

The Address—Mr. St. Laurent

Canadian people would expect the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister to go to this conference and do what they could, through discussion with the members of the sterling area, to seek and to find a reliable way to remove these restrictions on their trade. This government recognizes and has always recognized—and I am sure every member who sits in this house also does—the desirability of obtaining a restoration of the economy of the United Kingdom as something not only due to them in consequence of their great sacrifices during the last war but as something of immediate economic interest to this country.

I think parliament and the Canadian people have given tangible proof of their desire to be as helpful as they could be. There is no doubt that the greater the British market and the greater the commonwealth markets open to us, the better it will be for our Canadian producers. I regret that the conference coincides with the beginning of this session of parliament. I think hon. members know that I do not like to be away from Ottawa when parliament is in session. I know that the Minister of Finance would prefer to be here to deal himself with matters for which he is responsible to parliament and to the people represented in parliament, and which are apt to be under discussion in the debates in the house.

I regret also for another reason that the conference is being held while parliament is in session. The Minister of Finance and I would have liked very much to have the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe) accompany us on this occasion, as he himself would have liked to do; but he customarily acts for me when I have to be away and, rightly or wrongly, we felt it would not be showing proper respect to parliament if we were both away at the same time. There is also the consideration that in the course of these discussions it may, and I hope it will, become necessary for us to communicate with our colleagues at home. I hope such progress can be made that there will be things that will have to have the approval of our colleagues at home. My colleagues felt that if such an occasion should arise they would be glad to have the Minister of Trade and Commerce here, because of his experience in such matters, to assist them in dealing with such questions as we may have to refer to the Canadian government. After all, this is a conference, not a legislative body of any description. What recommendations are arrived at will be recommendations to the respective governments of the countries represented at the conference, and I hope we may have recommendations that will require immediate decisions. I cannot say how long

[Mr. St. Laurent.]

the conference may be expected to last, but I can assure hon. members that I shall lose no time in returning to my place in parliament just as soon as it is over.

The Minister of Finance and I are going to London with the hope that some progress can be made in the direction of widening opportunities for trade both within the commonwealth and between commonwealth countries and other nations. But I think it would be wrong to give the impression that a conference of commonwealth representatives, however valuable it may be as a preliminary—and it will be valuable—can by itself solve the problem of making sterling convertible or, as the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Drew) has put it, of removing the roadblocks in the way of trade. That is not only my personal view. If I may refer again for a moment to Mr. Eden's speech here in Ottawa I find that he had this to say:

We realize of course that there is no final solution to some of these problems which we shall have to discuss in London, except on a world basis.

Yet by our joint efforts we believe we can inspire the message and expand the contribution which the commonwealth can make to the economic life of the free world.

I am sure we all join in that view and that hope. I also feel sure that we join in the confidence in the future of Britain expressed by Mr. Eden in that same speech:

I know there are some who believe that the contribution we can make to the modern world is a declining one. I do not accept that for one instant. On the contrary, I am convinced that the leadership and experience we have to give can be as decisive in shaping world events as at any time in our long history.

I am sure it is with that hope and that confidence that we are going to join them in the search for ways to remove the roadblock which prevents the resumption of world trade, because I think we share the views and hopes that it may not be too optimistic to feel that the western world will so rearrange trading that the great nations of the east will feel that it is to their advantage to remain with us and help us maintain the standards of freedom for mankind throughout the whole world.

Mr. M. J. Coldwell (Rosetown-Biggarr): Mr. Speaker, my first words must be to join with the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) and the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Drew) in the hope that we may make every preparation for Her Majesty's coronation and that her reign thereafter will be a very long and happy one.

I also want to join the Prime Minister in expressing pleasure at seeing the new members in the house and to say to them that I