

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 51/39

THE JAPANESE PEACE CONFERENCE

An address by the Minister of Fisheries, Mr. R.W. Mayhew made to the United Nations Association, at Toronto, on October 2, 1951.

The San Francisco Conference which concluded on September 8 was the culmination of a year of intensive negotiations with respect to the Japanese Peace Treaty. It was, as one delegate at the Conference said, an unusual conference indeed, and it was an unusual treaty which this unusual conference met to sign. Efforts to reach agreement on the terms of the Japanese Peace Treaty among the war-time allies extended over four of the six years since the acceptance by Japan of the terms of surrender in 1945. A new drive and determination in the conduct of negotiations became evident last autumn. On September 14, 1950, President Truman revealed in a press conference in Washington, that he had authorized the Department of State to initiate informal discussions with governments represented on the Far Eastern Commission on a procedure which might succeed where past efforts had failed, in reaching agreement on the terms of the Japanese Peace Treaty.

As early as July 1947, the United States had proposed the convening of a conference of the eleven member-states of the Far Eastern Commission to draft the peace treaty for Japan. In September of the same year, Commonwealth representatives met at Canberra to exchange views on the subject. These attempts to get on with a Japanese treaty were frustrated by the insistence of the U.S.S.R. that the peace treaty must be drafted by the Council of Foreign Ministers. This procedure would have provided the U.S.S.R. with the veto power. It would, in addition, have denied to many nations with undeniable interests in the peace settlement the opportunity to influence the final terms of the treaty. In January of 1950, the treaty was discussed at the Colombo Meeting of Commonwealth Foreign Ministers. As a result of agreement reached at Colombo, a Working Party of Commonwealth officials met under the direction of Commonwealth High Commissioners in London from May 1 to May 17. An opportunity was provided at the meeting for a free exchange of view at the official level. The subject was discussed again at the Conference of Commonwealth Prime Ministers in January of 1951.

On January 11, 1951, Mr. Truman announced that Mr. John Foster Dulles would head a presidential mission to Japan, and to other interested countries, to discuss "the means of making further progress towards a peace settlement". Mr. Dulles had been actively engaged in presenting the views of the United States Government to other interested governments since Mr. Truman's authorization was given in September of 1950.