

Supply—Trade and Commerce

commonwealth trade conference was unnecessary because there was a commonwealth finance ministers' conference in London in January is wholly unsatisfactory. In the first place, the Minister of Finance, who represented Canada at that conference, rightly or wrongly created the impression he was there largely as an observer, Canada being the only dollar member of the commonwealth at a meeting called to deal with a sterling crisis. Further, that was a finance ministers' conference held without the advice of trade experts available to the countries represented.

A commonwealth trade conference should be called for the purpose of dealing with matters of trade designed towards unblocking existent channels of trade and development of new ones geared to expansion now under way within the commonwealth, and not for any specific purpose a minister of finance would or could serve. If the commonwealth means anything it means we could sit down in conference and review the whole trade situation as it has developed since the war. Already too many valuable years have been wasted without the necessary action being taken while our traditional markets are being closed to us.

While the deal arranged between New Zealand, United States, Great Britain and Canada for beef is a step in the right direction, it will not take care of the surplus we will undoubtedly have this year. It is imperative therefore that the government do everything possible to try to regain our former position in the United Kingdom market. While it is not desirable that we should gain through the misfortune of one of our sister nations in the commonwealth, if reports are true of an unusual drought in Australia it might be to the mutual advantage of the United Kingdom and this country for Canada to make every effort possible now to supply the British market.

Mr. Howe: We have just listened to a political speech so full of inaccuracies that it should be answered immediately. The hon. member says that we have lost our British markets. I stated that sales to Great Britain were up 37 per cent last year over the previous year.

Mr. Charlton: In dollars.

Mr. Howe: In volume as well as in dollars. The sales for the first three months of this year are up at least 25 per cent over the sales for last year. If my hon. friend would like to have figures, I have them here.

Mr. Charlton: I have them too.

Mr. Howe: Why not interpret them correctly?

Mr. Charlton: I made the statement that your figures were not based on volume; that makes a difference.

Mr. Howe: The total value was related to volume.

Mr. Charlton: If the minister would give the volume and not the price it would present a different picture.

Mr. Howe: I will give the figures for the first three months of this year as compared with last year.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): In volume?

Mr. Howe: How can my hon. friend expect volume in over-all trade. If my hon. friend will just consider the difference in price between last year and this year, which is just fractional, he will compare the results.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): Then do not pretend that the hon. member is inaccurate because he gives the volume, which is the most sensible way to give it.

Mr. Howe: Here is the comparison between the first three months of this year and the first three months of last year, showing our sales to different countries:

	First three months 1951	First three months 1952
United Kingdom	\$113,000,000	\$154,000,000
South Africa	8,900,000	15,380,000
Australia	8,448,000	15,286,000
New Zealand	2,300,000	6,178,000

So we have lost our British market. I never heard such nonsense.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): You have not questioned a single figure the hon. member gave.

Mr. Howe: I never heard such a distortion of facts in my life.

Mr. Charlton: On a question of privilege, I should like to ask the minister how many pounds—

The Chairman: That is not a question of privilege.

Mr. Howe: I am getting to the information; I am taking every item in my hon. friend's speech and turning it inside out to show the ridiculous nature of the situation.

Mr. Argue: How about farm products?

Mr. Howe: I am coming to that. I have the information for every country in the world.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): You said you were going to question the hon. member's figures.