

to create a wider understanding of the various aspects of this subject among the people of Canada. In the meantime, the matter is not being overlooked by the government. In this connection it may be recalled that no formal meeting of the pan-American union has been held since 1938, the ninth conference, which was to have assembled in 1943, having been postponed because of the war. If our hemispheric neighbours find it advisable to postpone such conferences in war time it is not unreasonable to suggest that Canada should delay active consideration of this topic until the world conflict is ended. At that time, moreover, we can take whatever action may seem appropriate in the light of post-war developments in the realm of international organization.

Mr. GRAYDON: I take it from what the Prime Minister has said that there has been no formal or informal invitation to Canada with respect to membership or sitting in on the pan-American union.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I do not know just what may be included as an informal invitation, but a good many kindly-disposed friends have intimated how helpful it might be if Canada were a member of the pan-American union; but I would say that no invitation has been extended by the union. It should not be thought, however, that we are unaware of the value of increasing cooperation and friendship with the other governments of the western hemisphere. On the contrary, we are steadily developing our contacts with them on every appropriate occasion and in a variety of ways. Last autumn, for example, we had the pleasure of entertaining such distinguished political leaders of Latin American states as the Foreign Minister of Chile and the President of Haiti. At various times in recent months members of the Brazilian section of the United States-Brazil joint defence board, scientists, members of parliament and business men have also visited Canada. Members of the Mexican, Chilean and Brazilian delegations to the Bretton Woods conference have recently visited Ottawa. Such visits are most helpful in furthering friendly relations. I regret that war-time conditions make it impossible for members of this government to accept many of the invitations for return visits which have been so cordially extended to them. The fact that we have elevated our missions in Brazil and Chile to the rank of embassies, that we have established this year an embassy in Mexico and arranged for the exchange of ambassadors between Canada and Peru, is further proof of our appreciation of the importance of progressively increasing and

strengthening our political relationships in the western hemisphere. Our trade commissioner service is being maintained at a high state of efficiency in the Latin-American countries. The government also looks with favour upon the presence of Canadian officials and experts at technical and scientific conferences of a pan-American character. Canada has been represented in Mexico City at a conference on demography, in New York at a conference on cartography, and in Santiago at a conference on criminal jurisprudence. It will likewise be represented at the fifth pan-American highway conference to be held at Lima, Peru, in the near future. In May last, at the invitation of the United States, Canada sent an observer to the first conference of commissions of inter-American development. These contacts, modest and limited though they necessarily must be, have all helped to bring about a better knowledge of Canada in the countries of Latin-America and of those countries among our own people. The new and closer relation with the American countries which have been stimulated and encouraged by our association in the war against the axis powers will, I believe, continue to develop to our mutual advantage in many fruitful ways.

May I refer to the question of Canadian nationals in enemy hands, on which questions have been raised once or twice during the present session? During the debate on the immigration estimates on June 5, a number of questions were asked by hon. members about the arrangements for the protection and relief of distressed Canadian nationals in enemy hands. The fact that the item for reimbursing the Swiss government for these relief payments appeared in the estimates of the immigration branch, rather than in the estimates of external affairs, may have been the cause of some misunderstanding. The Department of External Affairs, through the protecting power, endeavours to keep in touch with Canadian nationals in enemy hands and authorizes, where necessary, the payment of relief by the representatives of the protecting power. Such relief is made in the form of a loan and is subject to repayment from assets or income which the individual beneficiary may have in Canada. Frequently, when they are able to do so, the family in Canada of a person receiving relief are ready to reimburse the government. The vote for relief of the distressed nationals abroad has been for many years in the estimates of the immigration branch. This procedure goes back to the days when our immigration representation abroad was much more extended than that of the Department of External Affairs. It has been convenient to leave it there, as the immigra-