



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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CONVERSATION IN WASHINGTON

A statement by Prime Minister Diefenbaker on June 6, 1960, to the House of Commons.

With the permission of the House I should like to report in general on the visit which I made last Friday and Saturday to Washington at the invitation of President Eisenhower. As I pointed out on my arrival there, this was not a formal visit; it was the kind of call which one makes on a close neighbour with whom one is on friendly terms and with whom one is in the habit of talking over matters of mutual interest.

I particularly point out the warmth of the welcome extended to me because I represented Canada, both by the President himself, his Secretary of State and all the officials and members of the public with whom I came in contact. We are bound to have differences between our countries, as friends and neighbours will, but beneath the surface of whatever intermittent strains may arise in our relationship there is a vein of continued understanding and goodwill that springs not only from our heritage but also from the common sense of the importance of being united in safeguarding common values.

I am going to refer to one or two of the matters which were discussed, although I know the House will not expect me to go into any detail on the substance of those talks. We found ourselves in agreement with regard to the circumstances which led to the summit failure and also the position which the Western nations should now adopt individually and within the NATO alliance in their relations with the Soviet Union. The need is to establish and preserve an equilibrium between the maintenance of defensive preparedness on the one hand and on the other a continued readiness to retain existing contacts with the Soviet world and extend those contacts on the basis of mutual agreement whenever the opportunity arises.

Future NATO Policy.

I discussed with the President matters connected with the future policies in NATO. I expressed the view that

the time had come for the NATO nations to re-examine the capacity of that alliance to deal with the problems which lie ahead. Hon. Members will recall that at the Ministerial Meeting of NATO last December the United States Secretary of State proposed that a study be made of long-range planning for the 1960's. My view, which I expressed to the President, was that recent international happenings had increased the urgency of undertaking this study.

The United States is already engaged in preliminary work along these lines. My view was that, after that study had been fully proceeded with, the NATO governments should give early and serious attention to the holding of a meeting at heads-of-government level in order that those who have the responsibilities of leadership may join in a collective effort to establish and sketch new lines of endeavour for NATO in the years ahead. All of us are fully conscious of the importance of thorough preliminary consultation, for unless we achieve the free inter-flow of ideas and suggestions in the future we cannot take advantage of the opportunity to open up new and secure paths of progress for the alliance.

I further stated that should it be agreed that a heads-of-government meeting of NATO should take place, Canada would be prepared to extend invitations to the NATO leaders to hold that meeting in Canada.

Aerial Inspection.

I discussed with the President the proposal which he put forward first in 1955, and to which he referred in recent public statements, that consideration should be given to a system of aerial inspection as a means of removing the threat of surprise attack. In that connection, he pointed out the views expressed by the Leader of the Opposition in support of action in that direction. The President confirmed that study was being given to the "open-skies" proposal. I said that such a proposal, if and when advanced in the United Nations, should have co-sponsors and that Canada would join in sponsoring an appropriate resolution in that regard.

Other subjects were generally of an international nature, the outlook for progress on disarmament and the ending of nuclear-weapons tests. There was agreement on the importance of pursuing negotiations on these matters which would serve at the moment as important and continuing points of contact with the Soviet Government. Information on the most recent Soviet disarmament plans as enunciated by Mr. Khrushchov was not available in comprehensive form and it was therefore not possible to discuss this development in any detail. However, as the Secretary of State for External Affairs said in the House last Friday, although the Soviet proposals are heavily weighted in propaganda aspects, the Western nations should demonstrate a readiness to examine them with serious intent, and the agency for that consideration exists in the 10-nation Committee on Disarmament which will resume its deliberations tomorrow in Geneva.

U.S.-Canada Relations.

As for the bilateral relations between the United States and Canada, various aspects of policies affecting the two countries jointly were discussed, including continental defence and problems in the trade and economic fields. We spoke frankly about the concern that Canadians feel over recent United States wheat surplus disposal policies which could damage Canadian wheat export markets, particularly in Latin America and Africa. However, I think I can sum up the general feeling and the attitude that was shown during these discussions by reading the words of the communiqué and drawing particular attention to those in the concluding paragraph:

"The Prime Minister and the President reviewed the course of relations between their countries during recent years and noted with pleasure the extent to which the problems arising in such relations have yielded to the process of friendly and continuing consultation. They considered that satisfactory means of carrying on such consultations have been established in personal exchanges as well as by regular diplomatic arrangements and the various joint committees that have been created. They expressed their belief that there has been established between the two countries a model for the relationship between neighbours."

Again I repeat... that the unusual warmth of the welcome and the expressions not only of friendship but of a desire to co-operate in every way so as not to cause harm one to the other was most apparent, and I must publicly express my thanks and appreciation for everything that was done on the part of our great neighbour to show its feelings toward our country.

S/C