(*March 1st, 1937*)

Canada's Foreign Relations

By Paul Martin, M.P.

Colonel Mess:—Guests and members of the Canadian Club: Today we have a most interesting subject and a well informed speaker—a pressing subject and a capable speaker. Undoubtedly foreign relations are the world's greatest problem, and if the nations do not share the burden with ability, tact and reason, I shudder to think of what may happen. I am sure this problem will become more acute in the future. Modern communications will still further increase the dissemination of news, and with the increase of knowledge of world affairs will come an increasing desire of the general public to have a share in directing them. On the other hand, of course, the dissemination of knowledge may render the problem less acute. Either way, greater skill will be required in the handling of Canada's foreign relations, and it is to our younger members of parliament that we have to look, for the correct handling of these matters in the future. With his background of Toronto, Harvard and Oxford, and his experience in law and politics behind him, I am sure success will attend the career of our Guest Speaker, Mr. Paul Martin. M.P.

Mr. Martin:—Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, I am no authority on international affairs, nor do I pose as one. I am simply a member of Parliament, but I suppose that *status* will not prevent me from expressing an opinion on one or two subjects, which I know very little about. When I was asked to come to this club the invitation suggested I should speak on Canadian Foreign Policy, but I thought it would be better to make it Canada's Foreign Relations—not because of the view held by many that Canada has no Foreign Policy, but because I considered that Canada's relations with so many countries must eventually have some

very definite effect on that Foreign policy. In the first place we are a young country—we are just beginning to acquire a technique and develop a tradition in the field of foreign affairs. Up till a few years ago we were content to let Great Britain act on our behalf, but with the Statute of Westminster came a definite change, and we no longer continued to confine our main activities to domestic problems. Our previous *status* did not mean that we agreed entirely with the foreign Policy of Great Britain, but rather that our lack of experience and other factors precluded us from accepting responsibilities, we did not want to assume.

Our foreign policy—such as it is—has always revolved around the question of war—war in Europe, war in Asia, war somewhere outside Canada, and with that single exception we were prepared to accept direction in matters of foreign policy from the hands of His Majesty's government of the United Kingdom. Only in the matter of foreign wars did we preserve the right to decide for ourselves.

I believe it would be as well to go on record that this is not a statement of the Liberal policy solely, so that my friends on the other side will not be able to get after me about it later. In the issue brought about by the suggestion of the British Government in 1884 that Canada might assist in sending an expedition to the Sudan, Sir John A. Macdonald wrote to Sir Charles Tupper: "The Suez Canal is nothing to us and we do not ask England to quarrel with France or Germany for our sakes . . . our men and money would be sacrifices to get Gladstone and company out of a hole they have plunged themselves into by their own imbecility . . . the reciprocal aid to be given by the colonies to England should be a matter of treaty deliberately entered into and settled on a permanent basis."

Again I would say, Mr. Chairman, to those who suggest that Canada has no foreign policy that there are many in England who contend that His Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom likewise has no foreign policy. Harold Nicholson has said recently that in Foreign affairs Great Britain lacked a foreign policy. I am not in agreement with that because the more one studies the question the more one realizes the difficulties of forming any set policy at the moment. Each case as it arises must be dealt with on its merits.

That was Macdonald's view, it was the view of Laurier and of every succeeding Prime Minister, including the present one. Laurier wrote to his wife and said: "One of my main ambitions will be to keep Canada out of the vortex of European Militarism", and to do that he held it necessary and desirable that we should oppose any suggestion of Imperial federation. Though he was a firm upholder of the Empire he was yet reluctant to share in the formation of any Empire foreign policy because this would result in at least moral commitments.

Sir Robert Borden, who perhaps is the greatest figure in the development of the Dominion status of Canada thought this should be acquired through active cooperation with Great Britain. He urged that Canada should participate in the Councils of the Empire, and the result was the formation of the Imperial war cabinet which was really a committee of different governments.

Our participation in the peace conference of 1919 was expressed in terms of cooperation and consultation with His Majesty's government. The same was true of the Washington conference of 1921 and other post-war conferences where the Dominions took part in deciding Empire policy.

Then came the break. Mr. Meighen objected very strongly to the terms of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance because of the effect in the United States. He intervened and his intervention was successful to the extent that the objectionable terms were modified, but the system of cooperative control of the Empire's foreign affairs failed to last longer than 1922, when the matter was brought to a head by the Chanaq incident. Then all the Dominions wired to Great Britain that they did not want to be represented by contingents in the event that a crisis should occur, and we were not asked to send representatives to the Lausanne conference where terms of peace in respect to the incident were discussed. We likewise refused to refer the treaty to Parliament, although our Prime Minister acknowledged that we were technically bound by it.

We had nothing to do with the treaty of Locarno and we had nothing to do with the Hoare-Laval agreement, but we are prepared to consult on matters involving common interests in foreign affairs, and on occasion to agree upon a foreign policy for the whole British Empire.

I hope none will think that in stating the situation in a manner that is consistent with my own views I will be a victim of the prejudices of my own race. I am a French Canadian and a Roman Catholic, but I have been educated under English Canadian auspices, and therefore have the advantage of the blending of both points of view. My view of the Empire may not be yours, but it is a sincere belief. For me Canadian safety must always be the primary need. It can perhaps best be expressed as a policy of giving offence to none. That is, I believe, the basis of our foreign policy at the moment. The basis of a foreign policy, it seems to me, must always be tinged with a touch of selfishness, summed up in the need for securing the safety of one's own country and one's own people.

Before coming to definite features of Canadian Foreign Policy, may I suggest that in the case of a country like Canada we should be giving very special attention to a number of matters that may be described as the mechanics of foreign relations. It is one thing to have a point of view, but it is a better to have a good foundation. The recent debate in the House of Commons in connection with arms recalled very clearly the absence of tradition and technique, particularly of technique, in dealing with Canadian foreign affairs.

The debate on the part of all political parties brought forth passion and prejudice and sectional views. There was an inability to discuss these matters objectively on merit instead of in the light of political and sectional interests. I exclude in that direction my good friend Mr. Factor. His speech was excellent. The more one talks to members of Parliament on this subject the more one realizes that until it is possible to arrive at an objective discussion of the subject we must remain without defence.

On the Civil service side there can be no complaint. We are gradually building up a group who are able to hold their own with any foreign officials, but there must be a definite correlation of their work at home and abroad if we are to achieve proper results. The time has come when we must pay some attention to the mechanics of the service. We must have a foreign service act and take greater pains to see to the proper training of our representatives and see

that they have proper opportunities for leave and promotion. It cannot be good for their work to stay out of touch with their own country for ten or fifteen years.

In Europe last summer I was discussing this problem with a very good friend of mine on the staff of one of our Legations. He has not visited Canada since 1925, for the very good reason that he has not had the means to visit his own country during that period. Things like this may seem small in the conduct of foreign relations, but to my mind they are tremendously important. Until we can get a proper technique on these, as on other more direct matters of foreign policy, we shall have to be very careful as to on what lines and how far we shall proceed.

The whole problem of our relations with the British Empire and the League of Nations must have angles that every thinking man and woman must find very difficult. There is for example the matter of the handling of affairs by the Secretary of State, and in this matter one is apt to lose sight of the difference between his job and that of the historian. The job of the latter is to analyse policies and governments in terms of what should have been done. The job of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs is very different. He has to handle stern realities, putting on one side his own views of what the ideal situation would be. If there were a greater effort on the part of the public to realize this he would receive a great deal more cooperation than he receives today. Fortunately in Canada this subject has not yet reached the stage of Political controversy.

What I think should be particularly appreciated at this stage of our development is the fact that the dominating factor of our foreign policy must be our geographical situation. This seems elementary and yet it always appears to be necessary to be able to produce facts and figures in support of the statement. Every country in the world has its foreign policy based on this situation.

Let us, then, turn to an analysis of the Anglo-German relationship made by the British Foreign Office. A memorandum on the geographical situation in relation to the matter was made on January 1st by Sir Eyre Crowe, then head of the Western Department of the Foreign Office, concerning which Mr. Harold Nicholson has this to say: "Sir

Eyre Crowe took as his axiom the incontestable premise that British policy was determined by geography. On the one hand you had a small island situated on the flank of Europe. On the other you had a large Empire stretching tenuously across the world. The law of self preservation necessitated the maintenance of food supplies of the island and the safety of its communications with its overseas Empire. This dual necessity in its turn implied preponderance of sea power against any possible enemy.

"If, then, the spirit of the German policy has in effect changed but little since Sir Eyre Crowe made his famous diagnosis of 1907, can it be said with equal certitude that his definition of the principles of British policy has today lost none of its validity. The axiom remains the same. Geography is still the determining factor, and self preservation the determining instinct. The Channel is still but twenty-five miles wide. Sea power coupled with resistance to any hegemony of Europe are still the two main foundations upon which British policy should be based."

Canada's foreign policy is in the main not a matter of Canada's relations to the League of Nations, but of Canada's relations to the United Kingdom and the United States. This is particularly true today because collective security has broken down, and collective action is non-existent. It would be folly for a nation such as Canada to try to impose peace on a world that is not prepared to look after it. Yet while that is so the Government of this country believes in a long range policy which leads ultimately to the support of the League of Nations, and in many ways the League remains of importance.

At the League of Nations Assembly on September 29. 1936. Mr. Mackenzie King said: "Canada comes to the League of Nations today with a desire to reaffirm her adherence to the fundamental principles of the Covenant. The preservation of the peace by the progressive organization of international cooperation within a collective system has been championed in equal measure by all political parties in Canada. Our attachment to this ideal is as strong today as it was at the inception of the League. At the same time there is a general concurrence in the view which has been expressed by the leaders of all political parties since the

beginning of the League, that automatic committment to the application of force is not a practical policy."

Analysing Canada's relations with the British Empire, again at Geneva, Mr. King declared: "The nations of the British Commonwealth are held together by ties of friendship, by similar institutions and by common attachment to democratic ideals rather than by committments to join together in war.

"This respect for the full autonomy of each of the self governing members of the British Commonwealth, I may add, is not confined to questions of participation in war. It applies to all relationships. It is for each part to decide what political or economic policies it may wish to adopt. Recognition of the same principle we believe should govern the actions of all members of the League of Nations."

Emphasis is placed on conciliation, not force. Consider the Prime Ministers' statement on article 10 and our attitude thereto: "The Canadian Government, in responding to the invitation to become a signatory to the Briand-Kellogg pact in view of the discussions of the bearing of the pact on the League Covenant declared: 'It is true that the Government also contemplates the application of sanctions in the event of a member state going to war if in so doing it has broken the pledges of the Covenant to seek peaceful solution of disputes. Canada has always opposed any interpretation of the Covenant which would involve the application of these sanctions automatically or by the decision of other states. It was on the initiative of Canada that the Fourth Assembly, with a single negative vote accepted the interpretative resolution to which the Secretary of State of the United States recently referred indicating that it is for the Constitutional authorities of each State to determine in what degree it is bound to assure the execution of the obligations of this article by the employment of its military forces'."

The difficulty, of course, is how far we are prepared to go in living up to our obligations in fulfilment of our commitments. While we have these reserves in our attitude to the League of Nations our foreign policy must inevitably depend on our relations with the United Kingdom and the United States. Obviously so. In terms of sheer selfishness it must be so.

Beyond all this we must realize that we are a North American State. I see great advantage in becoming members of the Pan-American Union. The Government has not expressed itself on the subject and I know my suggestion will not be adopted because of the great political difficulties. Trying to break up the British Empire would be the charge used to the political disadvantage of the person who proposed it.

Mr. King, in analysing just what we were prepared to do in connection with The League postulated that the time had come when the causes of war would have to be examined. Speaking in the House of Commons on June 18th, 1936, he said: "We should inquire into any question, raw materials, population movements, labour conditions that is felt as a grievance . . . With a measure of our power we must pursue the attempt to bring international trade gradually back to a sane basis, to lessen the throttling controls and barriers". The hopeful thing is that, while in 1921 we were reluctant to examine the problem from that point of view, we are now prepared to do so.

There is another thing that arose out of the arms debate. In most instances there was an inquiry as to how far we were committed to any action in terms of the United Kingdom, the United States or any other country. In answer to this I would again quote Mr. King. Speaking at Geneva in the presence of all members of the League and in the presence of Eden, Halifax, Malcolm MacDonald and Mr. Morrison, Mr. King asserted that Canada had made no commitments and was unwilling to make any, for either League or Empire action. That was again reported in the House of Commons last week, and I mention it, not because I am trying to suggest that we should not be willing to co-operate but because of various elements in this country, Quebec in particular, any definite commitment of any sort might throw this country into disaffection, and that must not be permitted to happen. We cannot over-emphasize that.

But what does Canadian Foreign policy really mean? I believe that none of you would want to break up the British Empire, particularly with the good relations that now exist. But how far are you prepared to go to stop it? Will you

be willing to participate in an Empire war, or do you join Mr. Woodsworth in urging that we declare ourselves for peace and refuse to participate in any wars whatsoever?

I am opposed to war, but, gentlemen, what would be the advantage at this time of declaring ourselves to those terms. I can well conceive that a good section of my own compatriots, in the event that we were subjected to attack, finding itself willing to use efforts to defend ourselves. I can conceive that a good section of this country, if they thought that the philosophies of Stalin were likely to disrupt our constitution, would be willing to fight to defend it. Many would be prepared to fight to preserve the unity of the British Empire.

As to our relations with the United States we know that they would be willing to come to our help, if we were attacked. But what is our attitude to them? . . . What should we do in the event that they went to war with Japan? All sorts of questions arise along those lines but it would be absurd to ask Canada, in terms of foreign policy to give unequivocal answers to what are after all hypothetical questions. Not because they should not be given, but because in giving them this country might be split up into several factions that are already existing but more or less dormant.

I have been brought up on collective action. Two years ago it was inevitable to me that there should be a League of Nations to preserve world order, and I find it difficult today to realize that the whole framework has fallen to the ground. But that cannot always be. At least so far as Canada's foreign policy is concerned, we must have faith that it must not be.

But we cannot go on in this country indefinitely straddling the fence, unwilling to declare on things that must be declared. The present government as previous governments have done, looks upon the League essentially as a body for conciliation, but there are many in Canada and the rest of the world who say the League cannot be based on merely moral 'suasion, and that there must be some compulsory agent behind it.

I wonder if you will think me impractical if I suggest that things will, in spite of all we can do, look after them-

selves. Just as one century succeeds another, in spite of the difficulties of the moment, so we will gradually find ourselves coming back to the beliefs of 1919. In that case what about Canada?

I am not one of those who feel we have no influence in world affairs. I felt last year at the Assembly, and I feel now that we are still intimately linked up with European and Asiatic problems. I felt that there is always a possibility that we may be drawn into conflicts, and therefore I believe that those in charge of our foreign policy must be determined, so that when the time comes there will be no mistake in the role we shall play.