

The deterioration in the United Kingdom's financial situation that took place in the autumn of 1951, and the continuing difficulties of the Sterling Area in general, raised urgent problems for all members of the Commonwealth, not excepting Canada, the only non-sterling member. A meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers accordingly took place at London in January 1952, and discussed measures that might be taken to meet the situation. Some of the countries concerned, particularly the United Kingdom and Australia, later took drastic steps to arrest further deterioration in their own position. While some such measures may have been unavoidable in the immediate emergency, discussions on an official level continued with a view to planning for the eventual expansion of trade which appears to be the only satisfactory solution for the whole problem.

International tension, besides adversely affecting the world's economic development during the past three years, also made it necessary to devote to strengthening the defences of Commonwealth countries resources that would normally have been used to increase trade and prosperity. In general, the distribution of the Commonwealth countries through all parts of the world has made it essential to organize their defences on a regional basis providing for full co-operation with friendly foreign countries. As regards North Atlantic defence, for example, Canada and the United Kingdom, as members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, have worked together in co-operation with the other members of NATO, while the United Kingdom, the Union of South Africa, and Southern Rhodesia have consulted with other countries interested in the defence of Africa. A Conference of the Defence Ministers of the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, the Union of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, at which Canada was represented by observers, was held at London in June 1951 to consider defence problems arising in the Middle East and other regions of common concern.

A number of conferences were held to discuss special problems of an economic, scientific or technical character. These included a conference to review the work of the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux; meetings on air transport and aeronautical research; gatherings of survey officers, statisticians, auditors-general, and scientists in various special fields; and a British Commonwealth Scientific Conference.

In addition, Canada is represented on such standing bodies as the Executive Council of the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux; the Commonwealth Economic Committee; the Commonwealth Shipping Committee; the Commonwealth Telecommunications Board; the Commonwealth Air Transport Council; the Commonwealth Advisory Aeronautical Research Council; the Commonwealth Liaison Committee; the Commonwealth Committee on Mineral Resources and Geology; and the Imperial War Graves Commission.

The Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux are, for the most part, bodies which collect and distribute information on agricultural research. All of them which are engaged exclusively in this work are located in the United Kingdom. The work of the one in Canada, known as the Commonwealth Bureau of Biological Control, is of a somewhat different nature; it undertakes to control the spread of noxious insects and plants by such means as the collection and distribution of parasites. The work of these Bureaux was reviewed by the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux Review Conference, which met at London in June 1950, and made various recommendations for increasing the usefulness of the Bureaux and ensuring co-operation with United Nations organizations and with interested foreign governments. The Canadian Government is represented on the Executive Council of