

The hope of my Government which I expressed when I last addressed you, that the structure of peace might be consolidated by agreement upon the settlements with Germany and Japan, has not been achieved. Hopes for peace, and, indeed, the very Charter for maintaining the hard-won peace, were based on a belief in the continuance of that unity of the Great Powers which gave such strength to the Allied brotherhood in arms. Differing basically in their interpretation of peace aims, however, the Great Powers have failed to establish the feeling of confidence which is essential if peace settlements are to be made and guaranteed and if collective security is to be a reality. In their plans for the security of this country my Government must take heed of this situation, over which they have little control.

In spite of these deep-seated dissensions which have delayed the achievement of its primary aims, my Government consider that the United Nations Organization must be maintained in its full membership in the hope that it may yet be, in the words of the Charter, "a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations." My Ministers will continue to do what lies in their power to strengthen the United Nations and to ensure that its purposes and principles are observed.

Within the past year the United Kingdom and a nucleus of the countries of Western Europe, conscious of the traditions, culture, and interests they hold in common, have affirmed their determination to move towards a closer association. My Government welcome these steps towards the unification of the moral and material forces of this vital area, and note with satisfaction the contribution of the United States of America towards its success. Any question of merging the strength and resources of the British Commonwealth of Nations with those of the States of Europe presents problems which call for decisions of fundamental importance in the life and economy of this country. My Government are confident that a closer economic, defensive, and spiritual union of the United Kingdom and Europe, which they regard as necessary and desirable, can be achieved without prejudicing the historic unity of the Nations of the British Commonwealth. They believe, further, that the other European States concerned will share this view. These matters are under consideration by my Ministers. It is hoped, moreover, that the Prime Ministers of the British Commonwealth may be enabled at an early date to discuss these and other major questions of common and urgent concern.

During the course of the year my Government have warmly welcomed India, Pakistan, and Ceylon to full membership of the British Commonwealth. They will, for their part, offer their friendliest co-operation to these countries who share with us the benefits of this association of free peoples.

Parliament will be given an early opportunity to consider ratification of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade which was reached at Geneva, and which provides for the mutual grant of substantial tariff concessions among the signatories. The Charter for an International Trade Organization, drawn up at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Employment at Havana, will also be placed before Parliament for consideration.

During the past year my Government have participated in several conferences dealing with the welfare of the people of the South Pacific, South-east Asia, and the Far East. It is their policy that New Zealand should continue to contribute, within the limits set by her size and population, to the progress of her neighbours.

A Mission of the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations visited Western Samoa last year at the request of my Government to investigate a petition from the leaders of the Samoan people. The conclusions reached by the Mission endorse in large measure my Ministers' proposals for the advancement of Western Samoa and its progress towards self-government. Three weeks ago the new Legislative Assembly of Western Samoa, established in accordance with the Samoa Amendment Act, 1947, was formally opened.