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Memorandum to the Right Honourable W. L. Mackenzie King

PROSECUTION OF THE WAR

Everyone is shocked and dismayed at the disastrous course the War in the Pacific is taking.

The French Empire has been literally destroyed.

The Dutch Empire is faced with devastation.

The British Empire is being challenged and threatened as never before.

We have lost control of the Pacific for the time being in the Far East and control of the Atlantic is seriously threatened.

Canada as a base of supply is in great danger. Our safety and security is not all that is threatened. The very right to exist of every Canadian is in jeopardy. Every Canadian should be forced to realize these unpleasant facts.

These statements unfortunately are simply clear-cut plain logical conclusions of existing facts which establish the cold brutal truth that this war can be lost. It certainly is not being won and there does not seem to be any reason for believing that our war news will not continue to be worse before it gets better.

Were it not for the Russian front the whole situation would appear as a calamitous disaster.

Under the pressure of these hard facts President Roosevelt has ordered a sweeping streamlining of the United States War Department. War Secretary Stinson described the move as "a striking revitalization and sweeping reorganization of the entire War Department to help win the war - existing staff procedure was too cumbersome", he said. Has not the time come when a similar course should be followed in Canada?

Granted that we in Canada have done a fairly good job in preparing and sending an Expeditionary Force overseas. But what have we done for the creation of a Canadian army?

Granted that we have done great work in training an Air Force for overseas service. But what have we done towards creating a Canadian Air Force?

Granted that we have done a good job as far as convoy work in the Atlantic is concerned. But what have we done towards the creation of a Canadian Navy?

Granted we have done an excellent job in developing wartime food necessities, war industry and the supply of war equipment. But what have we done to

establish the organization to sustain all the requirements of a modern Canadian fighting power of naval, air and land forces and to appropriately marshall the resources of the Nation to the service of a long time war programme?

Do you not think the time has come to establish a Department of War and to commence without delay the creation of a Canadian fighting power of sea, air and land forces? The problem is a large one, but not beyond the capacity of Canada and certainly not beyond the needs of these fateful days.

THE MINISTER OF WAR

The Head of the War Department should be a man experienced in this war's technique. You have such a man in Lieut.-General A. G. L. McNaughton. I think it would be a tragedy to send a man of McNaughton's ability, experience and standing back to England to lead our overseas corps even though it were two or three times its present size. The creation of a modern Canadian army is infinitely more important to Canada's war effort than is the leadership of Canada's overseas forces, a position that can be filled by any number of available men.

McNaughton's experience in England during the past two years has given him the knowledge and today he has the standing to bring about in the least possible space of time a real fighting power in the Dominion. From that power can be secured such units fully trained and equipped as may be required in the future to fight either in Great Britain, Europe, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, China, Siberia or Russia. The point is that future Expeditionary Forces other than reinforcements to the corps in Britain, should come out of reserves that are available from an established Canadian Army. By this course we could achieve the maximum for Canadian security and at the same time achieve a maximum of our capacity to contribute effectively to attack overseas. The tragedy of the Expeditionary Forces to Hong Kong must not be repeated.

In this War the development of equipment, the training of forces, coordination and maintenance of supply is infinitely more important than ever before. The maintenance of the security of the North American continent as a base of supply is no less important than is the maintenance of security of Great Britain. That is why I believe that we should fall in line with the course President Roosevelt is

taking and move without delay to establish a streamlined Canadian fighting power of sea, air and land forces.

As far as possible I believe Canadian Staff Officers and as many others as can be made available should be sent to England and to Russia for training and experience. The Canadian Staff should be made up as far as possible of men brought back from England who have already secured the training and knowledge in modern warfare which association with overseas forces have developed. These are the men who can give us the action we need and no others without their experience can do the job.

The present Minister of National Defence is a great public servant. But he has neither the standing nor the experience as a War Leader to arouse Canadians to the effort that must be put forward. He would, however, make an excellent Attorney-General and with the innumerable problems that will continue to confront the Department of Justice he would be of inestimable assistance to the Honourable Mr. St. Laurent in this all important work.

WAR PROGRAMME IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

The vulnerability of the Alaskan, Yukon, British Columbian and American Pacific Coast lines cannot be ignored.

It is imperative that all Japanese should be removed from all Pacific Coast and Railway areas. None of them can be trusted.

I believe in the interests of everyone, including the Japanese in Canada and the unfortunate British and Americans now under the control of the Japanese in the Pacific War Zone, that all Japanese in Canada should be isolated. They should be properly taken care of; housed and fed, and their possessions should be properly preserved. This is necessary because the Japanese are proud, arrogant impertinent and bold and are not beyond starting trouble in Canada even though they know it would bring personal disaster upon themselves. Any such trouble of course would endanger the peace and security of British and American subjects under the control of the Japanese at the moment.

The present haphazard guarding of railways, bridges, power plants and war industries should be done away with and this important work should be maintained as part of the Nation's military programme. It should be the responsibility of the National military authorities.

On the Pacific Coast we have the only remaining drydock under British control in the Pacific Ocean and

steps should be taken immediately to see that it is not destroyed.

The only secure large operational air base on our Pacific Coast is Patricia Bay Airport. Others should be established without delay.

The ease with which air bases have been taken and captured in Europe and in the Pacific Ocean area indicates the need of having the Air Force equipped to defend its own air bases. This means the inclusion of anti-aircraft, anti-tank, artillery and hard-hitting infantry units as part of the Air Force's personnel at every airdrome.

Existing training facilities for Canadian soldiers are far below requirements. I believe that somewhere in Northwestern British Columbia a large training base and army camp should be established where Canadian and American troops could be trained in large numbers.

Personally I think that training facilities should be established in British Columbia to take care of between 75,000 and 150 Canadian and American troops.

The establishment of such a training base would make it possible for the forces in training there to become acquainted with the whole terrain of the area over which

they might have to fight before this war is over. Personally I am inclined to the opinion that the Japanese know more about our Pacific Coast line and our Western terrain than do the Canadian or American Forces.

The fullest cooperation in training and in the development of the fighting power of the North American Continent between Canadian and American Forces is, I believe essential to the achievement of the maximum of success.

But let me put it to you in this way: Supposing an attack were made with a view to establishing an invasion base on Queen Charlotte Island or on Vancouver Island or at Prince Rupert or at some other point on the Alaska or British Columbia coast line; what plan have we to meet such an invasion? What forces have we available? What equipment have we to cross the waters to Queen Charlotte Island or to move along the Coast line? I venture to say the answer is "We do not anticipate any such necessity". If such an invasion took place it would be just another case of "too late".

In this war engineering services is all important and while we have two training camps for engineers the numbers in training are comparatively small and should be greatly increased. We should not only be training officer-

engineers, but we should be training companies and battalions of pioneer soldiers who would be capable of assisting an army to move as the Japanese, German and Russian armies are moved with the assistance of such trained engineering services.

HIGHWAYS AND RAILWAYS IN
BRITISH COLUMBIA

The experience of Hong Kong, Malaya, Singapore, the Phillipines and the Dutch East Indies proves that the only defence against invation is a strong well-equipped mobile force that can move quickly to the point of invasion. That is why highways and railways in British Columbia should be brought up to standards that would sustain large scale military operations.

I notice by the press that the Joint Defence Committee of Canada and the United States have at last decided that the construction of the Alaska Highway is an imperative necessity. In my memorandum to you of November last in addition to this highway I indicated the necessity for completing the highway between Edmonton and Prince Rupert and of improving the Cariboo highway from Fort George to Vancouver and of also improving the whole system of highways in British Columbia tieing into the Cariboo highway from

points South and East. I also indicated the great need for the completion of the Pacific Great Eastern Railway from Ashcroft to Fort George. This is a large programme, but an essential one to get under way and to bring it to completion within a reasonable time will require full co-operation between the Governments of the United States and Canada. Here is a job for Mennonites, Doukhobors, French Canadians and others who do not want to fight overseas.

All the appropriate resources of our Federal and Provincial Public Works Departments should be mobilized and all the available contracting resources skilled in the construction of highways and railways should be moved into action. Such a programme would also prove a fruitful training grounds for army engineering corps and pioneer battalions both American and Canadian that are so essential to the successful movement and maintenance of armies in this war.

NAVAL BASE FACILITIES

We have lost the drydocks at Kowloon, Hong Kong and Singapore and it looks as though we may lose the docks at Batavia. All that we have left is Esquimalt. Steps should be taken without delay to create and maintain drydocks and other naval base facilities at Prince Rupert.

The establishment of Prince Rupert as a naval base is essential to support the United States bases at Sitka, Kodiak and Dutch Harbour and Alaskan points.

It is also necessary to sustain the sea power in the North Pacific and to maintain communication with the Russian Forces in Siberia. Having lost control of the South Pacific we must make every effort to maintain our control in the North.

Let me ask you what steps are being taken to protect the fishing areas of the British Columbian and Alaskan waters. Have there been any conversations between the American and Canadian authorities in this regard? Certainly if they are not protected this vast source of food supply will be seriously interfered with by Japanese raiders.

FOOD SUPPLIES

There is need for the complete reorganizing of our programme of production and processing essential food supplies. I think that the services of a man like Stanley McLean of the Canadian Packers should be requisitioned to direct this work. I can tell you quite frankly that after looking over the food supply situation I am satisfied that it can be vastly improved.

SKILLED LABOUR AND FARM LABOUR

In the field of the development of skilled and farm labour - while considerable has been done, much more can be accomplished. ,Thousands should be in training today where but hundreds are being developed. We should mobilize our universities' engineering faculties, our technical schools and our Provincial training facilities and establish training centres in each province to increase without delay skilled labour and the development of woman power as a substitute for man power in industry.

CONTROLLED INFLATION

Heretofore Governments at war have relied upon high wages and excessive profits to induce an increased volume of the supplies of war needs and equipment. For the first time in our history we have in this war eliminated the profit motive by a system of regulation and control of prices and wages, taxation and the investment of national capital in war industry. To avoid the spiral of inflation usually attending the exploitation of large war expenditures we have brought into being Boards empowered to control production, distribution, retail and wholesale prices for both commodities and services. In this course we are in part following the leads of both Russia and Germany. The success of such a policy requires the administrative authority and capacity

of a very able and efficient Department of Economic Control. It is not a banker's job. At the present moment we in the Dominion of Canada are in danger of suffering from unnecessary limitations due to too narrow an outlook in economic administration.

At the moment in Canada by taxation and the regulation and control of production, distribution and prices for goods and services, international trade investment and currency movement, we have established sufficient power to avoid inflationary consequences even though we had in issue and circulation several billions of dollars of national currency.

Unfortunately while we have established the power to control inflation, we have not resorted to inflation which is a term used to define the issue of national currency. We are still insisting on inflating debts in the form of National obligations, bank deposits and taxation burdens.

Observing as we must the ever increasing expenditures of a long and indefinite war programme, no one can escape the conclusion that if we are to avoid the disaster of self-imposed bankruptcy we must without delay add to our powers of taxation and borrowing the power to issue national currency if we are to successfully finance the inescapable enormous expenditures of the future.

I do not think we can compete with our Fascist and Totalitarian enemies without adopting such a course. We must find some way to relieve our national economy and our war effort from the hobbles and fetters of unpayable debts and bankrupting taxation.

Of course in addition to the burden of war it must be recognised that we must carry on the domestic economy of the Nation. War invariably increases the obligations of such domestic economy and in this War that increase is already obvious. We must go on working towards a more effective coordination of Federal, Provincial and Municipal Governments.

We must take care of our youth, aged and soldiers' dependents, and an ever increasing war industry population. The maintenance of the health and general well being of the people and all the duties of sustaining good government are obligations that the War will increase rather than diminish.

This is not a war as usual. It is a war in which production from the farm must be increased through improved and increased agricultural labour. Similarly production

from the mines, from the forests and in the fisheries must be sustained and expanded. Expanding war production from war industry must be supported. Man power for the naval, air and land forces must be increased. Action abroad and security at home are inescapable obligations.

In your address in the House of Commons on Monday, January 26th at page 15 you clearly indicate that you have all these things in mind. Under the sub-title "The Scope of Compulsion" you point out "To achieve a total National effort everyone must contribute to the effort either directly or indirectly as far as possible each must be fitted into the appropriate task". Quite agreed. But it is well to remember that before appropriate individual tasks can be effectively undertaken the National War Programme must be envisioned and clearly defined. Without a clearly defined all-out National War Programme with objectives determined, the appropriate tasks into which individuals can fit and function must remain unknown and undetermined.

The all important work of the War Council of the Nation is to determine and define the nature, scope and objectives of the all-out war effort. With such a plan established the multifarious phases of its activities can

be defined so that the Nation's entire resources in energy and materials available can be brought to its service.

You know Mr. King we do not need the power of the National Selective Draft in the Government to conscript men for Overseas Service. We do need however to, as far as possible, fit everyone into his or her appropriate task.

The National programme which I have outlined I believe would be so far-reaching that the issue of Conscription for Overseas Service would disappear as a very insignificant part of the whole programme. Such a programme defined and launched by yourself would, I am sure, do more to secure an affirmative vote in the coming Plebiscite than any other effort which could be made.

Respectfully submitted.

G. G. McGEER

Ottawa, Ontario
March 5th, 1942

Vancouver, B. C.
May 29, 1942

PERSONAL

The Rt. Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King
Laurier House
Ottawa, Ontario

My dear Mr. King:

Thank you so much for the kindly interest in my well-being expressed in your letter of the 23rd instant, which I found here on my return from Seattle, where I have spent the past few days.

My recovery is excellent, but I plan to spend some time at Radium Hot Springs, near Sinclair Canyon in the Rockies, which I feel will make certain my return to that robust and vigorous health which once made the joy of battle full and adequate compensation for me, even in defeat.

During the five weeks since I arrived home you have been very much in my thoughts. I was greatly disappointed with the vote on the plebiscite in Quebec. The only compensation that I could see arising out of it was the possibility that almost everyone would be forced to realize the exacting and difficult burdens that Canadian war leadership has imposed upon you.

I have no idea what the actual situation is, other than what I infer from the press, which may be far from accurate, but if there were any way in which my services could be of the least assistance I would gladly place them at your disposal.

During my visit to Seattle I was the guest speaker at a Rotary Club Luncheon on the 27th, dedicated

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to the commemoration of our Empire Day. The next day I was the speaker at the launching of the Seaplane Tender "Umiak."

I was shewn through the plant where the Boeing Air Fortresses are built, the Headquarters of the construction of the Alaskan defenses, the Sand Point Air and Seaplane training base, several shipyards, and other war industries, and spent a day at the U. S. Navy Yard at Bremerton, some 20 miles across Puget Sound.

The experience was something more than an eye-opener. There appears to be as much real war work going on in Seattle and vicinity as there is under way in the whole of the Dominion of Canada.

The Seattle shipyard programme calls for the construction of destroyers and other types of naval craft. Up to the present something between 30 and 40 destroyers have been ordered and construction is well under way. Plans for the construction of other craft is equally impressive. Blast furnaces, foundries, machine shops and all that goes with such a programme is in full all-out operation.

The construction headquarters for the Alaskan and some other Pacific Coast defences is very extensive, and carries on without much reference to Washington.

The Navy Yard at Bremerton is rapidly being expanded into one of the best equipped and largest operational bases of the United States Navy. At the present moment the Battleship "Nevada", badly damaged at Pearl Harbour, is being repaired and refitted in one of the five large graving docks, two aircraft carriers are nearing completion, a large Naval Tender, really a great floating machine shop, equipped with over \$5,000,000 worth of machinery, one of the largest vessels of its type afloat, is just about completed. Several destroyers are also under construction there. Very extensive plans are being executed for the expansion of the Yard and all its facilities. Something over thirty thousand people, other than Navy personnel are at work 24 hours a day and seven days a week.

The defenses of Seattle and Bremerton seem to be very substantial. Vital areas are protected by

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balloon barrages against dive bombers. The whole area is studded with fixed and mobile anti-aircraft batteries. Smoke screen facilities, under-ground protection for oil, ammunition and personnel are being developed.

In addition very substantial fighter aircraft facilities are in readiness, and over three hundred thousand troops are in training and available.

What I saw during my visit to Seattle makes our Pacific Coast Canadian war programme, defensive and otherwise, appear to be very amateurish and insignificant.

You are quite correct in your conclusion that the Minister of National Defense for Air wrote me advising me that the Kitsilano Reserve was to be used in accordance with the original programme, despite the protests of myself, as Member for Vancouver-Burrard, and the Hon. Ian MacKenzie, as Member for Vancouver Center. But of course he did not bother to give me any reasons for that bit of real nonsense. I am more convinced than ever, after seeing what is taking place in Seattle, that this is one of the worst of the all too many conspicuous blunders in our Pacific Coast war programme. Of the innumerable sites available in and around the City of Vancouver, the Kitsilano Indian Reserve is, in my opinion, the poorest and the one least suited to the purposes in mind.

The Canadian National Railway and the Vancouver Harbour Board, both Government corporations, have, as you must know, very large areas of land, with trackage, highway, and waterfront facilities, that have been purchased and developed for industrial purposes, though as yet unoccupied. The unused acreage available, in the possession of these corporations is larger and more suitable for the purpose than the Indian Reserve. But that kind of co-operation does not seem to appeal to our Canadian war lords.

Whatever has induced the selection is beyond my understanding.

This decision, apparently against your request, does, however, confirm to me the utter futility and uselessness of my membership in our Canadian Parliament.

I am sure you will agree that I, for one, have good reason to feel that the time has arrived when my resignation as a Member should be tendered to the Speaker.

Unfortunately during almost three years of war I have yet to find approval for one single proposal that I have offered.

Back in 1939 when I proposed, among other war needs that:

1. Canadian Steel production should be increased and that blast furnaces should be set up on the Pacific Coast for scrap and B. C. iron ore, I was told that if we produced 5,000,000 tons of steel in Canada we would upset the steel economy of the whole world. Obviously the steel monopoly dominates Canadian production. The embargo on steel export was lifted and thousands of tons of our scrap were shipped to Seattle, converted into ingots and in turn shipped to Japan. Freight rates on steel were raised from 54 cents to 90 cents per 100 lbs., from Eastern points to points on our Canadian Pacific Coast.
2. When I proposed the construction of ships for both naval and marine purposes, I was told that we had more ships than we could use.
3. When I suggested the establishment of a ship-building programme on the Pacific Coast, including the production of steel, marine engines, and other ship equipment, the answer was a policy of building 9300-ton ships of the poorest possible war emergency type. The steel was shipped from the East. The engines were built in the East. As a result all we are doing here is rivetting the plates into hulls and putting the equipment in place. The moment the end of the war is in sight our alleged ship-building programme will collapse and the type of ships we are building will be ready for the junk dealers. And that is exactly what is intended. The policy of the government, apparently, is designed to deny industrial expansion to

the Pacific Coast and Western Canada.

4. When I dared to recommend the production of shells, depth charges, bombs, mines, torpedoes, with explosives and cellulose from wood pulp, a better and cheaper substitute for cellulose from cotton linters, and loading facilities in the West, to provide for the inevitable war in the Pacific, I was told that nothing of this kind would be undertaken because it could not be brought into production in 1941. The war in the Pacific broke for us on December 7, 1941, and we had absolutely nothing prepared, and we have little more as yet, and we started the production of synthetic rubber in 1942.

5. The suggestion that the completion of the Bridge River power project should be undertaken, which would have given us 600,000 H.P. of cheap hydro-electric energy, a project that could have been completed in less than a year, met with the blunt declaration that the production of electric power was not part of Canada's war effort.

6. Regarding the construction of wooden ships, I was told that no wooden ships would be required, only to find out later that the British Government were having built some 35 wooden mine sweepers in Bellingham, just across the border, and the lumber came from B. C. mills. If we had a thousand wooden ships to-day everyone of them would be in needed use. Certainly the war in the North Pacific is already presenting a demand that wooden ships could well supply.

7. When I outlined the development of an adequate system of military highways, railways, and terminals in B. C., that would make the defence of Northwest Canada possible, and provide the means by which Canada could operate with the United States in the defence of Alaska, and in carrying on offensive operations that would eventually bring the war home to Japan, as far as I was informed nothing whatever was done until the United States Government, at war, decided to build a highway North from St. John, (of no value whatever to our Coast defences), and to practically take charge

of our Northern Port of Prince Rupert. Then apparently we decided to build a few miles of highway East from Prince Rupert. As for the rest it might just as well be in the land of "Shangri-la".

8. Proposals for the increase of the production of petroleum, wool, oils and food for war zones, the training and mobilization of workers, met the same kind of indifference and rejection.

In the field of economy my suggestions have been no less unwelcome. Oh, I know that many of the ideas which I offered to the Banking and Commerce Committee back in 1934, and which I presented to the House in the years following the Election of 1935, have been adopted, but that is only because what we were pleased to call Democracy turned out to be a worn-out and decadent Plutocracy. Now we are witnessing our senile Plutocracy giving way to a malignant Bureaucracy which is not only just as bad, but in fact very much worse.

Under the former, social progress and national security were impossible, under the latter economic advancement for the individual, with freedom as an inalienable right, is certain to perish.

The chaos of regimented futility is certain to be the inescapable result of the economic black-out ordained by, and now plunging blindly ahead under the direction of the appointees of our dear misguided friend Lord Bennett, for God knows what, and their proteges and underlings.

Unfortunately I have been forced to the conclusion that the evil forces that have brought the British Empire to the very brink of disastrous defeat are now more strongly entrenched in Canada's Government than they were even in the days when the right of the debt dealers to rule was an unchallenged privilege.

The same old forces that once ruled from the throne room of invisible power are now boldly dominating with the invidious power of unbridled bureaucrats. I am certain that they will bring this nation into a sorry

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state of hopeless disagreement. They no doubt welcome the present situation of the conscription issue.

In every instance where my proposals were rejected I made due allowance for the fact that I had envisaged a long war that would rage in the Pacific as well as in the Atlantic zone. They were made to men who apparently believed that the war would be short and that it would not break out in the Pacific.

At the time they were made one guess, of course, was as good as the other, and I did not feel that I had any justification for demanding that my views be accepted by those who disagreed with the premises upon which they were based.

The situation, however, is now very different, and as far as I can see there is no indication of any change whatever in our Pacific Coast war policy.

The handling of the Japanese situation here is but another example of Bureaucratic incompetence. None of the B. C. Members were consulted, but we woke up to find a Securities Commission appointed, composed of men who were without the least experience in the work they were supposed to do. The ways and methods pursued to evacuate the Japs is now the cause of the bitterest criticism I have heard against us. A part of the press and many of our people believe that the situation has been made worse instead of better.

It was, however, only when I saw the war programme under way in the adjoining City of Seattle that I came to a full realization of the appalling incompetence of myself as a member of our Canadian war Parliament.

I am sure that you will agree that an advocate with so many excellent causes, who was unable to score one single success, would be well advised to change the venue of his operations. The loss of the Kitsilano Indian Reserve case, which I could not win even with the assistance of MacKenzie and your good self, convinces me that I should treat my parliamentary experience as a complete and utter failure and let it go at that.

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Of course the airdroids can go ahead and convert Kitsilano Indian Reserve into a bull's eye target in the centre of Vancouver, but I do not have to sit in Parliament supporting that kind of a war programme.

I enclose a copy of MacKenzie's letter dealing with the Reserve issue and our other plighted hope for a Naval Barracks on Dead Man's Island.

The attitude of Ottawa to our Pacific Coast defences, our Western war programme, and the utter indifference to the well-being of our civic and provincial government finds a complete reflection in the attitude of our war bureaucracy to every Member of Parliament who dares to express an opinion about anything.

Just recently I had a very fine example of just where a member stands in Ottawa, and strangely enough it came out of your own department, in this way. When I was invited to go to Seattle I learned that no one was allowed to see war industries or naval undertakings without authority from Washington. I then wrote to the Minister from this Province indicating my wishes to visit the Boeing Plant and the Navy Yards at Bremerton. He advised me that he had passed my letter on to the Department of External Affairs. In due course I was advised that my requests had been refused.

Well, I have some friends in Washington, so I decided to do a little on my own. I wired to Washington, and for your information I enclose a copy of the letter received from Ottawa, and also a copy of the wires from Washington, which resulted in my being received as an honored guest everywhere I wished to go.

Either the officials of your department have a very poor contact with Washington or they were very, very indifferent to my request, which happened to be a request from a Member of Parliament. No doubt the latter is the proper conclusion.

I quite appreciate that the foregoing is far from pleasant, but the facts set out are such that you should be aware of them, for I am by no means the only Member of Parliament who feels just as I do.

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If you should ever come to the same conclusion toward Parliament that I have now arrived at I would suggest that:

"...not by eastern windows only

When daylight comes, comes in the light:
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly!
But westward, look, the land is bright."

Yours most sincerely and respectfully,

G. G. McGeer