

Commonwealth Leaders Discuss European Common Market

By PETER KNOX
London (UPI)—Prime Minister Harold Macmillan took on one of the great challenges of his long career this week.

Starting last Monday, he is meeting with Empire leaders in an attempt to convince them that Britain's negotiations for entry into the European common market are not endangering the whole commonwealth idea.

Britain's bid to merge with Europe was the outstanding question up for discussion with the 15 commonwealth prime ministers as they gathered for their 11th meeting since the second world war.

concessions for an important section of commonwealth trade—the farm produce of Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

Tough Problem

The farm problem is a tough one because basically these three old so-called "white" dominions produce the same sort of food that Europe can grow itself. Britain wants the six market countries to give guarantees that food exporters from these countries will have reasonable access to the market countries.

The six recognize that some privileges must be conceded to commonwealth farm produce for a transitional period of several years to permit them to adjust trade, but are reluctant to extend them indefinitely.

Because common market negotiations still are not near the final stage—some informed commentators are wagering 60-40 odds that agreement never will be reached—Macmillan can give the premiers only a partial picture of the future.

At the same time he must sound them out as to what concessions they might be willing to make to permit Britain to work out a compromise agreement with the six.

If the premiers' conference ends in undisguised disagreement Macmillan might find it difficult to persuade the substantial commonwealth—first wing of his own ruling conservative party that Britain should join Europe.

Macmillan almost certainly will need all the diplomatic skill and political patience he has earned him such nicknames as "Supermac" and "Macwonder." The lineup facing him is formidable.

Prime Minister Robert Menzies of Australia, a veteran of many prime ministers' conferences and a tough and capable debater, is no friend of the common market idea.

Menzies sees not only the threat to such Australian exports as wheat, meat and canned fruit, but he fears also the political implications of Britain joining the six.

He recently told his parliament that if Britain became a member of a European federation the commonwealth would cease to be an association of "sovereign and fully self-governing states."

New Zealand is especially concerned because 95 per cent of her exports are farm products, and half go to Britain. The common market countries agree New Zealand needs special protection for her dairy exports, but have not yet worked out details.

Canada enjoys one advantage.

The United States would like to see Britain in the market where it could use its influence to ensure that the European group keeps to outward-looking trade policies while remaining politically closely linked with Washington. The United States believes Britain would act as a brake on these Europeans—France's President Charles de Gaulle, for one—who sees the old continent as a third force in world politics.

The 68-year-old Macmillan, who is heavily committed on the home political front to getting Britain into the common market, knows that among the commonwealth leaders there are several openly hostile to the European idea while the rest are torn with doubt. Macmillan himself believes British membership will not only make Britain stronger, but in the long run also strengthen the commonwealth.

The suspicions of the commonwealth leaders are inspired by political and economic considerations. Some fear adverse economic repercussions if they lose the Empire preferences that give them a privileged trading position in Europe. Others see the Commonwealth breaking up if trade ties are slackened and Britain becomes engaged in continental affairs.

Must Convince

Macmillan has said repeatedly Britain will not enter the common market without firm guarantees for the commonwealth. Now he must convince the premiers this pledge will be honored.

When he announced early in April that he was calling the conference, Macmillan hoped he would have by now the general outline of an agreement with the six common market countries—France, Germany, Italy, Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg—on the terms for British entry.

He wanted to present this agreement to the premiers for their approval before submitting it to his own parliament in October. This would have permitted him to have the merger settled well in advance of 1964 when he must call new general elections in Britain.

The timetable came unstuck mainly because the British negotiators in Brussels could not get the common market countries to agree to

large. The bulk of her important wheat exports are of a special hard type which Europe needs but cannot grow. Canada will, however, almost certainly lost a good market in Britain for manufactured goods.

Some African members also are hostile to the common market idea even though they might benefit from it financially. The six have offered the African commonwealth countries the same free access for tropical products as the former French colonies enjoy.

India and Pakistan, on the

other hand, fear for the future of their young and growing industries if Britain enters the market.

is Fearful
Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, like Menzies one of the real commonwealth veterans, is reported to be fearful the commonwealth ties would be seriously weakened if its economic links are loosened.

The newer countries in the commonwealth, such as Cyprus and the West Indies islands, Trinidad and Jamaica,

are not expected to make any major objections to British common market policy.

All the premiers, however, are expected to be drawn into searching discussion on possible alternatives to the common market should the British bid for membership fail. This will strike right at the heart of the problem. In Britain the people in favor of entering the common market argue that the whole pattern of world trade is changing and that Britain cannot afford to be left out of the com-

mon market grouping because the commonwealth offers no alternative.

The anti-common market faction, on the other hand, claims that, taken over a 101 year period, trade with the commonwealth has shown a definite increase and that, given some stimulus, it could be expanded.

Downward Scale
The pro-common market group reply that this may be so but commonwealth trade hit a peak in the mid 1950's and now is on the downward

scale again.

Trade experts give various reasons for the decline. The commonwealth countries have been trying to diversify their trade outlets and open new markets in view of the possible loss of the privileged British market. The commonwealth countries also have been developing their own industries and, in some instances, putting up protective tariffs against manufactured goods from Britain.

Several, too, have had balance of payments crises which

have forced them to cut back on imports.

Whether the commonwealth premiers can come up with some new plan that will permit Macmillan to think in terms of a future in which Britain does not merge with Europe is one of the unknown factors of the conference. What seems certain is that Macmillan will do all in his power to convince his fellow delegates that the interests of Britain and the commonwealth will best be served by British entry.



MEETS LEADERS - Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, above, took on one of the great challenges of his long career this week. Starting last Monday, he is meeting Empire leaders in an attempt to convince them that Britain's negotiations for entry into the European Common Market are not endangering the whole commonwealth idea.

(UPI)

ered for their 11th meeting since the second world war.

Attending the conference are representatives from the independent commonwealth nations of Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Ghana, Malaya, Nigeria, Cyprus, Sierra Leone, Tanganyika, Jamaica and Trinidad. The federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland have associate status at the talks and several colonies sent observer-delegates because their interests are especially affected by the common market project.

U. S. Bystander

In the wings as interested bystander is the United States, which has a deep interest in the outcome of Britain's common market plans. It is no secret President Kennedy wants Britain in.

The United States would like to see Britain in the market where it could use its influence to ensure that the European group keeps to outward-looking trade policies while remaining politically closely linked with Washington. The United States believes Britain would act as a brake on these Europeans—France's President Charles de Gaulle, for one—who sees the old continent as a third force in world politics.

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