

2. IRELAND (EIRE)

Mr Costello, Prime Minister of Eire, took advantage of a visit he made to Canada in September, 1948, to announce that his Government intended to revoke the Executive Authority (External Relations) Act, 1936. Soon after Mr Costello's return to his country the Republic of Ireland Bill was introduced in the Dail with this object in view. The question as to Eire's future relations with the British Commonwealth of Nations immediately arose, since the External Relations Act constituted the only remaining link—and a tenuous one at that—of Eire with the Crown.

Informal discussions on the implications of the new Bill were held in London at the time of the meeting of Prime Ministers in October, 1948. Irish Ministers and representatives of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand took part in these talks, which were later continued in Paris while the Third General Assembly of the United Nations was in session. All the Commonwealth Ministers concerned were ready to recognize the desire of the Irish Ministers that the Republic of Ireland should no longer be regarded as a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations, and the discussions revolved round the issues of the Republic's future relations with members of the Commonwealth. The final decisions reached became the subject of separate statements in each of the Parliaments of the members of the Commonwealth. The New Zealand position was set out by the Right Hon. the Acting Minister of External Affairs at Wellington on 27 November, 1948 :—

During the recent meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers in London, opportunity was taken for preliminary discussions with Irish Ministers, at which our Prime Minister attended, to explore the consequences which would flow from the decision by the Government of Ireland to repeal the Eire Executive Authority (External Relations) Act, 1936. This measure authorized His Majesty the King to act on behalf of Ireland in certain matters within the field of external affairs as and when advised by the Irish Executive Council to do so. This Act will be repealed by a Bill which has been introduced to the Dail entitled the Republic of Ireland Bill. The position that will obtain following the enactment of the Republic of Ireland Bill was further considered at a meeting at Paris on 16 November, 1948, attended by representatives of the Government of Ireland and by the Lord Chancellor, Viscount Jowitt, and the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, Mr Philip Noel-Baker, on behalf of the Government of the United Kingdom, Mr L. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, on behalf of the Government of Canada, Dr H. V. Evatt, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs, on behalf of Australia, and the Prime Minister, Right Hon. P. Fraser, on behalf of New Zealand.

The legal effect of the repeal Bill is clear and Ireland will, when it becomes law, cease to be a member of the Commonwealth, though New Zealand will not regard Ireland as a foreign country. It will be