

UNITED NATIONS

TEMPORARY COMMISSION ON KOREA—ACTION OF
CANADIAN DELEGATE

On the orders of the day:

Mr. GORDON GRAYDON (Peel): May I direct a question to the government based upon a news item of today which has assumed considerable prominence in the press. It appears that the Canadian representative on the temporary commission on Korea walked out of the assembly. I should like to have the Secretary of State for External Affairs clarify the situation so that we shall understand what are the underlying reasons which prompted that action by Canada's representative on this commission.

Right Hon. L. S. ST. LAURENT (Secretary of State for External Affairs): I got the notice from the hon. member for Peel and also a notice from the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggart about their desire to have information in respect to that dispatch, and I am glad to be able to supply to the house this information. The situation in regard to the matter is as follows.

The united nations temporary commission on Korea, of which Canada is one of the nine members, decided in February last to consult the interim committee of the general assembly when it met at Lake Success on February 19 as to whether the commission, under the terms of the general assembly resolution of November 14, 1947, and in the light of developments in the situation with respect to Korea since that date, could or should assist in implementing the program for the holding of free elections and the establishment of a Korean government in that part of Korea which was occupied by the armed forces of the United States of America. That was the submission on which the commission desired to get the views of the interim assembly. The situation which made such consultation necessary was the refusal of the U.S.S.R., whose army occupied the northern part of Korea, to permit the commission to operate in, or indeed to enter, that area.

At the interim committee, the United States delegation introduced a resolution as an answer to the commission's inquiry, the operative part of which was as follows:

That in its (the interim committee's) view, it is incumbent upon the united nations temporary commission on Korea, under the terms of the general assembly resolution of November 14, 1947, and in the light of the developments in the situation with respect to Korea since that date, to implement the program as outlined in resolution 2 (of the general assembly) in such parts of Korea as are accessible to the commission.

The resolution referred to above is that of the general assembly, which empowered this commission on Korea and instructed it to observe elections in Korea and facilitate the establishment of a national government there.

The Canadian delegate to the interim committee opposed this United States resolution on the ground that the holding of elections in South Korea only could not be brought within the terms of reference of the commission as laid down by the general assembly. It would amount in fact to a partition of Korea. Our representative said in part:

I hope that nothing I have said will be interpreted as suggesting that my government are not anxious to see a free, united and democratic Korea brought into being at the earliest possible date. My government strongly supports that objective and feels that the policy of the U.S.S.R. in preventing its realization is to be condemned.

We do feel, however, that it would be unwise to seek to associate the UN with an effort to achieve this desirable objective, by asking its commission in Korea to do things that it has not, under its terms of reference, the power to do.

That, Mr. Chairman, is all I have to say at this time on this one subject, namely, the legal powers of the commission under the assembly resolutions setting it up. Our position is that the commission is not authorized under those resolutions to act in or for South Korea alone.

Before the vote on the United States resolution was taken, the Canadian representative said further:

If the resolution (the United States resolution) is voted upon, my delegation will have to vote against it. We do so on the understanding that it is, in any event, merely advice to the commission.

It was not framed as an order to the commission, but just as the opinion of the interim committee. I continue:

If the commission should accept that advice, and that is for the commission to determine, a new and serious situation would be created which would have to be taken into consideration by the governments who are members on the commission, and who feel that the advice from this committee is unwise and unconstitutional.

The United States resolution was approved by the interim committee. It appears that, on receipt of this information, the acting chairman of the commission in Seoul (the chairman had not yet returned to Korea from Lake Success) informed the United States commanding general in South Korea, in the name of the commission that it would accept the advice of the interim committee. An announcement regarding the date for elections was then made. Our representative on the commission, Doctor Patterson, was not consulted in regard to this matter. There was no