

any event, the government would not accept a commitment beyond two years, although some other formula for opting out on shorter notice might be acceptable.

We have also said that we assumed that the necessary logistic support for the new commission would be available from the outset to make its operation substantive and effective or even possible. The government has also urged that unrealistic demands should not be placed upon the new commission in the initial stages particularly, and that no unrealistic expectations should be vested in it. For example, the commission should not be expected to begin functioning in any part of Viet Nam before a ceasefire has been established locally by the belligerents themselves.

In respect of the international conference, it has been our view that it should be free to establish its own relationship with the commission or indeed with other provisions of the agreement or its protocols. The government has also taken the view that participants in the new commission should pay the salary and allowances for their own personnel but should not otherwise be expected to contribute to the general overhead and expenses of the organization. This was an idea originally put forward, that the members of the commission should also pay part of the infrastructure. We took the strongest exception to it.

Should Canada decide to participate, it would signify its acceptance by a formal unilateral communication to the parties. At the same time, the government would also communicate any reservations it may have in respect of the documents embodying the settlement or in respect of the commission or Canada's participation in it.

When all the texts are available, the government will examine them in the light of these criteria, conditions and viewpoints and make its own determination on the viability of the operation and on the existence of a suitable role for Canada. The government is conscious of the fact that there are several possible forms of response open to it between a simple refusal to take part at all to a full and unconditional involvement. The government's assessment of the relevant texts will also take into account the importance of contributing to a scaling-down of hostilities in Viet Nam and to the disengagement of American forces and the return of their prisoners of war. It is conceivable that the result of this examination might suggest a participation limited to certain aspects of the agreement or a participation for a limited period of time rather than an outright refusal or an unqualified undertaking to serve. If so, the parties concerned will be so advised, and if they found this acceptable Canada could take part on a limited basis.

Also drawing on our experience, we are conscious of the dangers of allowing ourselves to be frustrated as a member of the new international organization through the possible application of a rule of unanimity. One way in which this risk could be minimized would be by regarding the new body not as a diplomatic conference held under the normal rules of confidentiality but as an international forum where the proceedings are normally open to the public. Consequently, we would not regard the new commission's proceedings as confidential or privileged in any way unless there was in any particular instance a unanimous decision of all the members to the contrary. We

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would, instead, consider ourselves free to publicize the proceedings in any way we saw fit to ensure that our view of events and, if necessary, the difference between our view and that of others were publicly available.

In putting forward our conditions it was, of course, not our desire or intention to raise unnecessary difficulties or to seek any special position for ourselves. The fact is that Canada is in an excellent position to judge, from its own experience, what is necessary to a successful operation in international supervision, whether or not we become members of the proposed commission. Some of Canada's experience has been positive. Some of it, notably in Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia where for 18 years we have tried to make international supervision work, has been profoundly disappointing. From that disappointment we have learned a good deal, and it is the light of what we have learned there that we have arrived at the position I have just described which we believe essential to the success of the operation in which we may be invited to participate.

Because of the possibility that we will be invited to accept a new supervisory role in Viet Nam and because of our long involvement in the Viet Nam problem, Canada, apart from the fact that it shares the interest of the whole world in the settlement of the Viet Nam war, has a particular interest in current developments there and in the negotiations which we all hope will bring an end to the conflict. This House embodies that interest, and I think it would be fitting that the House make known its view of the situation. For that reason we have proposed the motion which appears on the order paper. It is in terms which I believe deserve the support of all sides of the House. I conclude by saying, Mr. Speaker, that it is directed to all the parties in the Viet Nam conflict.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Wagner (Saint-Hyacinthe): Mr. Speaker, you can well imagine that it is not without genuine emotion that, as the representative of the people of Saint-Hyacinthe, I rise for the first time in this House, in the company of such distinguished colleagues and facing colleagues no less distinguished. Mr. Speaker, that emotion is all the greater because of the profound importance of the resolution we are concerned with, in regard to which I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) and of all members of our caucus.

I must say, Mr. Speaker, that I should have much preferred, and I know my colleagues would have much preferred, that our first speech in this House should deal immediately with urgent problems, the economic problems that are besetting the people of Canada because we are most anxious to deal as soon as possible with unemployment, cost of living, old age pensions. We were elected to alleviate the anxiety of the Canadian people. Mentioning this anxiety may make our friends across the room laugh, but it certainly does not make the people laugh.

Mr. Speaker, despite our national problems, we are not indifferent to what is taking place elsewhere. We have no right to be. We identify with all our fellow humans, those who are suffering and we must remember that. Therefore,