

need to say why. If an application is made by the chairman to concur in a report of the committee which so suggests, we will deal with it at that time.

**Mr. Speaker:** I appreciate the point being made by the hon. member for Peace River. The motion is not before the House. The President of the Privy Council sought unanimous consent of the House to put the motion. There does not appear to be unanimity on the motion. I assume it is not being put.

### EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

#### STATEMENT BY MINISTER ON VISIT TO MIDDLE EAST

**Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a brief report upon my visit to the Middle East which took place last week.

Canada has been closely concerned in Middle Eastern affairs since we participated in the activities of the United Nations Special Commission on Palestine, which drew up the Palestine partition plan of 1947. We voted for the United Nations resolution setting up the State of Israel in 1948. Recognition of the right of the State of Israel to exist remains an essential feature of our Middle Eastern policy. At the same time, we try to maintain an objective approach to the current problems of the area. Our essential objective is that all states there should be enabled to live in peace and security, free from threats of war or territorial encroachment.

For two decades, Canada has had military personnel in United Nations peacekeeping operations in the area. Canada is also the third largest contributor to the United Nations agency working for the relief of the Arab refugees.

Our Middle Eastern policy has largely found expression through the United Nations in New York. It was there that we took part in the steps which led to the birth of the State of Israel; it was there that the United Nations Emergency Force was established. More recently, as a member of the Security Council, it was there that we took part in drafting Resolution 242 of November 1967, the resolution that we feel offers the best available framework for progress toward peace in the area.

My visits were a reflection of our long involvement in the affairs of the Middle East, in response to invitations from the foreign ministers of Iran, Israel and the United Arab Republic, and in return for visits paid to

#### *Statement by Minister on Middle East*

Canada by the Shah of Iran, the President, the late Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Israel, and the Foreign Minister of the United Arab Republic. More particularly, I wished to learn at first hand the attitudes and policies of the governments concerned with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

I return from my visit both saddened and discouraged. Prime Minister Meir and President Nasser both told me that they seek a peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is very hard to see how useful negotiations can begin when the preoccupations of the parties are in direct confrontation. Israel is preoccupied with the security of her boundaries and her insistence upon direct negotiations with her neighbours. The United Arab Republic is preoccupied with the withdrawal of Israel to its pre-1967 boundaries and the fate of the Arab refugees. I can see no immediate resolution of this confrontation.

When I went to the Middle East I had no solution to offer and no proposals to make; I went to inform myself on the situation as seen, first, by Iran, a nation which does not take sides, and by the two main protagonists. In every country visited we were received with great courtesy by the head of state, the principal minister and the foreign minister. In each country the heads of state and their ministers devoted many hours to concentrated conversations. The views I expressed in outlining Canadian policy were given thoughtful consideration and the questions I asked answered fully and forthrightly. Wherever I went I found a manifest wish to have Canada understand the positions taken. This reminds us of Canada's special standing as a peace-seeking and peacemaking nation and is evidence, perhaps, of the need for understanding on the part of the nations in conflict.

My first visit was to Iran, where I saw a nation preoccupied with the advancement of its economy and the improvement of the conditions of life of its people. Its geographical location requires Iran to be intimately involved in the problems of the Middle East. I found a nation some 6,000 miles from Canada, in the heart of the Middle East, pursuing a Middle Eastern policy closely parallel to our own. In my subsequent visits I found my discussions in Tehran most useful both for the information I drew from them and for the political attitudes expressed.

In Israel I was moved, as anyone must be, by the sense of pride in nationhood that characterizes that country, and deeply impressed by what has been achieved in