

*External Affairs*

request for reinforcements which was made some weeks ago, because it is a matter of interest to the house.

The first mention of a reconnaissance squadron for UNEF was on December 4 when our ambassador in Cairo reported that General Burns was sending a message to the secretary general making proposals relating to the Canadian contribution to UNEF. We were told then only that General Burns would find it desirable to have as a combined unit an additional armoured reconnaissance unit or squadron of company size of about 200 men.

Shortly afterwards our permanent mission in New York reported that a representative of the secretary general had informed them that General Burns had urged that a request for a reconnaissance unit from Canada be pursued, that the reconnaissance squadron was urgently needed to supplement the two mechanized companies from Yugoslavia and would be deployed in Sinai. In the second week of December the Canadian permanent mission in New York received a letter from the United Nations formally requesting this additional contribution of the reconnaissance unit to UNEF.

There have been a great many reports of Egyptian objections to the arrival of these Canadian reinforcements. The reports and rumours of these objections will, I feel confident, prove entirely unfounded. I have every hope based on the assurances we have received as recently as the last 24 hours that the Canadian reinforcements will join UNEF in Egypt for duty in the normal way, as indeed I indicated would be the case, I think on March 7, in this house. No interference in this move by any government could be accepted by us as valid and if any attempt to so interfere were successful this would have serious results so far as any further Canadian participation in UNEF is concerned, and therefore it would have serious results for UNEF as a whole. There should be no doubt about this in anyone's mind, but it is a contingency which as I have said I have every reason to believe will not arise based on assurances which have been received.

In taking this position, which I think is a reasonable one, we are concerned about the whole future not only of this particular force but of the United Nations itself as an agency to facilitate and increase international peace and security. I am sure all of us have nothing but good will for the Egyptian people; we are not participating in any manoeuvres of any kind against them; we are not influenced by anything but a desire to make the United Nations and its agency the United Nations emergency force effective for achieving the objectives of the assembly, the objectives of securing and supervising a cease fire and

[Mr. Pearson.]

facilitating the establishment of peaceful conditions. In the policy we have been following at the United Nations in these matters our motives are above reproach. Any imputation to the contrary is false and unfair. UNEF is no cloak and will be no cloak for the plans or ambitions of any state or states, and there is no foundation whatever for any suspicions from any source that anyone wishes to use it in that way.

Mr. Speaker, questions have also been asked about the progress of the clearance of the Suez canal and I should therefore say something about that. While our attention has been concentrated for several weeks past on efforts to arrange for completion of the withdrawal of Israeli forces and on UNEF this other major enterprise, the clearing of the Suez canal, has been going forward. The clearing of the Suez canal under United Nations supervision has been proceeding in accordance with the most optimistic time estimates of the technical officers responsible for its progress. We do not know yet exactly when the resumption of a full flow of traffic will be possible but we are informed that if the present rate of progress is maintained a channel capable of taking ships of more than 25 feet draught will be opened very shortly, in a matter of days. We are told also that the clearing of marginal obstacles and restoration of full navigational facilities has made much better progress than had been originally scheduled, in spite of political difficulties which have understandably attracted so much attention.

As the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) told the house last Monday, Canada has acquired a special interest in the steps being taken to reopen the canal by virtue of the advance—not the gift but the advance on good 'security'—that the government has made toward the financing of the United Nations clearing operations.

Canada, of course, is not a large user of the canal but we are naturally anxious, as a trading nation, for the earliest possible resumption of the Suez traffic which is so vital to the economies of the many user states. Our participation in the advances made to the United Nations and the work that this interim financing has made possible was also of particular assistance to the United Kingdom and France at that time, and that was the main reason why we participated in that interim financing; and that is a reason which presumably should commend itself to hon. members opposite.

As hon. members know, certain proposals for provisional operating arrangements for the canal pending the working out of a permanent regime have been agreed upon