

External Affairs

a highly moral plane, according to sound moral principles, is the best way to try to achieve our aim.

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, when this debate began I did not think it would be desirable, or that I would want, to participate in the discussion, particularly because we have had from the Secretary of State for External Affairs a review of this matter which has been not only comprehensive but I am sure has impressed most hon. members as few of his statements on international affairs have during the past two or three years.

Perhaps no better tribute to the objectivity of what he said this morning could be found than that paid by the hon. gentleman who has just taken his seat. If anyone wanted a stamp of approval of a policy or of a statement I am sure few in this house could have done it as well as it has just been done by the hon. member for Peace River, particularly in view of the fact that in the past he has not always shared the view of this government, or of the Secretary of State for External Affairs, in matters of foreign policy. Certainly his views on the United Nations on some occasions in the past have not harmonized with those of us sitting to your right, Mr. Speaker. Therefore I attach great importance to what the hon. gentleman said when he observed that after listening to the Secretary of State for External Affairs he could not in all conscience find any cause to disagree with the general basis of the policy which the Secretary of State for External Affairs enunciated so well today.

I agree with the hon. member for Peace River, too, that in a matter of such delicacy, with so much depending upon the kind of solutions reached, having in mind the complexities of the issues involved, we ought to be more concerned about making constructive contributions than making debating points or, as the result of our debating efforts, seeking to gain political advantage. This is not the kind of question on which political motivations should influence the course of any hon. member.

I wonder whether the Leader of the Opposition will pardon me for saying that although I carefully followed his speech I formed the impression—and I may be wrong—that it was not so much that he and the Secretary of State for External Affairs were in fundamental disagreement as that he was seeking perhaps to take political advantage of a situation which I do not think, in the interests of a proper solution, lends itself to that kind of an attempt.

He made two points. He said the strait of Aqaba and the Suez canal should be open to every nation. He spoke about that objective with great emphasis and at great length; and then he also said that the United Nations should administer the Gaza strip. He could not have followed carefully the speech of the Secretary of State for External Affairs when he sought to give the impression that these were objectives to which we should address ourselves, implying that because he was addressing himself to these two objectives the government, and in particular the Secretary of State for External Affairs, had completely overlooked them. No one in the United Nations, no individual and no country, has more vigorously pursued those objectives in the general assembly than has the Secretary of State for External Affairs. That has been the basis of all his activities and of the policies of the government almost since the beginning of the situation that provokes this particular debate.

He asks, as does the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra what are we doing to see that the Suez canal is kept open; what are we doing to see that United Nations administrative processes and power are maintained in the Gaza strip? The hon. member for Peace River has given very effective answers to these rhetorical questions.

Mr. Hodgson: Tell the truth.

Mr. Green: Rhetorical questions?

Mr. Martin: To these rhetorical questions. To suggest that Canada, merely by a debate in this house or by a speech in this house, could cause the freedom of the Suez canal to be guaranteed is, of course, not to be taken too seriously. During the past several days the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra several times has asked the Prime Minister what the government is doing to keep open the Suez canal—

Mr. Green: No, I did not ask it in that way.

Mr. Martin:—thus leaving the impression, because no one could give a definitive answer to that question in terms of achievement, that we were doing nothing. When the secretary general of the United Nations asked a number of countries to provide money to make it possible to free the Suez canal from obstructions, we were among the first nations to join in acknowledging the request of the secretary general. One cannot easily forget the debate in this house when the Minister of Finance presented some estimates, including \$1 million for the clearance of the canal. He was subjected to all sorts of interrogations. Whether or not they were meant to be obstructive, they certainly gave indication of a concern as to whether or not this