

*External Affairs*

go on strike into pits with scorpions? That has been documented by the international labour office. His Majesty may talk of spiritual values, yet obviously he has some concern, too, for material values; for while he spends \$23 million a year in the royal household on Cadillacs, concubines and other chattels, some \$10 million a year is all that is devoted to the health, the education and the welfare of the people of Saudi Arabia. His Majesty may stand on moral principles. I am sure he stands very firmly on them because in his country an attractive young female slave can be purchased for the sum of \$500. Since \$500 is beyond the dreams of avarice to the vast majority of his people, I suppose he is keeping them out of temptation by keeping them impoverished. He speaks about the freedom and dignity of human beings. He stands on the freedom and dignity of human beings; he stands very heavily, for 40 per cent of his people have syphilis and 70 per cent have trachoma, and most of them will die before they reach the age of 33 years.

Last year the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) said that on occasion he was scandalized by the attitude of the large powers. I hope he feels scandalized by this, as do we. That is one of the reasons why we are opposed to this pandering to Arab monarchs and we should be wise indeed not to be deluded by the propaganda of the oil companies which keep those monarchs in office. But despite the oil companies, despite the Arab nations, despite the hatred which exists there, Israel, as I said before, has got the right to live and live without the steady threat of strangulation being held against her; and yet, for several years the country was forbidden, in defiance, I am certain, of international law, to use the gulf of Aqaba.

Perhaps the Egyptians themselves have some doubts about the legal position, but at one time they had no doubts. As a matter of fact, seven years ago, in January, 1950, the Egyptian government reaffirmed its recognition of the straits of Tiran. Let me quote from the Egyptian government submission:

Exactly seven years ago, on the 28th January, 1950, the Egyptian government reaffirmed its recognition of the straits of Tiran as an international waterway.

In a note to the American ambassador in Cairo the Egyptian foreign minister declared that the occupation of Tiran and Sanafir, the two islands guarding the entry into the gulf of Aqaba, "being in no sense intended to interfere in any way whatever with innocent traffic through the stretch of sea separating these two islands from the Sinai coast of Egypt, it goes without saying that this passage, the only practicable one, will remain free, as in the past; which is in conformity with international practice and the recognized principles of international law".

Therefore, if this was good law seven years ago, possibly it is good law today, and I hope very much that the whole matter will be taken before the international court of justice and there decided, and that when the decision of the court is made—and I am sure it will be in conformity with this earlier Egyptian statement—that right of access to this waterway is guaranteed to all.

The gulf of Aqaba, of course, is vitally important to Israel. At the head of the gulf, at Eilat, a new city is being built. The Israeli have built it because they are finding that their best customers are going to be probably in Asia, and rather than load ships in Haifa and send them around the cape of Good Hope, which puts them competitively into a very bad position, they want to load those ships at Eilat and send them down through the Indian ocean.

I was there myself a year and a half ago, and I found it very difficult to understand why people want to live there except out of a great sense of devotion.

The temperature was 130 and the humidity was about 15; it was utterly impossible to perspire. The dehydration was so great that the average per capita consumption of liquid in that area was some 16 pints a day.

We had our meals with the residents there. It was significant that even at meal-time the men sat with rifles between their knees ready for any attack, because Israel only extends for about eight miles in that area; there is Egypt, then Israel, then a strip of Jordan and then of course Saudi Arabia. Within a few years I think Israel intends to have approximately 10,000 people in this new city of Eilat. But Eilat poses a threat to the Egyptian economy. Obviously if it becomes the sort of port the Israeli visualize, then it means that not so many tolls from ships going through the Suez canal will be collected. It is the hope of Israel that a 32-inch pipe line can be built from Eilat to Haifa, which in the course of a year will transport some 25 million tons of oil which will be carried for much less than the tolls that are charged for similar amounts of oil going through the Suez canal. Therefore the Egyptians can see a threat to their own welfare here.

That is still another reason, an economic reason for trying once more to impose a blockade on this most important port, which as I say is vital to the welfare and the future of Israel. If a blockade is once more imposed, what is the situation? If the United Nations accepts it, then what the United Nations is doing in effect is acceding to another act of belligerence; and if it is accepted Israel is going to fight—we may