

*Viet Nam*

ences between the humanitarian feelings now being shown for the sake of peace whereas, at the same time, for vulgar economic purposes, we are participating in a war in a certain way by supplying weapons and accepting all kinds of sub-contracts from firms which only profit from the war.

Mr. Speaker, there should be no two ways in such circumstances. It is always unfortunate to realize that millions of human lives are being sacrificed so that industry might continue its production. If economic matters have precedence over true humanitarian problems, I wonder whether the North Vietnamese, because of our closeness to the United States, are a little fearful of us. It must be a well known fact in that part of the world, as everywhere else, that Canada and the United States are often considered as one entity, especially in economic matters. Consequently, I wonder to what extent Canadian participation could be considered as being truly neutral. Nevertheless, I believe we could be playing a peaceful role in Viet Nam, but not necessarily in the manner we are doing it now.

On the other hand, I would say on concluding my remarks that the best way for Canada to succeed in establishing peace in the world is still by leading the way. Our country can show the entire world that it is possible to establish genuine peace by insuring its own citizens true freedom and respect for human beings. If by implementing adequate legislation we prove that we can guarantee everyone a vital minimum income, we shall prove that these conditions are essential to peace. There will be wars as long as there will be misery and poverty next to wealth.

It would be highly desirable if the ceasefire in Viet Nam were to become a real treaty of peace. However, everyone doubts it for one rather expects that the war will go on, but I think that in the long run we should take advantage of this opportunity to think seriously and wonder whether our country could not do more to prove to the whole world that peace can exist, but only if one respects the freedom of everyone else. Now, the way to respect such freedom is to consider each human being as it must be considered, that is to assure everyone that he will live without any problems and that he will be able to develop himself in healthy freedom. Canada will then perform peaceful work.

Mr. Speaker, before we achieve all these things, I sincerely hope that our involvement in this peace effort in Viet Nam will be successful.

As a conclusion, I would like to stress that if our involvement happens to have no result, the government will have to decide then and there to withdraw its force from Viet Nam so that Canada will not have to pay the piper.

• (1720)

[English]

**Hon. James A. Richardson (Minister of National Defence):** Mr. Speaker, last Friday night I went to the barracks at Long Point, Montreal, to meet with our Canadian Forces personnel on the eve of their departure for Viet Nam. It seems to me it might be appropriate to begin my participation in the debate on the resolution before us if I were to repeat some of the thoughts I

[Mr. Matte.]

expressed on that occasion in an informal way to our troops.

I said, first, that I was honoured to be meeting with them as their Minister of Defence on the eve of their departure on a mission which I considered to be important to Canada and to the world. None of us know yet whether this mission will be successful, but one thing I do know is that it is important for all of us that we, as Canadians, should at least try to play a useful and effective role in maintaining peace in Southeast Asia.

When I was speaking to our men on the eve of their departure I said in my view it was characteristic of the Canadian way of life that they, as fighting men, as part of a military organization, should be leaving Canada, not to fight but, rather, in order to help prevent fighting. Some may consider it a paradox of our time that fighting men should not be leaving our country to fight. But there are many in this House and across this nation—and I am one of them—who believe it is a triumph of our times that Canadians in military formation should leave Canada not to fight but to prevent fighting.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Richardson:** I went on to say on Friday evening that it was the military capability, the military training and the military discipline which would enable our personnel to be effective as an observer force. In today's world it is not enough just to be idealistically opposed to war; it is essential to be trained and disciplined and equipped if we intend to aid the cause of peace.

I told our men I was personally confident that before they returned to Canada they would have added lustre to Canada's reputation as a country committed to peace. Under the leadership of the late Lester Pearson and under the leadership of the present Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) there is no country in the world which has enjoyed a better international reputation for the work it has done to ease tensions and bring understanding to the so-called "trouble spots" of the world—no country other than Canada.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Richardson:** In this respect we have probably not done nearly as well as we should, but we have managed so far to do better than anyone else. I also said last Friday evening that although our men were not being sent from Canada to fight, none of us underestimated the difficulties, and even the dangers, that they would face in Viet Nam: there will be difficulties of language, difficulties in connection with living conditions in a war-torn land. I believe no Canadian should underestimate the sacrifices that Canadian personnel have willingly accepted in this sense.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, as I spoke on a person to person basis with our Canadian contingent as they departed for Viet Nam, I told them about the government's concern, and my personal concern, for their safety in the event that hostilities might be resumed, or continued indefinitely. I told them, as I told the House on an earlier occasion, that we had made contingency plans to evacuate them from Viet Nam if such a course should become necessary. One