

Report by External Affairs Minister

compassionate understanding of the troubles of the world as well as by his great spirit of ecumenism which has done so much to bring the Christian churches closer together. He commended the efforts of Canada to bring about peace. He was well briefed in respect of our efforts, and particularly in respect of what we have been trying to do through the Viet Nam commission. I told him that the leadership which he and other religious leaders were continuing to give to international collaboration met with warm support and appreciation in Canada. I can only say that I have the strongest hope that my talks with the Pope, as with the other leaders, will be shown to have yielded productive results.

When we reach a consideration of the estimates of my department I will be anxious to go into greater detail in respect of some matters, particularly the Viet Nam situation and the nonproliferation agreement expectancy. Let me say that I have appreciated from time to time the visits to Ottawa of foreign ministers from many governments, and I particularly appreciated the discussions I had with Mr. Rapacki, Mr. Gromyko and Mr. Fanfani and the members of the ministries in which they serve.

I thank the government of Poland, the government of the Soviet union and the government of Italy for the way in which the Canadian representative was received in those countries. No matter what our ideological differences may be I am sure that if we have determination,—all of us in this parliament and in every parliament in the world—we can promote conditions which will lead to lasting peace. That was the purpose of my visit. While I did not at any time expect that I would return with great solutions, I feel as strongly as I possibly can that the further understanding of some of these problems and positions resulting from my visits will have constructive consequences and will I hope help in an improvement of the international problems facing the world at this very difficult time.

Hon. Gordon Churchill (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, under my self-imposed rule which limits me to five minutes, I cannot do justice to the speech of the hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs. As I listened to him I came to the conclusion that he was almost convincing himself. As an example of his attitude, I would suggest that he feels perhaps we can bring about peace in the world, and that is a fine objective.

[Mr. Martin (Essex East).]

Would it not have been wise when he visited Russia to have raised with the authorities there the problem brought to his attention on November 3 by the right hon. Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Ontario regarding the self-determination of captive countries. The minister on that occasion replied that he would think about this suggestion. The hon. member for Ontario suggested that the minister should speak his mind and ask the Soviet authorities to consider giving these people behind the iron curtain the right to self-determination.

The minister has not told us what he said in this regard or indicated what reaction may have been visible. He has told us of his instinctive feeling for the hundreds of thousands of people in Canada and Polish, Ukrainian and Russian descent, yet there is a gap in the information the minister has given us in this regard.

It is pleasant to have the minister back in the house again so that we can ask him questions and obtain answers in respect of these vitally important matters. We have been kept informed, almost twice daily, by the news media regarding the minister's trip overseas. I thought there were other international matters of greater importance, but we were kept informed of the minister's travels. I have wondered about the brashness of the minister in talking to the Polish and Soviet governments, as well as others, about the further proliferation of nuclear weapons at a time when Canada has not set an example to the world by getting rid of her nuclear weapons. This has been promised time and time again during the past three years.

There was a serious omission in this report in respect of the nuclear weapons situation in that China was not mentioned as a subject of discussion. This is particularly true in view of the Chinese advance in the production of nuclear weapons.

● (3:40 p.m.)

Mr. Martin (Essex East): We will discuss that on the estimates.

Mr. Churchill: The minister will be able to give us a fuller account in this respect when we reach the estimates. We will be able to ask him questions, daily perhaps, on the estimates. Although I would like to deal more fully with the statement the minister made today, and give him the compliments which I think he would like to receive, I will conclude my remarks at this time and make preparation for a full debate on some future occasion.