

Adjournment Debate

I wish to begin by saying that the publicity surrounding operation baby-lift both in Canada and in the United States has been most inappropriate and suggests an attempt on the part of some to look good in the midst of very bad times. Today there is a flood of articles by commentators, journalists and political leaders in various parts of the world questioning the efficacy of bringing out large numbers of orphans from Viet Nam and transplanting them in another culture as if this were the kind of response required by the situation. Mr. W. A. Wilson, a journalist in the Ottawa press gallery, has this to say today, that the process of moving babies in such huge numbers is "a do-gooder's ego-tripping carried to insanity". Then he goes on to say:

—no one has the right to pull children out of their own culture and leave them rootless. Everything about it is unattractive: the personal egotism, the white arrogance, the selfishness.

Then I notice that Mr. Charles Lynch in his column over the week end had this to say:

Communists may be cruel to their enemies, but in every Communist country I have visited, children are treated with tender loving care, impartially administered.

Then in today's *New York Times* Mr. Anthony Lewis said that it is an illusion if we think we can overcome the nightmare of Viet Nam and salve our own consciences by a procedure to bring out its babies.

The minister for overseas development in the British government, Judith Hart, had this to say:

One has to consider what is best for the children. In Southeast Asia there is an extended family system, she said. If such a child could go back to a village to be looked after by members of its family, that is obviously best for it.

I have recounted some of these opinions so as to suggest that the attempt to expiate the guilt that is felt in the western world will not be so easily routed. Here in Canada we cannot ever forget that we have been a silent but none the less partner in the destruction that has taken place in Viet Nam for so many years. I want to quote one or two sentences from a book by Charles Taylor entitled "Snow Job", which is one of the most complete analyses of the relationship of Canada to the Viet Nam war. He says:

Despite Ottawa's brave words about our Vietnam role, Canada was neither impartial nor objective. Whatever our initial intentions we soon became little more than American surrogates on both the ICC and the ICCS, carefully tending the interests of Washington and Saigon as well as dabbling in dubious intelligence work and selling the Americans part of the arms and ammunition with which they wrought such unparalleled destruction.

I just want to say tonight that I hope that the Canadian government will carry out the program announced by the external affairs minister, and that it will be administered in such a way, with the infusion of money and required personnel, that it will be seen by the world to be a truly humanitarian effort to respond to the chaos that is Viet Nam.

With regard to the adults I spoke about earlier today, I hope the adults of South Viet Nam who may want to emigrate under the classification of refugees will be permitted to do so. But what is to become of them? Certainly Canada should open its doors to the adult refugees of South Viet Nam; but here, as in the case of the babies, we should not consider it to be our total response just to have a refugee program.

[Mr. Roche.]

I doubt very much whether many adults will be permitted to leave Viet Nam. In any event I should like the Canadian government to put itself under the advice of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in respect to any program for adult refugees. I hope our Canadian program will be administered in such a way that the world will see it as an offer of truly humanitarian assistance to both sides to the conflict in Viet Nam. I trust we will move on, as the external affairs minister has said, to a new basis of international relations for Canada in which we will help to reorder the policies and priorities of nations around the world that are developing and that wish to participate in the economic and social systems to which they have the right. Otherwise, Mr. Speaker, I fear that we will see more cases like Viet Nam in the years ahead.

● (2210)

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, this is perhaps one of those more rare occasions during the late show, or in this House, when members on this side and on that side find themselves in so much agreement, except to the extent that the hon. member may have implied some misinterpretation in respect of what we are actually doing in this very tragic situation.

I find myself very much in agreement with some of the comments made about the movement of children. I would refer the hon. member to every statement I have made on this aspect which falls within my responsibility because it involves immigration. In respect of the movement of orphan children from Viet Nam I have tried my best to be very precise in pointing out that we are in fact limiting the movement of these children to those in respect of whom the adoptive process had begun or was completed, at least to the extent that the authority of the Vietnamese government was given, for exit and adoption and where required, with the knowledge of any relative that may be in Viet Nam associated with these children.

This movement has been limited also to those in respect of which the provincial procedures have been followed, since there is provincial jurisdiction in this matter of adoption, and the children who have been brought out to date, with one or two extraordinary exceptions, for reasons which I think are obvious in the drama and confusion of the situation, have all been in that adoptive stream, in some cases for many many months prior to this more recent emergency that has unfolded in Viet Nam. We have tended to hold to that provision.

We are not subscribing to the idea that we or any other country should charge into Viet Nam with aircraft to abduct or coerce children out of Viet Nam without the proper contact with and authority of the existing government, and, wherever families are involved, without their knowledge and concurrence. We are not doing that and in regard to the extraordinary suggestion in Mr. Wilson's column today in the *Ottawa Journal* to the effect that we as the Canadian government are subscribing to the kind of operation he described, when the facts are absolutely different, well I can only say it is not helpful in creating a clear picture of what is inevitably a confused situation under these very tragic circumstances in Viet Nam.