

Now, Mr. Speaker, we did not follow that particular line of policy in this matter, and I shall try to explain why. To do so it is, I think, relevant to give, as other speakers have given, some background which may help us to understand recent events. It is, for instance, important in order to keep things in perspective to understand the policy of the Egyptian government in recent months. That policy has been unfriendly to the western powers. It was arbitrary and was denounced in this house as arbitrary in the seizure of the Suez canal company. That policy has witnessed a gradual increase of Russian influence in Egypt and the Middle East, and it did culminate in the seizure of the canal. We recall that after weeks of effort and frustrations to bring about an international solution by international means no such solution was brought about.

It is quite obvious--it was quite obvious by the summer--that there was no meeting of minds between Washington and London and Paris in these matters. And of course; the fault was not by any means entirely on the side of London and Paris, and no one on this side of the house has ever tried to take a one-sided view of this situation. The vital importance of the Suez to western Europe is perhaps not appreciated in Washington, and it might have been better appreciated there if this situation could have been related by them to the Panama Canal.

Now, our own attitude in this matter was--and we expressed this attitude in the House of Commons and in a good many messages to the United Kingdom government during the summer--that we did not stand aloof and indifferent, and we did appreciate the importance of this development not only to western Europe but to Canada itself. Our attitude was that this question should be brought as quickly as possible to the United Nations and a solution attempted there; that at all costs there should be no division of opinion, no division of policy, between Washington and London and Paris on a matter of such vital importance, and that there should be no action taken by anybody which could not be justified under the United Nations charter; otherwise the country taking that action, no matter how friendly to us, would be hauled before the United Nations and charged by the country against which the action had been taken. That is something that has happened, and it is something we tried to talk over with our friends before it happened.

It will be recalled that eventually the matter was taken to the Security Council of the United Nations, and it will also be recalled that not long before the use of force by Israel against Egypt certain principles for a settlement of the Suez question had been agreed on at the Security Council. One of those principles which had been accepted by Egypt at that time, was that the canal should be insulated from the policies of any one nation, including Egypt. Therefore at that particular moment, through those conversations at the Security Council, and what is more important through conversations going on in the Secretary General's office, we had some hope that an international solution might be reached which might be satisfactory to all concerned.