

This brings me, Mr. Speaker, to some brief comments on the last regular session of the United Nations General Assembly, at which I had the honour to head the Canadian Delegation. As there are many important matters to be considered during today's debate, I shall confine myself to one or two items and impressions of special concern to Canada.

UN Stand-by Peace Force

Having just referred to UNEF, it is appropriate that I report at this point on the related question of a United Nations stand-by force. Hon. members may be aware that at the 13th Session of the General Assembly the Secretary-General presented a summary study of the operation of UNEF, out of which he drew a number of observations and principles for consideration as a guide to future United Nations action in preserving peace through its own instrumentalities. The Secretary-General's conclusions reflected the tenor of the discussions concerning a United Nations peace force at both the Special Emergency Session of the Assembly in August, 1958 and at the 13th regular session in September, 1958.

In these discussions attention shifted from the possibility previously considered of establishing a permanent stand-by force as such, or earmarking national units for service with such a force; rather it was directed toward, first, the desirability of developing arrangements and planning procedures which would enable the United Nations to meet swiftly a wide variety of possible situations and, second, the need for agreement on a set of basic principles to govern the operation of whatever United Nations instrumentality might be created. In supporting this approach, the need for flexibility in the planning of stand-by arrangements was particularly emphasized by the Canadian Delegation at both sessions.

In the course of the meetings of the External Affairs Committee last summer, I had occasion to review the history of attempts to establish an effective United Nations stand-by peace force. Opposition has been based on many grounds and the problems and difficulties have been legion. They relate primarily to the concern with which a number of countries regard the implications of such a force for their national sovereignty. Others have been reluctant to contemplate the financial burden which the support of a permanent force would entail. Still others have been dubious of the feasibility of creating a permanent force capable of meeting the various and unpredictable situations that could possibly arise. These are legitimate apprehensions and practical problems which may prove difficult to dispel and resolve completely.