

*Arab-Israeli Conflict*

As you may be aware, NDP Members, and MPs in general, take convention debates very seriously, since it is our conventions which determine our policies and which guide our caucus in Parliament. As you are also aware, there has been a strong tradition within the New Democratic Party, unlike other Parties, I would suggest, to debate in an informed and reflective way controversial international issues. Whether the subject matter is Poland, Central America, or nuclear disarmament, we believe that a national political Party has a moral obligation to address internationally important questions and not to back away from issues, even when they involve criticism of popular perceptions. This we have done over our history as a Party, and we have been willing to pay the political price which doing so has sometimes cost us.

The importance of international issues was reinforced at a recent convention with the decision to establish a permanent international affairs committee of the Party whose priority for the past year, in preparing for this year's convention, is the development and expansion of our policy on the Middle East. As part of this process, draft background paper and policy resolution are now being prepared for circulation within the Party prior to the convention, with the intention of placing these before the convention. As well, it is anticipated that there will be an exceptional number of resolutions on the Middle East from other elements of the Party, including constituency associations.

Because the draft material from our committee is not yet complete, and because I am not myself on the committee, it is difficult for me today to deal in specifics about much of what it might contain. This, of course, is not only because the work is incomplete but also because Party policy, in the end, must be determined by convention. Keeping these points in mind, however, I will try to give some indication, in broad and incomplete strokes, of the kind of issues and concerns which I think the New Democrats will be addressing and some of the principles and perceptions which will likely guide our deliberations.

The NDP will certainly remain firmly committed to our long-standing support for the people of Israel and the right of Israel to exist, and to exist in secure borders. The NDP also remains firmly committed to our call for a permanent, just, negotiated peace in the Middle East, especially that part of the Middle East which includes Israel. The NDP will continue its opposition to both terrorism and to the use of military force as a means of solving political problems. Consistent with our belief in the political integrity of all States, we will repeat our call for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Lebanon. We also believe that Canada has an important contribution to make to Middle East affairs because of this country's past role in diplomacy and peacekeeping, and because of the immediate interest of Canadians in peace.

Finally, it is long overdue for Israel's other Arab neighbours to do as Egypt has rightly done and officially recognize and accept Israel's right to exist. It is clear that they must do explicitly, what they now seem to do implicitly, and that is, recognize Israel, and this must include explicit PLO recognition of Israel's right to exist. The relationship between the

Palestinian people and Israel, obviously, is basic to any comprehensive settlement in the Middle East, and it must be realized by everyone that we are dealing here with more than a question of refugees. We are dealing with the question of the need for a homeland of a long dispersed and suffering people, the Palestinians.

There must be recognition of the legitimate rights and aspirations both of Israel and of the Palestinian people. Ultimately, Israel must be prepared to negotiate with any representatives of the Palestinian people who publicly recognize Israel's right to exist within secure borders. And also, ultimately, the Arab community as a whole must begin to see the Palestinians less as a political football in their grudge match with Israel, and more as a people whose collective and individual needs transcend the politics of any given situation.

As for the NDP, we will continue to recognize and defend the right of Israel to exist and to be secure. We will continue to call for dialogue and negotiations between the Parties. We will continue to condemn both terror and the use of military force as a means of resolving political issues. We will certainly reaffirm our belief in the important role that Canada can play in helping the parties resolve the conflict. And we will continue our tradition of not letting friendship stand in the way of honest and, if need be, vigorous criticism of what our friends sometimes do, whether it be the United States, Israel, Egypt or whoever it happens to be, for it is the constructive criticism which friendly peoples can provide to each other that is one of the mainstays of creative international dialogue.

In this respect I would like to bring up at least two concerns which I and my colleagues have with Israeli foreign policy. The first concern is Israel's relationship with South Africa. We are deeply offended by the collaboration of Israel with one of the world's most racist regimes. The technological, military and commercial links which Israel has with South Africa should be seen by Israelis not as an advantage to Israel, but as a powerful disincentive for Canadians and others to believe that in foreign policy Israel can lay claim to any moral superiority. If international opinion be as important to Israel as I think it should be, then let these links be broken. I believe that Israel's greatest weapon is its integrity. This is true of all nations, but it is an insight which I believe Israel has traditionally been guided by and must now re-emphasize.

A second concern is the recent reports of Israeli military advisers in Honduras, and the visit of Defence Minister Sharon. This, to me, is a profoundly disturbing report, and any aid which the Israeli Government is giving to American efforts to support regimes which terrorize its citizens in that region should be stopped immediately if Israel wants to have any credibility left with those who see American policy in Central America as one gigantic moral and political mistake. And there are many such people, as we all know. This is as disturbing, Mr. Speaker, to those who value the integrity of Israel, as was the bombing of Beirut. A nation whose roots, Mr. Speaker, are in the holocaust, whether it likes it or not, is expected to have higher than average standards.