

Speech by President of the Privy Council

the motion which has been presented but would be a statement endorsing the position which the President of the Privy Council has taken. In our opinion this would express the view of the great majority of the Canadian people.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I want to repeat to hon. members that in my view they are not assisting the house too much at the moment by expressing views either for or against the admissibility of the motion. There is before the house a question of procedure which involves whether there is an opportunity to debate this question within a reasonable time. That is what the Chair has to decide. To my mind the solution to the problem is easy enough, but as I say I will certainly hear further representations or submissions on the point if hon. members desire to make them.

• (11:30 a.m.)

Hon. Robert Winters (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Prime Minister, who is in Montreal, and of the Secretary of State for External Affairs, who has been detained with the president of Czechoslovakia who is at present visiting Canada and whom I had the honour of seeing earlier this morning, may I say this. I discussed this important matter with the Prime Minister, and the Secretary of State for External Affairs, as well as the President of the Privy Council. The President of the Privy Council asserted again that what he had said were his own views.

Mr. Diefenbaker: But a minister cannot do that.

Mr. Winters: The Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for External Affairs told me that I was free to tell parliament—and I am sure parliament understands this—that the government's position has been clearly set out by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for External Affairs, and remains unaltered.

This question ought not to be debated at this time, I submit, under those rules for debate referred to by the right hon. Leader of the Opposition. Most hon. members, I think, would also regard it as inopportune to debate the matter when the Secretary of State for External Affairs and spokesmen for the government on this question of policy cannot be here. On those grounds I submit that this would not be an opportune time to debate this subject.

[Mr Douglas.]

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, I believe the time has come for parliament to take a stand on the war in Viet Nam and I suggest the motion moved by the right hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) is one which has great value, because it would permit members of parliament to make their views known clearly on what is now going on in Viet Nam.

And when the Leader of the Opposition, says for instance—

[English]

—namely the crisis in international confidence brought about by the speech of the President of the Privy Council on Saturday last in Toronto, which constitutes a public declaration of policy of the gravest national and international significance in that it gives the greatest of encouragement to the communist world—

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, that is the most important point we have to debate, for we often hear virulent attacks against the Americans. The President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada (Mr. Gordon) precisely repeated those charges last Saturday, but we do not hear anything, for instance, about the communist involvement in that war.

[English]

—and reveals deep enmity toward the policy of the United States administration with regard to the war in Viet Nam, and will result in further and accelerated deterioration in Canada's relations with the U.S.A.; and furthermore, is a travesty on this house which has been denied the enunciation of policy of the government which was made in the said speech outside of this house while parliament is sitting.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, our group also endorses this motion of the opposition to the effect that we should, at the earliest possible time this very day if possible, discuss this most important question, because Canada should take a stand, and the whole world should know where Canada now stands in the continuing war in Viet Nam.

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I believe this discussion is truly urgent and that such a debate would surely bring some enlightenment.

[English]

Hon. Gordon Churchill (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, it is unusual to set aside the order of business in this house to discuss a matter of urgent public importance. Occasionally that does happen, and obviously