

*Inquiries of the Ministry*

**An hon. Member:** Yes or no?

[Text]

**Mr. Pearson:** If my hon. friend will read the exchange of correspondence and my statement this afternoon, they state the facts.

[Translation]

**Mr. Grégoire:** Mr. Speaker—

[Text]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. If the hon. member wishes to lay a charge he has the privilege of doing so.

### EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

#### VIET NAM—SUGGESTED APPROACH TO GENEVA CONFERENCE

On the orders of the day:

**Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam):** Mr. Speaker, I want to direct a question to the Prime Minister. In view of the serious situation in North and South Viet Nam and the danger that the events of the past few weeks may escalate into a major war, I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether the Canadian government would consider approaching the co-chairman of the Geneva conference of 1954, Great Britain and the Soviet union, with a view to reconvening the nations who attended that conference, along with the United States, in an attempt to work out some negotiated settlement in that area?

**Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, the position which the government has taken in this matter in regard to the situation in Viet Nam has been made known in the past, and it has been reiterated in recent days by members of the government, including myself, as a result of the deterioration of the position in Viet Nam. Our concern with that deterioration and the general situation has been made known to the two governments who provided the co-chairmen of the commission, the governments of the United Kingdom and the U.S.S.R.

I should like to say—indeed, I should like to repeat what I have said on many occasions, Mr. Speaker—that a conference of some sort may well prove necessary and desirable to work out a more durable settlement for Viet Nam than was worked out at Geneva in 1954. If that settlement has not worked out satisfactorily—and it has not—the major share of responsibility must be directed toward the government of North Viet Nam and those who have supported it. They have not lived up to that agreement from the

[Mr. Grégoire.]

beginning and have done their best to make it unworkable. I do not think that a conference called without careful preparation at this particular time would be able to accomplish what we all have in mind. I think it is desirable to settle this matter by negotiation, and to discuss with the governments concerned and the co-chairmen the conditions which would make a new conference or a resumption of the old conference more successful.

**Mr. Douglas:** May I ask the Prime Minister a supplementary question. In addition to the representations made to the co-chairman, have any representations been made to the government of the United States to find out whether it would be prepared to sit in at such a conference, since it is perfectly apparent that without its co-operation no negotiated settlement could be reached?

**Mr. Pearson:** We have made our concerns and views known to the government of the United States. I must add that it is our view, and we all share that view that any conference held at this time under existing circumstances would not necessarily have the desired result. We are not in favour of a conference merely because someone wishes to call a conference. We certainly are in favour of a conference if that kind of negotiation will lead to a settlement.

**Mr. H. W. Herridge (Kootenay West):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask a supplementary question. Will the Prime Minister tell the house whether the government of Canada supports the policy of the government of the United States at this time in respect of Viet Nam?

**Mr. Pearson:** Mr. Speaker, as has been pointed out before, we should not forget that United States forces are in South Viet Nam at the invitation of the government of South Viet Nam which was established as a result of the conference at Geneva. It should also be remembered that North Viet Nam has been the aggressor since that country was divided. Let us not forget that fact.

**Mr. R. N. Thompson (Red Deer):** Mr. Speaker, my question is related to the same subject matter and I should like to direct it to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. My question is in two parts. In view of the request by the government of North Viet Nam in recent days that the observation teams of the international control commission on the Chinese-North Viet Nam border and else-