External Affairs
Supplementary Paper

No. 57/3 ADMISSION OF NEW MEMBERS: VIETNAM

Statement by Mr. J.W. Holmes, Assistant Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, in the Special Political Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, January 29, 1957.

I should like to explain briefly the position of my Delegation on the resolutions before us.

Canada, along with India and Poland, as members of the International Supervisory Commission for Vietnam, have special responsibilities for seeing that the Geneva agreements of 1954 are carried out in the states of Indochina. I need not describe these responsibilities in detail because they have been clearly set forth by the distinguished representative of Poland in a very well-reasoned contribution to this discussion. Like our colleagues from India and Poland, I believe that no good purpose would be served by our taking positions here which would reflect in any way upon our impartiality.

Canadians have, during their close association with Vietnam in the past two and a half years, developed great respect and affection for its people in all parts of the country. We want to continue to the best of our ability to help them maintain the peace which they have so sorely needed and we want to assist them to reunification, freely and peacefully achieved. We regret that this has not yet taken place, but we realize that the healing of such deep wounds cannot be accomplished in a hurry or by forced methods. Nor do we share the view that responsibility for continued division rests solely with one side. The problems of Vietnam, like the problems of all countries which have been divided by war and painful change, are complex, and it is the special responsibility of those of us who are charged with the task of aiding the process of reunification to seek to understand those complexities, rather than to increase tension by oversimplifying its causes.

Because of our admiration for the people of Vietnam, we are anxious that they should take their rightful place in the United Nations at the earliest possible opportunity. They have an ancient and distinguished civilization of their own, and they have absorbed and applied in remarkable fashion one of the great civilizations of Europe, a factor which has helped create a special bond between Vietnam and Canada. We have welcomed here with special pleasure this year our good friends from Cambodia and Laos, whose countries we have likewise come to know intimately and from which we have learned a great deal. Vietnam likewise has much to contribute to this body and it is in the interest of the United Nations that the day of its entry should be sooner rather than later.

Whether the unification of Vietnam and its entry into the United Nations - the objectives we all have in mind but which are not necessarily compatible at the same time - would best be served by either or by none of the resolutions before us seems to me a question on which there can be reasonable difference. For the special reasons mentioned above, my Delegation thinks it best