

Then, as hon. members will recall, last autumn discussions began at Panmunjom with the Communist side in an effort to work out the details for this conference. Those discussions are theoretically still going on, although they have been suspended for the time being. As these discussions were taking place in December last they removed some of the pressure at the Assembly, which was meeting then from continuing its deliberation into January. As hon. members will recall, at that time a resolution was passed making provision for recall of the Assembly if a majority of the members so desired if the President of the Assembly, Madame Pandit,--who has been acting in that position with such skill and distinction--should decide that the time had come or should be asked by any member to recall the Assembly. Such a request has now been made by the Government of India. Our reply to that request has just been sent today to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for transmission to the President. This reply was made after a great deal of consideration and exchange of views between ourselves and the Indian Government, the British Government, the United States Government and other governments. Possibly I might put this reply on the record, Mr. Speaker. It is as follows:

Please inform the Secretary-General as soon as possible that the Canadian Government has given very sympathetic consideration to the request of the President of the General Assembly that the present session be reconvened on February 9. The Canadian Government appreciates the desire of the Government of India to report to the United Nations General Assembly on the discharge of its responsibilities as chairman and executive agent of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission in respect of the prisoners-of-war placed in its custody under the provisions of sub paragraph 51 (b) of the Korean armistice agreement, but considers that in present circumstances it would be inadvisable to reconvene the General Assembly for discussion of the general Korean question of which the Assembly is seized. In the view of the Canadian Government a session on this subject--

That is on the general Korea question.

--might more usefully be reconvened at a later date in March or April.

We took that position because of developments in Panmunjom where steps are now being taken to bring about a resumption of the talks, and we hope that these steps will be successful within the next few days; because of developments in Berlin where Far Eastern questions have been put on the agenda; and because we came to the conclusion, after the inquiries we made, that it would not be possible, if the session opened on February 9, to restrict its deliberations merely to the action of India and the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission.

It should have been possible before now at Panmunjom to work out a satisfactory plan for the Korean political conference. Differences of viewpoint occurred at once, of course, as one would expect, between the negotiators from the two sides on this question. But on their face, none of those differences were impossible or