

it is quite impossible for other countries to bring about a settlement.

"I need hardly remind the House that such a situation imperils not only the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Laos, which the members of the Geneva Conference undertook to respect, but also the peace and stability of Southeast Asia in general. In these circumstances, it is natural that there should have been suggestions that a return to Laos of the International Supervisory Commission might help to reduce tensions and promote a peaceful solution of Laos' difficulties.

DIFFICULTIES TO BE FACED

"Such a reconvening of the Commission presented, however, certain difficulties. In the first place, the task originally assigned to the Commission was to supervise and control the application of a cease-fire agreement already reached by the great powers at the Geneva Conference. There was no question of the Commission itself bringing about a cease-fire. Second, it is clear that an essential condition for the effective functioning of a Commission so constituted would be basic agreement among the other powers directly interested on its return and on the duties it should perform. Third, unless it has an assurance of the co-operation of the Laotian authorities it would be unable to operate and its position would be untenable.

"I might remind the House in this connection...that, at the time the Commission was adjourned, we made quite clear that if, in any future emergency, the Commission were to be recalled, we would always have in mind the rights of the Laotian Government and would respect the sovereignty of that country. The Canadian Government, therefore, while fully in sympathy with the desire to take action quickly in a critical situation, has sought to ensure that the means adopted would be those which, given the existing circumstances, would give the best promise of success.

"It was with these considerations in mind that I suggested an exploratory mission might be sent to Laos to find out by consultation with the Laotian authorities what precisely could usefully be done in the present circumstances.

"In this connection my suggestion was that the three key men who went to Southeast Asia in 1954 or 1955—I am not sure of the exact year—would go back as members of this exploratory mission. The Canadian member was Brigadier Sherwood Lett of Vancouver, who is now Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of British Columbia. Chief Justice Lett has offered to go out in this capacity. The Indian representative, Mr. M. Desai, unfortunately has not been well and is on sick leave. This proposal that there be an exploratory mission made up of these three key people was not generally acceptable.

CANADA IS WILLING

"Discussions are continuing with a view to establishing an agreed basis of proceeding along these general lines. We for our part are willing, if the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union as co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference so request, and subject to the agreement of the King of Laos—we are not asking for the agreement of the Laotian Government but for the agreement of the King of Laos, who is the only generally recognized constitutional authority of that country — to appoint a Canadian representative to the Commission, which would do what it could in present circumstances, by consultation and advice, to contribute to the restoration of peace and to the maintenance of the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Laos.

"If the Commission is reconvened, I do not believe that all the responsibility for working out a cease-fire could fairly be placed on it, because in fact it was never set up to bring about that result, but it probably could help.

"As I pointed out earlier, discussions are taking place. Some discussions are actually going on this afternoon, and when there is anything further to report I will be very glad to bring it to the attention of the House.

RECONVENE GENEVA CONFERENCE

"...I also made the statement some days ago that I thought, for a long-term settlement, it would be wise to reconvene the Geneva Conference. There was a good deal of opposition to that being done. In addition there has been the suggestion that there should be a broad-ended Geneva Conference made up by adding countries in the area which are neutral, for example Burma and Thailand. Several of the Asian countries have been proposed. Whether agreement will be reached to recall the original Conference or to call an expanded Conference, I do not know. This is one of the questions which is already under discussion."

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MARITIME GROUND FISHERIES

An intensive study of the valuable ground-fishery of the Maritime Provinces was carried out by the biological station of the Fisheries Research Board of Canada at St. Andrews, New Brunswick, in 1960. In a report recently released at the Board's annual meeting in Ottawa, several projects vital to this important fishery were described. Groundfish are those that feed on the ocean bottom. Well-known members of this group are cod, haddock, pollock and halibut.

Among the projects undertaken by scientists of the St. Andrews station were the collection of mobile-fleet statistics, the sampling of commercial landings at major Maritime ports and the studying of catches taken at sea by