

We had discussions in Washington about the future of Lebanon. The discussions had to do with the possibility of having the Lebanese accept a position of neutrality. Favour was expressed by the United States and United Kingdom representatives with respect to that proposal.

I was not here on Monday, but I have read the address of that distinguished representative of a member of the Commonwealth, the Prime Minister of Ghana. I know that he also advanced that proposal when he addressed members of the House in joint session with members of the Senate. Can we work toward a status of neutrality for Lebanon and have an international guarantee of its neutrality such as is provided in effect for Austria? It cannot be imposed on the Lebanese, but it should not come as a novel suggestion to them because throughout the centuries, indeed from Phoenician times, the Lebanese have been merchants and traders. Their history shows that by reason of necessity to be friendly with as many people as possible in order to trade with them, they have over the centuries achieved that relationship with bordering countries.

Of course there is a new factor, one that I adverted to earlier in my remarks. Recently Lebanon has been rocked by pressures, sometimes violent pressures, from outside countries. Recently those pressures have been manifested in hostile radio broadcasts and other activities, and these pressures have brought about the vexed situation in which the Lebanese find themselves at this particular time. But it is, I think, possible to find a way out of the situation along the lines I suggested a moment ago. I would expect that the Lebanese might welcome some arrangement establishing neutrality that would assure them their independence in this middle position. But I am convinced that that cannot be brought about without the practical assistance of the United Nations. Indeed, I think it might well require some physical manifestation of United Nations authority, a physical manifestation of such authority on the ground in Lebanon.

The task which the observer group is now performing and will perform to a greater and more successful degree, I hope, will be to insulate the political affairs of Lebanon from those of its neighbours and thus help to restore tranquility in that divided nation. That, Mr. Speaker, could be the forerunner of some continuing role on the part of the United Nations in that country, perhaps not unlike the role played not by the United Nations but by Canada and other members of the international commissions in Indo-China. As hon. members will recall, these commissions were set up by the Geneva agreements of 1954.