

It is the realization of this danger, the danger of conflict, which prompted Western statesmen recently to offer the assistance of their governments and themselves in helping Israel and the Arab States find a solution for their disputes and problems. We in this government are very much in accord with the spirit of such pronouncements which point to the necessity of a settlement based on conciliation, understanding and compromise, which alone can afford a real basis of security and prosperity for both the Arab and Israeli peoples. The difficulties are great and the dangers are very real, as they always are when passions are high and feelings are deep.

We can sympathize with and understand the fear felt in Israel when they hear across their borders threats of destruction; and, of course, the United Nations did not establish the State of Israel in order to see its obliteration. Similarly, we can understand the feelings of Arab peoples at the alienation of land which was occupied by Arabs for centuries; we can sympathize with the sufferings of the many thousands of Arab refugees who have been made homeless. But surely to both sides the advantages of a confirmed and secure peace, instead of the present condition of precarious armistice, are so great both economically and politically that a negotiated settlement should not be impossible.

I cannot mention the armistice without paying tribute here, and I know the House will join me in this, to the work of Major General Burns, the chief of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization for Palestine. He is not, of course, serving as a Canadian but as a United Nations official. Nevertheless, since he is a Canadian, I am sure that all hon. members are as proud as I am of his devoted and skilful work in safeguarding the armistice in most difficult and, indeed, at times dangerous circumstances, and of the high regard in which he is held by both sides for his sincerity and impartiality.

As hon. members know, I have had the privilege recently of exchanging views with Israeli and Egyptian leaders. In July the Egyptian foreign minister visited Ottawa and I had the honour of being received by the Premier of Egypt, Colonel Nasser, at Cairo on my way back from Southeast Asia in November. I might at this point answer a particular question put to me by the hon. member for Prince Albert Mr. Diefenbaker when he inquired whether I would "equalize" Canada's position in the Middle East by going to Israel, in view of my visit to Egypt. I hope that it may soon be possible for me to visit Israel to see for myself the exciting and constructive things that are being done there. The reasons why I could not do so during my recent journey have been fully explained already, and I will not waste the time of the House in repeating them here, especially as they were made known to and understood in Israel at that time. I was all the more pleased, therefore, because I had not been able to visit Israel on this trip.