

less. 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.

Discussions with Israeli and Egyptian Leaders

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, to welcome to Ottawa at the beginning of December Mr. Sharett, the Foreign Minister of Israel, who came here at the invitation of the Prime Minister [Mr. St. Laurent]. I agree whole-heartedly with the hon. member for Prince Albert that our attitude should be "equal" but I doubt whether anyone would seriously contend that the criterion of such an attitude is an exact and prompt balancing of my journeys to foreign capitals. This "equality" which, as I say, I endorse, must rest on a sturdier basis than that.

In any event, during 1955 two cabinet ministers, two senators and six members of parliament visited Israel from Canada and each spent some time there. The members included the leaders of two parties, and, above all, they included the hon. member for Prince Albert himself. I am flattered, indeed, I am flabbergasted, by the suggestion that all of these visits by such distinguished Canadians were more than equalled by a day and a half stopover by me in Cairo on the way home from a Colombo Plan meeting.

My own discussions with Egyptian and Israeli leaders about the problems of the Middle East and my study of these problems, which I share with others in the House, have left me with the impression that, while the issues are complex and difficult, and even dangerous, there is a basic desire for peace on both sides because it is realized, it must be realized, that this is indispensable to social and economic progress. There seems, then, to be at least this foundation upon which a settlement could be reached.

I believe that the Western powers are ready and anxious—I know that Canada is—to assist in the achievement of a settlement. I hope sincerely that the Soviet Government and its friends are equally anxious. If they are, they