

Canada has a special interest in this matter, and not only because we are close neighbours of the United States. We have been involved, during the past 18 years, in the thankless task of supervising an earlier settlement, and of trying without success to make that supervision effective. Beyond that, we have been given clear indications of the possibility of our being asked to accept a further role. It has been indicated to us that Canada would be acceptable to all the parties as one of the members of a new international body which it is expected that the present negotiations will create when and if they are successful. Canada has not yet been formally invited to participate in this new international presence; indeed, I anticipate that no such invitation will be addressed to any of the potential members until an agreement is concluded. We have, however, been asked to consider the possibility, and we have done so most carefully.

Canada would, of course, wish to play a constructive role in assisting a peaceful political settlement if the parties wished it to do so, if that role were within Canada's capabilities and resources, and if it held the promise of success. The Government has long wished to see military violence end in Vietnam and to see its friend and neighbour, the United States, disengage itself from that military conflict. If the parties to that conflict invite Canada to play a role in which we could effectively contribute to a cessation of hostilities there and which would help the United States to end its military involvement in Vietnam, we should, of course, consider the invitation sympathetically and constructively. There is no question, however, of Canada, as a part of a new commission, attempting to maintain peace through the use of arms. The implementation of the cease-fire would be the responsibility of the belligerents and the role being contemplated for a new international commission would be to observe and report on the implementation of those parts of the cease-fire agreement which the commission is asked to supervise.

In considering the invitation to participate in a new commission, however, we should have an obligation to the people of Canada, to this House and to those Canadians who would be asked to go to Vietnam to implement our role there, which I should emphasize once again would not be a military role but would involve only observation and reporting to ensure that Canada's contribution could be a real and effective one, and to ensure that Canada's attempt to contribute to peace not be reduced once again to impotence as it has been in the supervisory arrangements in Indochina that emerged from the 1954 and 1962 Geneva Conferences.

Having our past experience very much in mind, in our discussions with the American authorities and in communications with the other parties to the Paris negotiations, as well as in public statements, the Government has developed a number of conditions and criteria on which it would base its judgment on whether Canada should participate in a new international commission for Vietnam.

The first condition, and indeed the ultimate one, is that the provisions for the operation of the new organization, when taken as a whole, should be workable and offer real prospects of being effective. Moving from