

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I was very pleased to be invited to be the concluding speaker in this distinguished Lecture Forum Series and I am delighted to be in Chicago again after a long absence.

I follow a well-worn path of Canadian leaders to Chicago - two Prime Ministers have acknowledged a formative debt to this city. The Chicago influence on both of them was divergent but important. MacKenzie King was a fellow in economics at the University of Chicago while Mike Pearson had his first taste of practical administrative experience in the fertilizer branch of a large Chicago corporation. I cannot claim such a close connection with the city -- but as a Mid-Westerner, born and raised in Winnipeg, I have a special feeling for this part of our continent -- sometimes even for the wind and snow which, after hockey players, are, I suppose, our most apparent export to this city.

I also welcome this opportunity to speak to an American audience about the relations between our two countries. It was less than a year ago that I spoke on this subject in the United States. Looking back over the rush of intervening events, it seems very much longer. The international monetary system is being shaken into significant and sometimes difficult adjustments. It has become increasingly evident that the post-war era is drawing to an end. Our economic geography is changing with the enlargement of the European Common Market and the ever-increasing economic power of Japan. But of considerably greater importance to you was the achievement of the cease-fire agreement in Viet-Nam -- bringing American military disengagement, a return of the prisoners and, it is still hoped, perhaps an end to a generation of bitter warfare in that unfortunate land.

A week ago today I announced in the House of Commons that Canada had decided not to exercise its option to withdraw from the International Commission of Control and Supervision in Viet-Nam after 60 days -- but to remain for a further period of 60 days -- that is, until the 31st of May. At that time, unless there has been some substantial improvement or distinct progress made toward a political settlement, Canada will withdraw from the ICCS -- allowing a further 30 days grace period for the Parties to find a replacement.

This was not an easy decision for us to reach. Our dilemma was this: Canadians remain anxious to serve the cause of peace in Indochina as long as there is the slightest hope of a peaceful solution to which the Canadian presence or function on the Commission can usefully contribute. But at the same time the Government was resolved that Canadians should not take part in a charade in which they would be required to supervise -- not a cease-fire -- but continuing and possibly escalating hostilities.

Put another way, Canada's international reputation is closely associated with our contribution to international efforts to make peacekeeping and peace supervision a reality. Our credibility in that role is very much on the line in Viet-Nam.

In making our decision we were very conscious that of the various alternative courses of action, there was not one which would meet all of the demands being made upon us or which would command universal approval outside Canada.