

time to demonstrate the feasibility of their solutions; not to bring them about just to demonstrate feasibility. Once confidence has been established and if there has been some movement toward a political solution on either side's terms, the peace will no longer be as fragile as it is and the mere presence of an international commission will no longer be regarded as a vital part of the picture or that such a commission would be in a position to contribute to a solution. On the other hand, if neither side's view of a political solution is making any headway we can look forward to full-scale hostilities regardless of the presence of any observer or supervisory body.

It is out of consideration for this new element and for the possibly far-reaching consequences of opting out now for which we would have to accept some responsibility that the Government has decided not to exercise its option to withdraw after sixty days, even though it could justify doing so on the basis of the reasonable application of its announced criteria. On the other hand, our experience, both past and present, does not justify moving into acceptance of open-ended or unconditional participation. Consequently, the Government proposes to inform the parties to the Agreement that Canada would be prepared to continue to serve on the same basis as it does now for a further period of about sixty days, that is until May 31, after which, unless there has been some substantial improvement or distinct progress has been made toward a political settlement, it will withdraw, giving a further thirty-day grace period for the parties to find a successor. This means that Canada, unless there is a substantial improvement in the situation or some signs of an imminent political agreement, will cease to participate in the ICCS by June 30, 1973. All the parties will by then have had adequate time to carry out those provisions which the ICCS was created to supervise, perhaps even the holding of elections on which I will have more to say. If the South Vietnamese Parties now meeting in Paris are able to reach an early accord on internal matters as envisaged and encouraged in the Paris Agreement of January 27 our decision will present no obstacle.

One important aspect of the Agreement assigns a task to the ICCS, not in the field of truce observing but in contributing to the political settlement which alone can bring about the end of the war. The Agreement calls for an election to form a new national government. The ICCS Protocol assigns an undefined observer role to the ICCS. The meetings now going on between the two South Vietnamese parties are intended to produce the conditions under which the election should be held. This electoral function is distinct and separate from the other functions assigned to the ICCS and the rules have yet to be elaborated. It could therefore be dealt with separately. So far as Canada is concerned, regardless of our status in respect of other aspects of the Agreement, we would remain ready and available to serve, as the parties may wish, in helping to supervise an election provided it was called under the provisions of the Agreement. It would not apply to an election called in other circumstances.