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RECOGNITION OF CHINA

Statement by the Prime Minister in the debate on External Affairs in the House of Commons, March 25, 1954.

Mr. Speaker, I find myself at this moment in a position where I have to ask your indulgence and that of the House for a few minutes to speak of at least one of the unfortunate results of my trip around the world that has been referred to in so generous terms by my colleague, the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Pearson). International affairs are of such importance that any imprecision or ambiguity in language used about any of their aspects is apt to have very unfortunate consequences, and I have to appear at this time before my colleagues in the position of a repentant offender asking the indulgence of his colleagues for his regrettable transgression on the basis of a humble confession of his error or mistake or lapse and on the basis of his genuine desire to clarify the situation and to dispel any of the anxieties or undesirable consequences resulting from the interpretation of too loose language he was unfortunate enough to use.

I am sorry that any of the things I am reported to have said in the East about China have given concern and caused controversy in this country. I am not going to attempt to say that I have been misquoted. I know that the gentlemen of the press who were there were honestly doing their best to report accurately and objectively the many questions in many forms that were put to me, sometimes with almost machine-gun rapidity, at press conferences or at the airfields as I alighted from the plane or was walking towards the plane to re-enter it. I am sure that they did attempt to reproduce what they understood me to have given as my answers and what they understood those answers to mean. I must and I do take the responsibility for any misinterpretation or misconstruction that could be put upon them because of their imprecision or their ambiguity.

There is one thing, however, about which I do feel quite sure that there was an inaccuracy. There was one report that I had said that I was sure we would have to recognize the present government of China as the government the people of China wanted. I feel quite sure I never would use those words intentionally because I never had that feeling about the present government of China. But I must have used some almost like them since so many of these reporters have come out with that as their version of what they heard and understood, that I felt we would have to be realistic and recognize the government of China "as the government the people wanted".

I should not have said "the government the people wanted". What I had in mind was that, in spite of our dislike of any form of communist or totalitarian government, we could not expect to have to deal with the kind of government, representing the people on the other side, we would like them to have the kind of