

the part of certain delegations that it would not get the necessary two-thirds majority.

It is my view, Mr. Speaker, and I hope that this view will prove to be well-founded, that we have now entered a phase in which progress may be made towards the objective of finding a suitable balance between the practical position of the United Nations and the legal position of Egypt in the administration of Gaza, an objective which was sought but never found at the recent session of the General Assembly. As I have said, the Secretary-General himself is going to the area tomorrow in search of such an understanding. It is a mission of great responsibility and delicacy, fraught with consequences for the peace of that area. So far as the Canadian Government is concerned, and I am sure so far as this House is concerned, we would not wish to do anything to complicate the Secretary-General's task by anything we might say here. I wish to reiterate, however, that our opinion is that, subject to the legal right of Egypt under the armistice agreement, and until those rights are altered, the United Nations and the United Nations Emergency Force have an important, indeed an essential role to play in the administration of that area.

Any policy or any action or any arrangement whereby the United Nations was refused Egyptian co-operation in the discharge of that role or in which the United Nations was denied a substantive responsibility for carrying out the purpose of ensuring peace and security in the Gaza Strip, any arrangement of that kind which included non-co-operation on the part of the single government most concerned, the Government of Egypt, would be doomed to failure.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Does the Government of Canada recognize the sovereignty of Egypt over the Gaza strip?

Mr. Pearson: No, Mr. Speaker, I have already stated that no single power has sovereignty over the Gaza strip. Under the armistice arrangement between Egypt and Israel, which was endorsed by the United Nations, the responsibility for the civil administration of that strip was placed in Egypt's hands and that is where it is now legally, under the armistice agreement which has been endorsed unanimously by the recent Assembly of the United Nations. Any effort, however, on any government's part to interfere with the practical necessity of United Nations action in the Gaza strip at the present time would, I think, be inconsistent with the basis of free co-operation which must underlie the discharge of United Nations responsibility in that area. It would deny to the area, and indeed to the people of both Egypt and Israel, the great practical benefits which could develop if the United Nations and its agencies were given a fair chance to make their contribution to the welfare and security of that unsettled region.

Egypt and UNEF

This situation, Mr. Speaker, in the Gaza strip points up, I think, the importance of a clear understanding of the relationship between Egypt and the United Nations Emergency Force.