

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, May 12, 1967

The house met at 11 a.m.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF REPRESENTATIVES OF UNITED STATES CONGRESS

Mr. Speaker: May I be permitted to bring to the attention of hon. members the presence in the galleries to my left of a very distinguished group of representatives from the United States Congress.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: These Senators and members of the House of Representatives, accompanied by their wives, are attending the tenth annual meeting in Ottawa of the United States-Canada interparliamentary group. On behalf of all hon. members I extend to them very cordial wishes and express the hope that their stay with us will be pleasant, interesting and fruitful.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

● (11:10 a.m.)

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

VIET NAM—OPPORTUNITY FOR EXPRESSION OF CANADIAN VIEWPOINT

On the orders of the day:

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Secretary General U Thant made a frightening statement regarding the danger of the world slipping into world war III. He made the suggestion that a bombing pause or cessation at this time might be conducive to bringing about discussions at the conference table. Will the Prime Minister say whether within the next two or three days an opportunity will be given to this house by resolution for this parliament to place before the world the viewpoints of the Canadian parliament and people in this connection? The suggestion of U Thant was that unless something is done it will be too late to prevent a world conflagration.

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the government and I am sure parliament share the concern expressed by the Secretary General of the United Nations,

a concern which I indicated I felt myself when I spoke during the debate on the speech from the throne on Wednesday last. I do not think anyone can predict what may happen in Viet Nam if hostilities continue unabated, but the prospect of the indefinite prolongation of such hostilities is obviously fraught with dangerous possibilities. That is why the Canadian government has been doing everything it could to help bring these hostilities to an end.

I recalled the other day the efforts we had made in this direction. I should perhaps recall also the suggestion put forward on April 11 of this year by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, when he proposed that the first phase in this process of ending hostilities might envisage a cessation of the bombing of North Viet Nam together with effective supervision of the demilitarized zone. I think I should also recall that the United States government has indicated its willingness to begin negotiations at once on the cessation of hostilities on both sides.

The right hon. gentleman has suggested that a resolution might be brought forward in the house in respect of this matter. We are now on the throne speech debate, and during the next four or five days there will be an opportunity for hon. members who wish to speak on this subject to make their views known. Perhaps we should reserve our consideration as to whether any formal action of the kind suggested is required until this debate has been completed.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I had hoped the Prime Minister would consider the possibility of a resolution giving the opportunity to parliament rather than the government, to present the views of all Canadians.

Let me now ask the Prime Minister this question. What about Hanoi? Has there been any reaction by Hanoi to the representations from the Canadian representative? The other day there was the suggestion that Hanoi had been approached and that certain secret discussions had taken place. Hanoi, which has been very provocative throughout, and unrelenting in its attitude, has stated that there was no such discussion with the Canadian representative and that no consideration whatever was given to Canada's representations