

The North Vietnamese Government believes that the bombing of their territory should be stopped by a unilateral commitment on the part of the United States. The United States Government, on the other hand, argues that it is unrealistic to expect them to give a unilateral commitment of this kind which would leave North Vietnam without any commitment in respect of their infiltration of men and supplies into the South.

What is to be the position of the Canadian Government in this situation? I believe that there are two choices open to us. We can take strong public positions on any or all of the issues involved in the present conflict. That is the easiest thing we can do. Alternatively, we can continue to do what we have been trying to do. So long as I am in this office that is what I propose to continue to do, because I believe this is the only effective way available of achieving the objectives we have in mind. We shall continue to conduct quietly and through diplomatic channels our efforts to find the basis for an accommodation in Vietnam.

I should seriously suggest to the House that we can follow one or the other course I have mentioned. We cannot effectively follow both at one and the same time. I think we have to admit to ourselves that there are no simple solutions to this conflict. And, because there are no simple solutions, a settlement in Vietnam will not be achieved overnight; it can only emerge from a patient probing of positions.

It will have to go right to the roots and the origins of the conflict in Vietnam and it will have to be such as to hold out an assured prospect of peace and stability, not only in Vietnam but in Southeast Asia as a whole. This is what Lord Avon had in mind when he talked of neutralization -- not now, not as a means to bring this conflict to an end, but as the kind of solution that would follow a negotiated settlement. If this is what we are working toward, then I think it will be agreed we must take first steps first.

It is being put to me from time to time that Canada, either by itself or in co-operation with other countries, should issue a call to a new Geneva conference. Before we set out to determine the proposed new role for the Commission, we had already done that. Before we sent Mr. Ronning to Hanoi and Saigon and elsewhere, we had already done that. I now resist this course, not because it is unreasonable or because it does not represent a long-term objective of the Government of Canada. We have had discussions with the Government of India -- and I mention India because of the speech made yesterday by her distinguished Prime Minister to the effect that there should be a conference called.

This proposal was made over a year ago, and again last November, before we contemplated the proposed role for the Commission, and before we decided on the Ronning missions. I have now resisted this course, in the sense that I have resisted it before, because all the information available to me indicates that a call of this kind will not have the desired results in present circumstances, much as I should like to be able to say that the situation was otherwise. We have been told this without going to Moscow, on the highest authority. It is one thing to call for a conference; it is quite another thing to ensure its being attended by those who must be there.