

Viet Nam

by the recently established international committee to free South Vietnamese political prisoners from detention, torture and death. This committee includes officials of many groups in Canada. The Canadian Council of Churches, the Anglican Church of Canada, the United Church, the Voice of Women, and Amnesty International are concerned, as I am sure we all are, about the fate of political prisoners held by the Saigon government.

Chester Ronning, about a generation ahead of his time and a distinguished retired public servant, writes that he "fully supports the initiative which the international committee is taking to draw the attention of Canada to the plight of these South Vietnamese people who continue to be punished for the crime of wanting peace in wartorn Viet Nam." Canada can do something about these political prisoners at the February conference.

Dr. Kissinger, at his press conference of January 24, said:

Chapter III deals with the return of captured military personnel and foreign civilians, as well as with the question of civilian detainees within South Viet Nam.

This, as you know, throughout the negotiations, presented enormous difficulties for us. We insisted throughout that the question of American prisoners of war and of American civilians captured throughout Indo-China should be separate from the issue of Vietnamese civilian personnel detained, partly because of the enormous difficulty of classifying the Vietnamese civilian personnel by categories of who was detained for reasons of the civil war and who was detained for criminal activities.

And secondly, because it was foreseeable that negotiations about the release of civilian detainees would be complex and difficult and because we did not want to have the issue of American personnel mixed up with the issues of civilian personnel in South Viet Nam.

Canada has no such inhibitions. Canada will have the opportunity at the end of next month, along with other countries, to make very certain that the release of these prisoners takes place. Dr. Kissinger went on to say:

This turned out to be one of the thorniest issues that was settled at some point and kept reappearing throughout the negotiations. It was one of the difficulties we had during the December negotiations.

Then he says the issue of Vietnamese civilian personnel will be negotiated between the two Vietnamese parties over a period of three months. Canada will be there and I submit that Canada has an urgent role to play. If Saigon and Hanoi cannot agree, Canada should insist that the human rights aspect of the political prisoners question must be protected by the International Committee of the Red Cross as part of the quid pro quo of our membership on the ICCS.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Fairweather: We have the awful example of the failure of the old ICC to obtain the release of internees and prisoners of war and to exercise control over the movement of refugees. I do not want to be misunderstood; I make no charge against the old ICC. We have learned from it. We ought not to repeat the mistakes of the Geneva accord; the 1954 failure cannot be allowed to be repeated in 1973.

I seek, as one response of my party to the resolution we are debating, what I might call the internationalization of the rebuilding of peace. The Security Council can create

[Mr. Fairweather.]

the basic infrastructure upon which peace can be built. Viet Nam, both North and South, must solve the juridical problem; no outsider's writ can run here. After all, like it or not, civil war is the privilege of a people. The Americans have experience of this. Imagine what would have happened in the American Civil War if one of the great European powers had attempted to interfere. History is indeed a paradoxical part of man's story. I seek a latter-day UNRRA—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to let the hon. member finish.

Mr. Fairweather: I will take only a minute or two more.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Is it agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): I think the hon. member for Gamelin (Mr. Portelance) also would like to seek the unanimous consent of the House to revert to an earlier item of business for the purpose of presenting the first report of the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration. I ask if there is consent that this be done.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Fairweather: Mr. Speaker, I thank you and my colleagues. The interruption would have cut off my peroration. I am not sure how good a peroration it is, but none are good when they are interrupted.

I seek a latter-day UNRRA operating in Indo-China. First, there must be relief in the form of food and medicines for the hungry and the wounded; second, rehabilitation in the form of seeds and fertilizers to replant the lands poisoned and defoliated; third, reconstruction and development in the form of a Mekong Valley authority on the model of the Tennessee Valley authority in the United States so that Indo-China can use the water for energy and irrigation.

The people of Viet Nam never were the enemies of our country, Mr. Speaker. We are embarked upon another of man's quests for peace. The Canadian armed forces have again demonstrated their readiness to take on a tough and difficult mission. May I say, too, that the government and the country have been exceptionally well served by the officials of the Department of External Affairs throughout a difficult period. They have warned us of the pitfalls and frustrations. They have sought conditions and safeguards, not to frustrate a mission but to make it viable. We have an obligation to them to make sure that the February conference is the catalyst for a useful and productive United Nations and not one of a long series of exercises in futility.

The cold war, thank God, is in the last stages of being wound down. Even today nations of east and west Europe are meeting in Vienna to discuss mutual force reductions. In 1972 a United States president went to Peking and to Moscow, trips which came later than an American visit to the moon.