

Foreign Policy

So, Mr. Speaker, we intend to carry out our responsibilities to the commission, and we believe that this is the right course for us to follow. We note with satisfaction that this is the view of India and also of Poland. The Canadian government has directed its efforts toward finding a basis on which the parties to the Viet Nam conflict might be brought into direct contact. I have indicated some of the steps we have taken in our endeavours in that regard.

The Canadian government has held that a solution to the problem in Viet Nam must be sought by political means. That is part of Canadian policy. We have made it clear that we look to negotiations to settle this problem. It seems important to us that any settlement of the present conflict should be such as to hold out a reasonable prospect of long term stability in that area. This is because we think that the problem in Viet Nam cannot be isolated from the security and stability of southeast Asia as a whole. We regard the basis of the Viet Nam problem as a political one.

• (4:50 p.m.)

As we see it, Mr. Speaker, what is primarily at issue between the parties is the future political arrangements in South Viet Nam. It is argued on both sides that the guiding principle should be the right of the people of South Viet Nam to determine their own destiny. It seems to us that the best way of achieving this is to afford the people of South Viet Nam an opportunity to determine by the test of the free ballot under what institution and under what government they wish their affairs to be conducted. We believe that the best way in which the Canadian government can bring its influence to bear on the Viet Nam situation is by doing exactly what we have done.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Oh, oh.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): On April 11 in the external affairs committee I outlined four suggestions or ideas that are in keeping with the Geneva accords. I suggested procedures for a cease fire arrangement. I said at the time that I did not believe the climate was right for their acceptance. The reaction in Hanoi has been negative. Hanoi takes the position that there can be no parity of position between the parties, that first of all there must be an acknowledgement that the United States, as Hanoi puts it, is the aggressor, and this notwithstanding the findings of the commission in 1962.

[Mr. Martin (Essex East).]

While the United States would probably find most of our points acceptable, I believe it would register objection to an approach to de-escalation which begins with mutual disengagement in the demilitarized zone, coupled with a cessation of the bombing. I think that would be unacceptable to them.

Mr. Churchill: Would the minister permit a question at this point. Is it not a fact that Dean Rusk said on television the other night that the United States had suggested to Hanoi a withdrawal of both sides from the demilitarized zone? Apparently that was not the minister's suggestion.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I am glad my hon. friend said that because Mr. Rusk, it will be remembered, said that that portion of the Canadian suggestion was acceptable to him. Mr. McNamara, the Secretary of Defence, also said that.

The point I make is that not only should there be a mutual disengagement in the demilitarized zone but that in all equity, if both sides accept that arrangement, there ought to be a cessation of bombing. Mr. Rusk has not explicitly accepted that. The Canadian government is prepared to make its own contribution to the eventual settlement in Viet Nam. We envisage that any agreed settlement of the present conflict will make provision for some sort of international presence. That, indeed, will be a very difficult assignment and if and when it comes, as the Prime Minister of Great Britain has put it, it may need to be buttressed by the guarantees of the great powers.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have today restated what I have stated on five occasions in this house and on six occasions in the external affairs committee to be the policy of Canada on the war in Viet Nam. That policy may not be acceptable to everyone.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Not to the President of the Privy Council.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): No one recognizes more than I do the rights of individuals in this house and outside.

An hon. Member: And in the cabinet.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): But no one has the right in the face of the government's record, in the face of the reaction of other countries toward what this government has sought to do, to charge us with not having a policy, with refusing to give information, with not trying, as a country not involved in this