

U.S. Invasion of Cambodia

An hon. Member: That was also said about Viet Nam.

Mr. Anderson: The hon. member has mentioned that this was also said about Viet Nam. I concur in the criticisms of the right hon. member for Prince Albert about the naïveté of late President Kennedy in getting involved in Viet Nam the way he did. Nevertheless, I wish to deal with this particular aspect of the war. No resolution of this or any other House, or the United Nations, regardless of all the problems involved in getting such a resolution passed, will deter the President from this action—certainly not at this particular time. I feel that at this moment we should not attempt to harden American opinion in the way that has been suggested. Nothing concrete can be done to deter them until such time as the results of this action are known. As the NDP member mentioned, this will not be until such time as it is proved incorrect that the American involvement in Cambodia is not limited—if that is proved to be correct.

We must realize that this expansion of actual fighting in terms of the area where the fighting is taking place is not really an expansion of the war zone if considered in general terms. For years this area of Cambodia has had an extensive Vietnamese population and an undefined border. For years it has been used by the Viet Cong. I do not wish to minimize the fact that fighting is now on the Cambodian side of the border. I do not accept the suggestion that this is of a very dramatic and different nature than previously. This area was always part of the war. It is exactly in that area where the Viet Cong forces were treated, regrouped, retrained and recovered from wounds. It is that area which is now being included in the scope of American operations. Much of what has been said in the last 24 hours concerning the expansion of this war is not entirely valid. This area has always been part of the war zone. It has now become part of the front line. Front lines shift, and this particular area now finds itself engaged in fighting.

An example was given by an hon. member for the NDP that the American President said the United States was pulling out of Viet Nam. I think that should be considered in light of what took place in the bombing of North Viet Nam. Obviously there was a counter-productive and unnecessary military activity which the Americans gave up despite objections from their generals and from their Congressmen and Senators. They gave it up because they felt it was counterproductive.

[Mr. Anderson.]

Perhaps I am only throwing out a ray of hope, but to suggest there is a certain type of inevitability in this type of escalation is to ignore the fact that over the last two years there have been modest reductions in the scale of operations. From this point of view we can take hope that the Americans mean what they say, that they are not in Cambodia to stay.

The hon. member for York South made much of the fact that this was actually an invasion. He said that Cambodia was being invaded, that the Cambodian head of state did not know of this and that they regarded it as aggression. The first question in my mind is why the Cambodians did not object. They have diplomatic representation abroad; they are represented at the United Nations. On this particular point we ought, I believe, to leave it to the Cambodians to decide whether or not they are victims of aggression rather than accept the too simplistic suggestions of the deputy leader of the New Democratic Party basing his account on hearsay evidence reported in a newspaper.

● (4:30 p.m.)

As a matter of fact, today's paper talks about Viet Nam task forces linking up with Cambodian troops defending the capital, and about the commanders conferring. It seems unlikely to me that Cambodia is a victim of aggression if the Cambodian commanders are conferring with their Vietnamese opposite numbers rather than opposing them. There has been no indication in the press so far of opposition, and this should be borne in mind when the artificial distinctions made by the deputy leader of the NDP are considered.

I am inclined to think the debate today should be concentrated upon the steps which Canada might be able to take in this trying and unhappy situation. It has been suggested we should go to the United Nations. If we simply wished to satisfy our own public opinion—and members of the public perhaps know less than do members of this House about the effectiveness of the United Nations—I am sure this suggestion is a good one.

We could go there and make speeches as has been done in this House today, speeches which have little value except in terms of political advantage—not that I, as a politician would say that political advantage is something to be ignored. But we should bear in mind that the major parties to this conflict, namely, the North Vietnamese and the South Vietnamese are not represented at the United Nations. Neither, of course, is the People's