

*Inquiries of the Ministry***EXTERNAL AFFAIRS****SECURITY ARRANGEMENT FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA—
DISCUSSIONS REGARDING INDO-CHINA**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Howard C. Green (Vancouver-Quadra): Will the Prime Minister give the house information concerning a security arrangement for southeast Asia which was announced by President Eisenhower yesterday as being in the process of formation? And is the Canadian government participating or willing to participate?

Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I understand the hon. gentleman telephoned my office as to the terms of this question shortly after one o'clock today. I saw it just a few moments ago. It is rather vague. "Is the Canadian government participating or willing to participate?" I do not know whether that refers to the discussions that are taking place, or if it seeks to get a declaration as to whether the Canadian government is willing to participate in a security arrangement for southeast Asia.

Mr. Green: That is what I had in mind.

Mr. St. Laurent: That matter has not come up for consideration by the Canadian government. As I understand the hon. gentleman's question there is very little information I can give him about it; it is based on the statement made yesterday by President Eisenhower in which he referred to the suggestion made by Secretary Dulles in his address of March 29. The President goes on to say:

Obviously, it was never expected that this collective security arrangement would spring into existence overnight. There are too many important problems to be resolved. But there is a general sense of urgency. The fact that such an organization is in process of formation could have an important bearing upon what happens at Geneva during the Indo-China phase of the conference.

The countries of the area are now thinking in constructive terms, which include the indispensable concept of collective security. Progress in this matter has been considerable and I am convinced that further process—

It must be "further progress".

—will continue to be made.

As I said in the house the other day, if and when the question as to whether Canada should make further commitments arises for decision it will be given very careful consideration, and our conclusions, if they are that we recommend further commitments, will be brought to the house and the reasons for these conclusions explained before we take the responsibility of making commitments for the Canadian nation.

I cannot add anything to that. We are, of course, very much concerned with what is

[Mr. Pinard.]

going on at Geneva and elsewhere. In connection with that I might perhaps take advantage of this occasion to clarify the answer I gave to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Drew) a week ago. My attention has been called to the fact that the hon. gentleman's question and my unqualified answer might have given the impression that we were taking no part whatsoever in discussions affecting the position in Indo-China. Well, that would be quite contrary to the statements which have previously been made in the house, and quite contrary to the facts.

The situation with respect to Indo-China is that so far as the formal phase of the Geneva conference is concerned the sole responsibility for deciding its membership rested with the inviting powers under the decision taken by the foreign minister of France, the Soviet union, the United Kingdom and the United States at their conference of last January in Berlin.

That information has already been given to the house and the fact is that these powers have now decided in Geneva that membership will be restricted to themselves and communist China, the three associated states of Indo-China, and representatives of the Viet Minh. Canada has not been invited to participate in the formal discussions which are about to take place in Geneva.

The problem of Indo-China is a most complex and difficult one. There is much to be said in favour of the inviting powers' decision to keep the formal discussions on Indo-China to those parties principally and immediately concerned. In the interest of the solution we had no grounds to complain of not being included. Such neighbouring countries as Thailand, the Philippines and Australia, which are more closely concerned with developments in Indo-China than are we, are not being brought into the formal discussions. On the other hand, informal discussions on Indo-China have been and are taking place all the time at Geneva because it is a matter of such vital interest to world peace.

The report we receive from the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Pearson) is that he and members of the Canadian delegation are participating in those informal discussions about all those matters as actively as is any other delegation outside of the countries immediately concerned with the problems of Indo-China. As was stated in the house, we were invited to the conference that would take place on the Korean problem but we were not invited—and others that are more directly concerned than we are were