



CANADA

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 73/8

CANADA ON THE ICSC: DIFFICULTY AND DILEMMA

An Address by the Secretary of State for
External Affairs, the Honourable Mitchell
Sharp, to the Empire Club, Toronto,
March 22, 1973.

...I am delighted to be here today. Your President's timely invitation has given me the opportunity to speak to you on the subject that happens to be most on my mind at the present time....

...I do not think it is really possible to appreciate the difficulties of Canada's role in the new Commission and the dilemmas about continued participation without some background on the long years of involvement in Indochina. This involvement reaches back almost 19 years -- to the International Conference held in Geneva in 1954 by Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union, France and China. You may recall that this conference followed the defeat of the French at Dienbienphu in 1954. This was the culmination of eight years of hostilities against the French colonial power by Vietnamese nationalists -- under the Communist leadership of Ho Chi Minh and the military leadership of General Giap, whose reputation continues. The task of that Geneva Conference of 1954 was to establish a peace settlement which might prepare the way for free elections and the eventual reunification of North and South Vietnam -- objectives which, I think you will agree, have a familiar ring.

The conference set up an international supervisory group known as the International Commission for Supervision and Control. Poland, India and Canada were invited to be its members. This body was despatched to Indochina with the responsibility to report -- and in this way it was hoped to deter violations of the cease-fire and it was also intended that the Commission would play a role in the supervision of free elections.

In its first year of operation, the old ICC established a good record with some notable achievements, and particularly the supervision of the movements of refugees, of whom there were many hundreds of thousands, probably a million, from North to South Vietnam. By the end of 1954, there were some 200 Canadians in the old ICC, about two-thirds of the number now serving in the revived, or the new, ICCS, and these were located in both North and South Vietnam. The task of the old ICC, at least from the beginning, was made easier by the fact that the cease-fire line was a more meaningful division. The Viet Minh -- that is, the Communist troops in the South -- largely withdrew to