

Foreign Policy

Mr. Diefenbaker: Would the minister now answer the question? This was a statement which was made by one of his own colleagues.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Secretary of State for External Affairs has the floor.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, will the minister allow a question?

Mr. Pearson: Nobody interrupted your speech.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The minister speaks of being non-political. A few moments ago he was piling praise on himself, so I would ask him—there is nothing political about this; this statement was made by one of his own colleagues—whether he agrees that the United States has no justification, moral or strategic to be in Viet Nam. Is that government policy?

Mr. Churchill: Answer the question.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, my right hon. friend must not think I am that innocent. He may try that on some young member who has been in this house for a week but he must not try it on me.

I stated that this government was concerned about the course of events in Viet Nam. For 20 years now since the end of the second world war the world community has tried to build a system of international law and order. It is part of that system to settle disputes by peaceful means. We regret that in Viet Nam recourse has been had to military means to deal with what is essentially a political problem. We are naturally concerned about the tragic toll in human suffering and destruction which this conflict is bringing to the Vietnamese people and to their country. We are also concerned that the longer the conflict continues the more difficult it will be to overcome suspicion and distrust on both sides. The longer the conflict continues the greater, of course, are the risks that it may expand, by inadvertence or deliberation, into something more serious. Accordingly we have urged restraint in those areas and in the way which we thought was the most effective.

I spoke a moment ago of Mr. Chester Ronning and of the commissioner's frequent visits to Hanoi. Has it ever dawned on my right hon. friend that if Hanoi has repeatedly observed that there is a Hanoi-Canada channel it is only because Hanoi believes that Canada does have some influence in Washington? What other reason could there be for the way in which our emissaries have been

received? What other reason could there be for the nature of the discussions they have had?

I am not indicating to this house—and I hope that Hanoi will not suggest that I am—what these discussions have been. I have respected fully the confidences of the government of that country to our emissaries including Mr. Ronning. As I have said, if we do have a credibility in Hanoi it is because it is thought that as a friend of the United States we rightfully enjoy the confidence of the United States.

The United States is a country that we respect, whose friendship we have enjoyed and whose society is so much like our own. Would we retain any credibility in Washington Mr. Speaker, if we were to engage in consultations with the United States and at the same time follow courses of action that would inevitably destroy our right to their credibility and their confidence? This is something that Mr. Wilson mentioned following the discussions he had with Mr. Kosygin when he was charged with refusing to give the British house any information as to the results of his discussions, which extended over a period of one week, with the premier of the Soviet union.

I have stated that we are concerned about this situation, Mr. Speaker, and I make this additional point. We are not a party to this conflict. We have undertaken no military commitments in southeast Asia. The only commitment that Canada has in that area is to support and accelerate the economic development of the countries of southeast Asia.

The government intends to continue as a member of the international commission. This has been a difficult experience, Mr. Speaker, as my right hon. friend knows. I say that because he was the head of a government that was charged with the administration of the commission just as is this government. It was for that reason that I was so surprised when he belittled the commission by referring to allegations, thus far completely unfounded, with regard to the personnel of that commission.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Why not put these men before a committee?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): If that was a proper charge to make against this government then it was a proper charge for my right hon. friend to make against himself, because he was head of a government that was charged with the responsibility for the commission between the years 1957 and 1962.