

The Address—Mr. Rowe

Prince Albert ten months ago in this house was hastily revived at last in the proposal to send an international emergency force to the danger area, even though it was merely scoffed off ten months ago. I submit it might have been better to organize it ten months ago than to wait until after the trouble had occurred.

I believe there is no disagreement among us regarding the desirability of forming a UN police force to police the Suez canal area pending a final settlement both between Egypt and Israel and also concerning the international status of the Suez canal. This party has over and over again emphasized the importance of the underlying and fundamental principle of the League of Nations as well as the United Nations. We have been on record to that effect time and time again. In the United Nations we need more than platitudes or bluffing. We need more action.

Canada was one of the first countries to offer troops for the UN emergency force and, as we all know, the Queen's Own Rifles were hurriedly prepared for service in the troubled region. As Canadians I believe we were all proud to know that one of our oldest regiments was to have the privilege of forming part of the emergency force. For ten days we were treated to news stories and radio and television reports on the Queen's Own Rifles preparing for action. Meanwhile, the cabinet and members of parliament like myself were ready on very short notice to come to Ottawa for a special session of parliament to deal with our participation in the emergency force. I think, however, that it would have been preferable for the government to have secured the approval of parliament before the Canadian contingent left our shores for the Middle East. Having regard to the very dangerous situation in which the Canadians will find themselves in the Suez canal area, surely the approval of the people, through their parliamentary representatives, ought to have been sought. The government has taken it upon itself to commit some of our Canadian forces to the international emergency force without explaining in detail to Canadians the extent of the obligations to which they are committed.

I believe it is true that as yet most of them are administrative forces. According to all reports the administrative force is about 10 times the number of troops that has been mentioned. However, perhaps the pen might be mightier than the sword at this stage.

Mr. Sinclair: You know more about it than General Burns.

Mr. Rowe: I am not disturbed by the hon. member's interruption, because later I shall listen to just how much he knows about it.

In any event, as we know, the Queen's Own Rifles were very hurriedly prepared. I must say, Mr. Speaker, that there was some mystification over the delay in securing final United Nations approval of our contribution. No statements were issued by the government to explain the delay or to warn that the sending of the Queen's Own Rifles might be dispensed with entirely. The very silence of the government, always so quick and ready to claim all things that are so great as their own invention, was disquieting.

When it was finally announced 10 days ago that Canada was sending an administrative staff to the United Nations force, there was considerable surprise throughout Canada. This surprise turned into anger and dismay when it became clear that the United Nations, through its secretary general, was allowing the Egyptian president Nasser to dictate or at least to exercise a veto over the exact composition of the United Nations emergency force. Surely the realization that Colonel Nasser was specifying what we might or might not contribute to the United Nations must have brought a feeling of humiliation and embarrassment to the members of this government.

Having ventured to lecture the United Kingdom and French governments on their behaviour in the Middle East crisis, we ourselves must feel abundantly ashamed of the weak and vacillating policy—or shall I say lack of policy—which the government has followed during the last month in one of the greatest crises which has faced world diplomacy in this century.

I believe it is the solemn duty of the opposition in this house to insist that the whole story of Canada's participation in the United Nations emergency force be told. Canada's pride has been wounded by pretense and evasion. Surely we have not stumbled and blundered into a position in which our contribution to the United Nations emergency force is no longer dependent upon our own generous instincts and desire to preserve peace in the world.

I do not wish to criticize the methods which have been followed by the United Nations secretary general, Mr. Hammarskjöld, in his negotiations with the president of Egypt. My concern is with the fact that we have allowed ourselves to drift into our present position. Let not the government believe it can any longer deceive the Canadian people by creating a fancy halo around the Secretary of State for External Affairs, as if he had already saved the world's peace