

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, June 30, 1950

The house met at ten-thirty o'clock.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

SITUATION IN KOREA—CANADA'S PART IN COLLECTIVE ACTION UNDER UNITED NATIONS

Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a further brief report to the house with regard to our relationship to the present situation in Korea.

As the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Pearson) said yesterday, our responsibility in this matter arises entirely from our membership in the United Nations and from our support of the resolution of the security council passed on Tuesday last, part of which reads as follows:

The security council . . . Recommends that the members of the United Nations furnish such assistance to the republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security in the area.

Any participation by Canada in carrying out the foregoing resolution—and I wish to emphasize this strongly—would not be participation in war against any state. It would be our part in collective police action under the control and authority of the United Nations for the purpose of restoring peace to an area where an aggression has occurred as determined under the charter of the United Nations by the security council, which decision has been accepted by us. It is only in such circumstances that this country would be involved in action of this kind. The house, I think, has already approved this position.

I would add, however, that if we are informed that a Canadian contribution to aid United Nations operations, under a United Nations commander, would be important to achieve the ends of peace, which is of course our only purpose, then the government wishes parliament to know that it would immediately consider making such a contribution. It might, for instance, take the form of destroyers to operate with other naval units of the United Nations, though our destroyers could not in any event reach Korean waters in less than about three weeks' time, because after all it is more than six thousand miles from Esquimalt.

Hon. members will recall that our naval units there were to proceed to European waters for summer exercises. These arrangements will be suspended, and the move will now be made into western Pacific waters, where the ships would be closer to the area where they might be of assistance to the United Nations and Korea if such assistance were required. If the situation in Korea or elsewhere, after prorogation, should deteriorate and action by Canada beyond that which I have indicated should be considered, parliament will immediately be summoned to give the new situation consideration.

Meanwhile the government, within the mandate which the attitude of the house in the last two days has given it, will do its full duty, within the measure of its power and ability, as a member of the United Nations, in common with other members, to make the collective action of the United Nations effective, and to restore peace in Korea. If this can be done—and it can—then the chances of preserving and strengthening peace over far wider areas of the world than Korea will be immensely increased.

Mr. George A. Drew (Leader of the Opposition): The house will welcome the assurance by the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) that in the event of deterioration of the situation which would call for action, parliament will immediately be summoned. It is particularly appropriate that on the day we prorogue there should be a further opportunity to discuss this subject in the light of the statement which the Prime Minister has made.

As the Prime Minister has pointed out, we are now seeing the first real effort to make the collective principle of the United Nations charter effective in the form of sanctions, in an instance in which there has been clear-cut aggression such as has occurred within the past week in Korea. Far from feeling depressed about the gravity of the events, it seems to me that all of us should be greatly encouraged by the hope this offers that the steady wave of aggression which has spread over many parts of the world in these past few years may at last be stemmed by the vigorous and effective joint action of free men throughout the world.

I think the sentiment of this house has been clearly demonstrated within the past