

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS—CYPRUS—POSSIBLE REMOVAL OF
CANADIAN CONTINGENT

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): Mr. Speaker, I am a little disappointed that the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacEachen) had to leave the chamber, and even more disappointed that the distinguished member for Gloucester (Mr. Breau), the parliamentary secretary, is not in his place. Had he been here I would have extended in a personal way my sympathies to him, as a member of parliament from New Brunswick, on the very tragic events of last weekend in the city of Moncton.

● (2200)

My purpose tonight is to express concern at the continuing presence in Cyprus of Canadian troops. Whatever else may be said about the presence of the Secretary of State for External Affairs, no one can say that when the chips are on the line he is not capable of saying it like it is. Too many years ago, in pursuit of what at the time was something quite proper I suppose, namely, some degree of international honour and glory in the area of peacekeeping, we permitted ourselves to enter into contracts, which in essence were bad contracts from Canada's point of view, regarding the presence of Canadian forces offshore. We entered into a number of contracts, going back as far as 1948 and 1949, which continue to require the presence of Canadian troops as well as the performance of roles that are no longer useful. They are not performing any discernible function in terms of the original concept that sent them there.

I say this because over the years—I shall not bore the House with the figures—it has cost us many lives and countless millions of dollars to pursue less than useful roles offshore. The concept of peacekeeping is one thing; the concept of peacemaking is another. When we went to Viet Nam, I think we went with the right approach—as a way out. We went for a definite period of time and we said that if it was not apparent to us that we were doing the job that we went there to do, we would leave—and we did leave. In doing that, we broke away from the traditional type of contract which has existed for so long in the past and which I submit is essentially bad.

This brings me to the kernel of the few points I want to make tonight in regard to Cyprus. Cyprus is exactly one of those areas that we entered in all good faith but under the guise of what can only be termed a very bad contract. We have not way of getting out; there are no ground rules, no guidelines, no nothing. We are there essentially to keep the peace, not to make the peace, and it is very difficult for us to intervene in the conflict between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots in the area of peacemaking. Certainly we cannot keep the peace and make the peace without conflict.

This evening I want to ask, particularly in light of the statements made quite recently by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, whether or not at this point in time Canada should say very clearly to the parties involved, as well as to our partners in NATO and our allies and friends in the councils of the United Nations, that it is indeed the intention of Canada to get out of Cyprus at the end of the current six-month term of service unless we become satis-

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fied during the next six months that meaningful progress has been made toward a lasting peace on that island. We have now been there 11 years. Failure to make this progress in 1975 will render our role there almost totally useless in the eyes of Canadians, and they will with justification have the right to require the return of those troops.

I ask whether we could not put this question forward because I think it would provide the type of stimulus to bring the parties on the island in question closer to a meaningful settlement, and it might spur our allies in NATO and the UN to get on with urging these two great countries to end their differences in respect of Cyprus. I suggest we can do this with some meaning on this one, simple ground: our allies and friends around the world will now listen to us. We told them we would get out of Viet Nam if we were not seeming to perform the useful role for which we were contracted to go there; we did get out of Viet Nam, and I think the councils of the world will now listen to us. Nations that are at loggerheads will listen to us.

I am not talking about threats; I am talking about the deployment of our troops in the most useful way possible, not only in this particular situation but in other situations that come up from time to time. I pose that question and I will be listening with interest to the response by the government spokesman.

Mr. Leonard Hopkins (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, first of all I think it must be said that the hon. member knows very well we were dealing with a different organization in Viet Nam than we are dealing with in respect to Cyprus, namely, the United Nations. We are members of the United Nations directly and are dealing there in respect of Cyprus. We were not a member of the organization heading up the Viet Nam situation at the time.

The hon. member asked a question about the *Preserver*. It is classified as an operational support ship, designed primarily to replenish ships at sea. It has a strictly limited passenger capability and is not designed to carry troops. It does not carry troops from Cyprus or anywhere else, except for crew. The Cyprus mandate, as the hon. member knows, has recently been renewed by the Security Council for a six-month extension terminating June 15, 1975. The Canadian government, however, has not yet received a formal request for Canadian forces' participation. When it does, the request will be given careful consideration and an announcement on the decision will be made in the normal manner.

The Canadian airborne regiment has been serving in Cyprus since early last summer, some members since April 1974, and the decision was taken by the Department of National Defence to replace the regiment with the First Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment, based at London, Ontario, in keeping with the policy of a six-month tour of duty for peacekeeping forces in the Middle East. The replacement of troops in Cyprus was completed earlier this month and it was carried out by Canadian forces aircraft, which is the normal method of transporting Canadian forces for peacekeeping and other overseas duties.