

*Supply—External Affairs*

This afternoon I am not going to say anything about NATO, although the minister made a short reference to it. Later on in the discussion of the estimates opportunities may arise when hon. members who wish to discuss NATO and to make inquiries concerning that organization will have the opportunity of doing so. I was pleased indeed to hear the minister say that the subcommittee of the disarmament conference, although meeting in secret, had made some progress in adopting an agenda and that the speed which had been attained in preparing for the further discussions was still being maintained.

The minister paid a tribute to the personnel of the Canadian delegation left at Geneva. From my experience at various international conferences with some of the personnel of our delegation, I am perfectly sure that Canada will be well represented even in the absence of the minister; though, of course, should events require his presence I have no doubt that he would proceed there immediately.

I do not want to go into all the points made by the minister but I want to say this. If we are to attain understanding and peace and if we are to attain the co-operation of the Asian people—which we all know is so essential, as the hon. member for Prince Albert indicated in his remarks also—I think what we have to do is to demonstrate our understanding of and sympathy for the aims and aspirations of those Asians who are seeking for independence and for freedom.

The minister said that the situation with regard to Indo-China at the conference was always in a state of flux. I think that statement is true. When we hear it said that this is a struggle between the western democracies and the communists for the control of Asia, I think we must bear in mind that the position in which we find ourselves is largely of our own making. Had we shown sufficient sympathy for the aspirations of the Asian peoples, certainly from the close of the late war, I do not think that the communists would have been able to seize the leadership of liberation movements in the Asian countries. If certain Asians are now becoming a part of a communist conspiracy or are coming under the aegis of communist imperialism, it is largely our neglect of opportunities that were presented to us in years past that has brought this condition about.

This afternoon I want to say something about the background of the present conflict in Indo-China because I think it has a bearing on the policy that Canada must pursue, particularly if things take a turn for the worse. To begin with, we should keep in

mind, of course, that this conflict in Indo-China is not of recent origin. Determined efforts of the Indo-Chinese people to obtain their freedom began many years ago. When Japan entered the war in 1941 the allied troops were actually assisted by the nationalists and other groups—under whose leadership?—under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh. At that time the movement was known as Viet Minh. A proclamation was issued by this independence group. They were not communists but were a group, as Nehru said the other day in his statement—and which I may refer to in a moment—consisting of all sorts and conditions of Indo-Chinese people, including people who were by no means communists, but some of whom were socialists, some of whom were Liberals and indeed some of whom were Catholic in religion. I heard that interesting fact stated also the other day in a talk given by Mr. Andre Laurendeau, editor of *Le Devoir*, in a Sunday evening commentary not long ago when he recorded a conversation he had had with a young Indo-Chinese lady who was a member of the Roman Catholic church and she refused to speak French because she said until the French were out of Indo-China they were not going to use the language of France. A proclamation was issued by this group—and I quote part of it—supporting “the defence of democratic principles by the United States, U.S.S.R., Britain, and China”—as they called the war at that time—and at the same time our Indo-Chinese allies asked the great powers to make a declaration that when victory came over the Japanese forces, the Indo-Chinese people would be granted complete autonomy.

When the war ended a provisional government of fifteen members was set up, five of whom were communists but which included nationalists, some Catholics and others, to govern the country. That group elected Ho Chi Minh as president of “the democratic republic of Viet Nam”. This republic was recognized in September, 1945, by the government of China which of course was at that time the government headed by Chiang Kai-shek.

In March, 1946,—to give a brief outline of these events—France signed an agreement with Ho Chi Minh recognizing the democratic republic of Viet Nam “as a free state with its own government, parliament, army and finance, and forming part of the Indo-Chinese Federation of the French Union”. Unfortunately that recognition did not last. In 1947 grave differences arose between the new republic and the French republic which resulted in various acts of violence. In 1948, a year later, France signed a new agreement