

Foreign Policy

This is the reason I welcomed the speech of the President of the Privy Council. I welcomed it not merely because it is support for a policy which our party alone has been proclaiming in Canada for three or four years but because of the basis on which the President of the Privy Council put it. He put it on a basis of personal conscience. He said, and I should like to refer to two or three parts of his speech:

Whatever the reasons I believe all of us have a duty to record our concern—our growing horror if you will—over what is going on in Viet Nam. If the present policy ends in disaster—the extermination of millions of unfortunate Vietnamese, or possibly global war—our failure to speak out against what is happening will always remain on our consciences—if by chance we happen to survive—and so it should.

● (5:30 p.m.)

Later he repeated words which suggest he felt he had to speak out as a matter of personal conscience. I have never had reason to doubt the sincerity of the President of the Privy Council, nor to doubt that he is as frequently moved as all of us are by deep feelings of conscience about matters which concern the welfare and the survival of humanity. I want to say that the President of the Privy Council will go down in history as the rebel who refused to rebel. Let me say to him in all kindness that an occasional expression of courage does not a fighter make. If he felt as deeply as he said he did, and I am sure he did, about the pressure of the horrors in Viet Nam, and that he had to speak out as he did on May 13, he ought to do so again because the situation in Viet Nam has grown worse. The escalation of the war as a result of the invasion of the demilitarized zone has progressed to a point of greater danger than ever before. The destruction which he regretted has increased, and if that was a matter of conscience on May 13 last I suggest it is an even more pressing matter of conscience now.

Mr. Churchill: Hear, hear. Let us hear from him.

Mr. Lewis: I regret very much that apparently he has accepted the ukase of the Prime Minister that members of the cabinet are not to say anything more about this issue. I cannot blame the Prime Minister in this regard because I am not one, as some hon. gentlemen seem to be, who will tell the government it must maintain cabinet solidarity while on the other hand condemning the Prime Minister for trying to do just that. I am not saying to the Prime Minister that he was wrong in laying down policies for his government and

[Mr. Lewis.]

expecting members of the government to follow them. But I am more than surprised—I am shocked—that the gentleman who spoke so deeply from conscience, on an issue so important as Viet Nam, pays the price of silence ever after in order to remain a member of the cabinet. That is what is shocking to me, not the fact that cabinet solidarity is desirable, because that is a matter which is crucial to our form of government.

If the President of the Privy Council makes just that one speech of May 13 and then accepts the proposition that nothing more is to be said, I think he will have misled the Canadian people. If he was right in that speech about the things he said regarding American policy, if he was right about this determination that men of conscience ought to speak out, and if he was right in calling upon the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for External Affairs to do so, as he does in one part of his speech—in my opinion he was never more right in his public life—it seems to me he has a duty to the people of Canada to continue to support the kind of policy he began to enunciate on May 13.

It is not my purpose in saying this to make a personal attack, although the criticism was inevitable. I am convinced that if men like him were to join this crusade, as he did in his one speech, for a new policy for Canada toward Viet Nam, the results both in Canada and in Washington might be considerably better. Apparently he will not do so again, so far as I have heard, and that is his decision and a matter for his conscience. He will have to reconcile one expression of conscience with another expression of conscience.

We agree with Professor Kenneth Galbraith, that the conflict now in Asia is an unnecessary one arising from a stereotyped anti-Communism out of the cold war era. In our view Canada ought to demand publicly a cessation of bombing and other things relating to it. Let me remind the house that the right hon. Leader of the Opposition also supported this view. Therefore he ought not to be upset by our subamendment.

For all these reasons I move:

That the amendment be amended by changing the period at the end thereof to a comma, and by adding immediately thereafter the following words:

"and in particular this house regrets that the government has failed to do everything in its power to press the United States to stop the bombing of North Viet Nam, as a necessary preliminary to negotiations to end the war in Viet Nam.

Let me point out that the first part of the subamendment, the part ending with the