

1964 when we were faced with the grievous challenge and the threat of Cyprus, a fellow member of the Commonwealth, a place from which the crackle of war could be heard thousands of miles away.

At that time the government was able to ascertain the views of parliament and to rest its case upon the people's representatives. And the people's representatives moved. This afternoon I was reading the eloquent speech given on that occasion by my former leader, the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker), who stated clearly that our party and, as he rightly said, the people of Canada would do their part to have Canada assist.

I would commend the amendment of my colleague the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe (Mr. Wagner). It clearly indicates that this is the way things should be done. I would implore the Secretary of State for External Affairs, who with all his faults is not a bad man, who wishes well for Canada and does his best for Canada, to take, adopt and accept the amendment so eloquently put forward by my colleague so that the people of Canada will know that the Canadian people's representatives have expressed themselves thoughtfully, with due consideration, on this important path which is hazardous, uncertain and divisive. And I appeal to my colleagues in a great gesture of Canadian unanimity to support what my colleague so eloquently and so thoughtfully has put before us all.

[Translation]

Mr. Georges-C. Lachance (Lafontaine): Mr. Speaker, in the 1970 review of its foreign policy, the government stated the following as recorded on page 20 of the English version of the booklet on Canada's Pacific involvement and I quote:

When peace comes to Indochina, Canada, without diminishing its existing aid programme in the area, will wish to play its full part in special programmes of rehabilitation aid necessitated by the prolonged hostilities. The Government will be ready to move to meet immediate relief requirements and to make a contribution to longer-term reconstruction efforts.

As stated in this House last week by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp), Canada is also anxious to participate in the immense task of assisting and rebuilding Viet Nam and although the government is still in the dark as to what it will be requested to do and as to how any extended Canadian program could be related to the efforts of other countries and of international organizations, I think we shall be willing and ready to contribute to this task through all of Indochina.

Therefore, if I am not mistaken, the government, from the remarks made by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs is considering helping the Vietnamese people restore their economy destroyed by war, and also helping to cope with the individual and social needs of thousands of people who have been torn away from their home, who have been displaced and who are now actually refugees often in their own country.

It seems that the government's intention is to contribute to the assistance and rehabilitation operations in Viet Nam after the war is over. They have repeatedly proclaimed this intention over the last few years.

I think the words I just quoted from the review of our foreign policy are, in my opinion, an official statement. Canada should be willing to extend any assistance we are

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in a position to supply to the Vietnamese people and to Indochina generally. However, in view of the uncertainty surrounding the general situation in that part of the world, it is premature, I believe, to stipulate the exact amount in dollars of the assistance we shall be supplying or shall be able to supply to the countries forming Indochina during the post-war period.

I understand that Canada plans to supply some types of assistance and to continue its current programs in that region of the world. But it goes without saying that the extent of Canadian assistance must, as much as possible, be in keeping with needs which it is not yet possible at the present time to identify or determine accurately.

Following remarks made yesterday by the hon. member for Fundy-Royal (Mr. Fairweather), I should also like to point out that since 1955 Canadian development assistance to South Viet Nam has amounted to very little, for many reasons, namely some \$14 or \$15 million. This assistance was mainly of a humanitarian and social nature and was particularly geared to the areas of paramedical rehabilitation, of training and of assistance by way of food and shelter.

During the current fiscal year, Canada is supplying \$3,100,000 worth of assistance to the Republic of Viet Nam, Laos and other neighbouring countries. In this regard, we must clearly consider that the implementation of the Canadian program was facilitated by our linguistic resources.

[English]

As I mentioned earlier, the level of the present requirement for outside support for the reconstruction effort in Indo-China is unknown. One dominant consideration in determining Canadian aid levels is the amount of assistance which can be expected from other donors. In addition, the government will wish to consider that because of its participation in international observer arrangements in Viet Nam, even for the initial 60 days only, it will be spending a substantial amount of money which might have a bearing on the aid funds we could provide. Therefore at this time, with so many imponderables, it would seem preferable and in fact more realistic for Canada simply to reaffirm its intention to provide assistance for relief and reconstruction, rather than to set any specific sum or target.

• (2040)

In any case, we must bear in mind that a number of factors which are intrinsic to the current situation in Indo-China will place limits upon the capacity of the recipients in the area to absorb dramatic infusions of aid. Recent events have demonstrated that those countries may in the short run be preoccupied with a variety of problems other than reconstruction and long-term development programs. We must also take into account the institutional capabilities and capacities of the governments concerned to identify and carry out the tasks of reconstruction and development.

From the point of view of the donors, there remain basic unanswered questions. One question which will have to be resolved is the need for co-ordination of effort. This is vital, as was recently shown in Bangladesh. But in the case of Indo-China no fully effective co-ordinating