

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, made the following statement today prior to his departure for Paris to lead the Canadian Delegation to the International Conference on Viet-Nam:

This will be an important conference. If it goes well, its beneficial effects will long be felt in Viet-Nam, both North and South. If it goes badly, the hopes for peace of the war-weary people of those two countries will be dimmed, and all those throughout the world who desire peace in Viet-Nam and in Indochina will have to think deeply about the hopes that were raised by the Paris Agreements of last month.

The chief issue, as I see it, will be to lay a firm basis on which the people of South Viet-Nam, as the Paris Agreements envisage, will be able to determine their own future. That means that the way must be cleared for the people of South Viet-Nam to achieve a political and military situation such that their country can at last cease to be the object of a bid for power from beyond its borders, with all the international reaction and involvement which is attracted by such a bid for power. In a real sense, the issue is that the internationalization of South Viet-Nam's political situation must be brought to an end. And that does not mean only that all troops which have entered South Viet-Nam must withdraw. It means also that, as soon as possible, the presence of international observers, and the need for them, must be done away with. Political normalcy must be restored as soon as possible, and achieving political normalcy will have to mean achieving a situation in which international observers need not watch over the