

was reported to the House by my predecessor, the Hon. Paul Martin, on June 7, 1965.

• (11:20 a.m.)

Mr. Seaborn visited Hanoi for the last time from September 30 to October 4, 1965. We had told the United States government in advance that we had serious doubts about the usefulness of giving him special instructions and on this occasion he carried no message. His only official contact this time was at a low level in the North Vietnamese liaison mission and he detected no sign of interest in discussions or negotiations. Shortly thereafter Mr. Seaborn returned to Canada at the conclusion of his normal posting in Viet Nam.

It has been suggested that the Canadian government knew, or should have known, that some of the messages it conveyed amounted to statement of an American intention to bomb North Viet Nam. The Canadian government knew of no such intention on the part of the United States. The messages we carried were couched in general terms and related to the possible consequences for the North Vietnamese government of continued activities in South Viet Nam.

It has been implied that the Canadian government should not have carried any such messages on behalf of the United States. It was the view of the government of that time that this was entirely consistent with its role as a member of the ICC, and indeed that it was implicit in the role that Canada should endeavour to promote a dialogue between the main parties to the conflict. The North Vietnamese made it abundantly clear to Mr. Seaborn that they did not regard our activity as in any way improper or inconsistent with our ICC role.

It has also been implied that when the bombing of North Viet Nam began, the Canadian government should have made some public protest on the basis of what it is now claimed that it knew about American intentions. The Canadian government had no information that would have justified such a protest at that time. Canada, along with many others, accepted the United States government's version of the Gulf of Tonkin incident.

We were not allied to the United States in its operations in Indochina and were not fully informed by the United States on its various plans and intentions. Throughout, the record is clear that the government of that day acted in good faith and in a manner consistent with our responsibilities to the International Control Commission.

Mr. R. Gordon L. Fairweather (Fundy-Royal): Mr. Speaker, it would have been useful to be able to see a copy of the minister's statement before the House opened. I hope that very soon some system will be devised whereby the opposition parties will get such documents so that their responses can be useful to the House.

What the government must seek to do is to make clear that our position of neutrality on the International Control Commission for Viet Nam is assured and can be

Message to Hanoi by Canadian Official

believed by other countries who have come to trust us. Canada did not stumble into membership on the ICC. There was a reason for our having been asked. I suggest that the reason was that we were trusted by the international community. We had the confidence of other nations. Such confidence and trust are priceless. Devoid of them, a country is a purposeless drifter upon the international scene.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Fairweather: This response to the minister's statement is not to be construed as another item in a long and puerile list of criticisms of the United States or its policies. The American people by a large majority have shown what they think of United States involvement in Indochina. Gratuitous comment from me would serve no useful purpose.

The point I wish to raise is this. Do the disclosures so forthrightly exposed by the New York *Times* call Canada's neutrality into question? Our representatives are on record as complaining that neither India nor Poland were maintaining their neutrality. Were those protests hypocritical? The former Secretary of State for External Affairs, speaking in the House on April 2, 1964, said that the failure of certain members of the commission to recognize the force of the Canadian claim that majority decisions of that commission were needed, was a serious detriment to the validity of the commission's work. I ask, were Poland and India informed of Canada's intention to deliver messages? Did they approve? In other words, was the Canadian stand in favour of majority decisions adhered to in this regard?

The minister has said that Mr. Seaborn, who is a distinguished public servant and who is in no way being personally criticized, did not pass on all or even the entire messages to Hanoi. In other words, a judgment was exercised as to the content of the messages. Whose judgment? That of the former Secretary of State for External Affairs, or of the government, or of Mr. Seaborn, the Canadian representative on the ICC? The Secretary of State for External Affairs also said that the bulk of the content of Mr. Seaborn's messages to Hanoi was delivered orally. I hope the minister will accept the suggestion I made yesterday that Mr. Seaborn, and, I would add today, Messrs. Pearson and Martin, be invited to give explanations and background before the Standing Committee on External Affairs and Defence.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Fairweather: I make this suggestion in an attempt to be constructive, because I am sure those gentlemen could and would wish to reassure the Canadian people that when the Right Hon. Lester Pearson attacked the United States bombing of North Viet Nam he did so without being aware of the intention of the United States to escalate the war as enunciated by Mr. Seaborn several times in his visits. We are entitled to these reassurances, just as we are entitled to have tabled any documents or letters exchanged between the government and Mr. Seaborn which contain or relate to the content or form of