

can be carried out but is rather due to the importance of providing an international presence as an indication of the continued involvement of the world community in Viet Nam, the lack of which would hinder the achievement of a political settlement? Further, will the test concerning whether consideration will be given to our staying on beyond the original 60-day period be answered entirely in terms of the progress toward a political settlement rather than any judgment in terms of supervising the truce?

• (1450)

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): No, Mr. Speaker. I think that would be a one-sided interpretation of the situation. We are there in order to help in supervising the truce. That is why we were asked to take part. It has been urged upon us, however, that there are other values to be taken into account. That is the reason we have given only a 60-day extension and not an indefinite extension.

Mr. Stanfield: Is it the opinion of the Secretary of State for External Affairs that the ICCS has a reasonable potential of becoming a really vital force in keeping the peace in Indo-China?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, as I have said before in the House, the only parties that can keep the peace are the parties to the peace agreement. What the ICCS can do may be to help, if asked to do so, by observing and reporting. However, we have not been given very much freedom of action to perform that function.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I hoped I had understood the statement upon reading it but I must say I do not understand it now. I should like to ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs whether he can reconcile for me what appears to be a contradiction. On one page he says that Canada will continue to serve on the same basis as it does now but not beyond May 31 unless there has been some substantial improvement or distinct progress has been made toward a political settlement. On the previous page the minister said that once confidence has been established and if there has been some movement toward a political solution on either side's terms, the mere presence of an international commission will no longer be regarded as a vital part of the picture. As I understand the minister, on the first page he is saying—

An hon. Member: Will you repeat that?

An hon. Member: You are reading too fast.

Mr. Stanfield: I am sorry if I read it too fast. I understand the minister is saying in one place that an international presence will no longer be necessary if there is some movement toward a political solution on either side's terms, while later he seems to be saying that we will stay on if there is some substantial improvement.

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, the statement is drawn in very careful terms as I think such a statement should be because it will be read in all parts of the world as an indication of Canada's attitude on this question. We have said, and I am sure the Leader of the Opposition would

Oral Questions

agree, that if there is some evidence of movement toward a political settlement we should stay but if it gets to the point where a political settlement is achieved obviously there is no need for the ICCS.

VIET NAM—DECISION TO CONTINUE CANADIAN PARTICIPATION IN SUPERVISORY COMMISSION—REQUEST THAT RESOLUTION BE PLACED BEFORE HOUSE

Mr. David Lewis (York South): I have a supplementary, Mr. Speaker. May I ask the minister whether it is his intention to place a motion before the House of Commons regarding the decisions made by the government for participation in Viet Nam?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to the House leader and he would be quite willing to discuss with the other leaders in the House the idea, for example, of having an adjournment motion on which our decision could be debated.

Mr. Lewis: I do not quite understand. May I ask the minister whether what he is suggesting to the House is that there would be some general adjournment motion but that he is not prepared to place before the House a resolution containing the precise decision the government has made?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, I had been talking to the House leader and he thought that perhaps the best way to have a debate, which is what I had promised, would be to have a motion to adjourn the House to discuss this decision. I think this would be suitable, but if the opposition has some other way by which we could bring the matter to debate we would be glad to consider it.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, whether or not there should be another method depends on whether or not the minister is prepared to place the decision before this House of Commons for a vote, or is it his suggestion that we would merely have a debate of some hours and that is all?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, the difficulty, as has been said by the spokesman for the official opposition and to some extent by the spokesman for the NDP, is that this is just a tentative decision and not a final decision. It seems to me it would be more appropriate to discuss the present situation on an adjournment motion and when we come to making a final decision to present the kind of resolution the leader of the NDP has suggested.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. member for Portneuf wish to ask a supplementary?

Mr. Roland Godin (Portneuf): No, Mr. Speaker.

[English]

VIET NAM—ARRANGEMENTS TO ASSURE SAFETY OF CANADIAN PERSONNEL ON SUPERVISORY COMMISSION

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, I have a very simple question I should like to ask in