

*Supply—External Affairs*

taken place on the coast of the gulf of Aqaba, occupied by and now part of the state of Israel, with a port that has been established there which is the main port for importing Israel's oil requirements.

The Canadian position in regard to this matter was made perfectly clear in the assembly of the United Nations on February 26, 1957, more than ten years ago. What was said then was reprinted in two white papers called "The Crisis in the Middle East" which, if hon. members have not read them recently, I think they would find very interesting in the light of the developments that have occurred in the last few weeks. What I said in 1957 in the general assembly on this particular point about the question of the gulf of Aqaba and the straits of Tiran, was:

In our view—

That was the Canadian delegation's view.

—it should be agreed and affirmed by us—

I meant the assembly.

—that there should be no interference with innocent passage through or any assertion of belligerent rights in the straits of Tiran.

We have not altered that position, Mr. Chairman. I repeated this in the House of Commons on March 15, 1957, as recorded at page 2355 of *Hansard* for that date, and I tried then to emphasize the danger that would be incurred in dealing with this matter in New York if some agreed action could not be taken that would be effective in dealing with this situation in the gulf of Aqaba. That position taken then is certainly relevant to the position that governments—including ours—have taken in the last few weeks on this question.

We take the position, in regard to the legal situation, that these are international waters and that the gulf of Aqaba is an international gulf. But if there is doubt about that legal question, and there is doubt about it, I would hope the matter can be settled by the International Court of Justice. Irrespective of the legal position, however, no action should be taken by the riparian states which would interfere with the right of access to the gulf.

As hon. members know, in 1957 a contingent of the United Nations emergency force occupied a strategic point called Sharm el Sheikh which commanded the navigation channel through the strait of Tiran. As was stated at that time in New York, that force was there to preserve the right of access to the gulf of Aqaba. Of course it has been my view, and I think the view of the house, that one of the measures leading to the difficulties

[Mr. Pearson.]

that culminated in this conflict—it was a tragedy—was when the United Nations force was withdrawn from that point as well as from the border between Israel and the U.A.R.

All this does not mean that the United Nations emergency force was a failure. On the contrary, it was successful in maintaining the peace in that area for ten and a half years. Surely the conclusion to be drawn from this experience is that it is a time not for banishing United Nations forces but for stronger United Nations forces.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Pearson:** Another conclusion that should be drawn is that when these forces are set up, in the way the force was set up ten and a half years ago by the United Nations, we should be as careful as it is possible to be that the basic authority of the forces is laid down, as I think for instance we have it laid down in regard to the United Nations force in Cyprus. It may be that the legal positions we took in 1956 and 1957, along with many other states, about the withdrawal of the United Nations emergency force may seem very academic now, but it won't be academic if the United Nations is asked to move in there again.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, perhaps I may be pardoned if I go into that matter in some detail with a view to avoiding in future the difficulties we have encountered in recent weeks in regard to United Nations peace keeping.

• (3:30 p.m.)

On March 15, 1957, as reported at page 2357 of *Hansard*, I said:

But in the arrangements made and in the agreement which I have referred to—

That is the establishment of the United Nations emergency force on Egyptian soil.

—the United Nations, which established this force to do certain tasks, clearly has a right to be consulted as to whether and when these tasks have been discharged, as it would if they were to be extended. From this, it follows in our view, and this is the view of the secretary general also, that if Egypt should at any time make a request for UNEF's withdrawal, the appropriate procedure would be for that request to go first to the advisory committee on UNEF through the secretary general. There it would be discussed by the committee which was set up for that purpose by the assembly, and if necessary and desirable the whole matter could then be referred to the full assembly for decision. And therefore any question of whether UNEF should be withdrawn would become a matter for discussion with and decision by the United Nations.