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Text of the Reply by the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable L.B. Pearson, to Representations from a Group of University Professors, including the Faculty Committee on Vietnam at Victoria College, University of Toronto, March 10, 1967.

I need hardly tell you that the situation in Vietnam is one to which the Government attaches great importance in the formulation of Canadian foreign policy. That importance reflects not only the implications of the problem for world peace and the international processes of change by peaceful means but also the concern which the Government shares with responsible citizens at the toll the hostilities are taking in terms of human suffering as well as of wasted resources and lost opportunities for human betterment. On these points, I think there can be few differences of opinion.

The real problem, of course, for governments no less than for individuals, is in translating hopes and convictions into constructive action. Constructive action, in turn, depends on a realistic assessment of the nature of the situation which it is desired to change and of the likely consequences of any given action, whether public or private, in relation to the problem. Therefore, at every stage, we must ask whether any particular step is likely to advance the issue any distance towards a solution -- or even towards a more satisfactory state of affairs. Any answer to this question becomes doubly difficult in the context of problems where the direct involvement and the direct responsibility for action rest essentially with others.

Let me be more specific. I realize, as the public debate over Vietnam here and elsewhere over the past few years has shown, that it is possible to arrive at different assessments of the rights and wrongs of the various positions represented in the conflict. This is inevitable, and, in the long run, useful, in a free society, always provided, of course, that the differences of opinion are genuine and based on the fullest possible range of facts. But, whatever the view one might hold about the origins and development of a situation such as we face in Vietnam today, I believe that the right and proper course for the Canadian policy-maker is to seek to establish that element of common ground on which any approach to a solution must ultimately rest.

This is precisely the direction in which we have attempted to bring Canadian influence to bear - the search for common ground as a base for a solution to the Vietnam crisis by means other than the use of force. We have

spoken publicly about our belief that a military solution is neither practicable nor desirable and we have encouraged the two sides to enter into direct contact to prepare the ground for formal negotiations at the earliest practicable time.

In what might be called a process of public diplomacy, the parties themselves have gone some distance over the past year or so in defining their positions. This open exchange of propositions is, of course, useful in settling international problems, but it must, I think, be accompanied by other, less conspicuous, efforts, since public positions are generally formulated in maximum terms. One aspect of these quiet efforts could be an attempt to develop a dialogue with the parties, stressing to them the urgency of seeking more acceptable alternatives to the means being used to pursue their objectives; another might be an attempt to find channels by which the parties could, in quite confidential ways, move out beyond their established positions, abandoning where necessary, tacitly or explicitly, those aspects of their positions where compromises must be made in the interests of a broader accommodation.

As I have said, I am convinced that the Vietnam conflict will ultimately have to be resolved by way of negotiation. But I do not think that a Geneva-type conference (or, indeed, any other conference) will come about simply because the Canadian Government declares publicly that this would be a good idea. It will come about only when those who are at this time opposed to such a conference can be convinced that it would be in their best interests to attend and negotiate in a genuine desire to achieve results. And, in the process, confidential and quiet arguments by a responsible government are usually more effective than public ones.

Similarly, when it comes to making channels, or "good offices", available to the parties to enable them to make contact with each other, I think that too many public declarations and disclosures run the risk of complicating matters for those concerned.

In short, the more complex and dangerous the problem, the greater is the need for calm and deliberate diplomacy. That may sound like an expression of timidity to some of the proponents of political activism at Canadian universities and elsewhere today. I can only assure them, with all the personal conviction I can command, that in my view it is the only way in which results can be achieved. Statements and declarations by governments obviously have their place and their use in the international concert, but my own experience leads me to believe that their true significance is generally to be found not in initiating a given course of events but lies rather towards the end of the process, when they have been made possible by certain fundamental understandings or agreements reached by other means.

As far as the bombing of North Vietnam is concerned, there is not the slightest doubt in my mind that this is one of the key elements, if not the key element, in the situation at the present time. You may recall that I was one of the first to suggest publicly that a pause in these activities might provide openings for negotiations. Subsequently, I have repeatedly stressed that I would be glad to see the bombing stopped, Northern infiltration into the South stopped, and unconditional peace talks begin. This has been and will remain, in broad

outline, the Canadian Government's position - a position which we have adopted not in a spirit of timidity but in a sense of reality, because we believe it corresponds to the facts and because we believe that a negotiation involves reciprocal commitments. Any other position taken by the Government, I am convinced, would be unhelpful.

In your letter you also called upon the Government to reveal all military production contracts related in any way to the Vietnam war, and to consider refusing to sell arms to the U.S.A. until the intervention in Vietnam ceases. While I can appreciate the sense of concern reflected in your suggestions, I think it might be helpful if I were to try to put this question in a somewhat broader perspective than the problem of the Vietnam war alone.

Relations between Canada and the U.S.A. in this field are currently covered by the Defence Production Sharing Agreements of 1959 and 1963, but in fact they go back much farther and find their origins in the Hyde Park Declaration of 1941. During this extended period of co-operation between the two countries, a very close relationship has grown up not only between the Canadian defence industrial base and its U.S. counterpart but also between the Canadian and U.S. defence equipment procurement agencies. This relationship is both necessary and logical not only as part of collective defence but also in order to meet our own national defence commitments effectively and economically. Equipments required by modern defence forces to meet even limited roles such as peace keeping are both technically sophisticated and very costly to develop and, because Canada's quantitative needs are generally very small, it is not economical for us to meet our total requirements solely from our own resources. Thus we must take advantage of large-scale production in allied countries. As the U.S.A. is the world leader in the advanced technologies involved, and because real advantages can be gained by following common North American design and production standards, the U.S.A. becomes a natural source for much of our defence equipment. The U.S.-Canadian production-sharing arrangements enable the Canadian Government to acquire from the U.S.A. a great deal of the nation's essential defence equipment at the lowest possible cost, while at the same time permitting us to offset the resulting drain on the economy by reciprocal sales to the U.S.A. Under these agreements, by reason of longer production runs, Canadian industry is able to participate competitively in U.S. research, development, and production programmes, and is exempted from the "Buy American" Act for these purposes. From a long-term point of view, another major benefit to Canada is the large contribution which these agreements have made and are continuing to make to Canadian industrial research and development capabilities, which, in turn, are fundamental to the maintenance of an advanced technology in Canada.

In this connection, I should perhaps point out that the greater part of U.S. military procurement in Canada consists not of weapons in the conventional sense but rather of electronic equipment, transport aircraft, and various kinds of components and sub-systems. In many cases, the Canadian industries which have developed such products to meet U.S. and continental defence requirements have, at the same time, been able to develop related products with a civil application or have been able to use the technology so acquired to advance their general capabilities. For a broad range of reasons, therefore, it is clear that the imposition of an embargo on the export of military equipment to the U.S.A., and

concomitant termination of the Production Sharing Agreements, would have far-reaching consequences which no Canadian Government could contemplate with equanimity. It would be interpreted as a notice of withdrawal on our part from continental defence and even from the collective defence arrangements of the Atlantic alliance.

With regard to your specific request that we reveal all military production contracts related in any way to the Vietnam war, there is so far as I am aware no way in which the Canadian Government - and perhaps even the U.S. Government - could ascertain the present whereabouts of all items of military equipment purchased in Canada by the U.S.A. Such equipment goes into the general inventory of the U.S. armed forces and may be used for such purposes and in such parts of the world as the U.S. Government may see fit. The converse is true of equipment which is purchased in the U.S.A. by the Canadian Government. This long-standing arrangement - which is sometimes known as the "open border" - reflects the collective defence relationship of Canada and the U.S.A. and is an important element in the broadly-based co-operation of the two countries in the defence field. It would not, in my judgement, be consistent with that relationship for the Canadian Government to seek to impose the sort of restrictions which you suggest, nor am I convinced that, by taking such a step, we should be contributing in any practical way to achieving a political solution to the Vietnam problem.

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