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Canada Sets Limits on Role In Viet Peace Commission

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OTTAWA, Jan. 5—Canadian Foreign Minister Mitchell Sharp warned today that Canada might not serve on the proposed Vietnam cease-fire supervisory commission for more than 60 days if the body was unable to report to a continuing political authority such as an international conference.

"If no such authority was created, or if once created it ceased to exist, Canada would have to reserve the right to withdraw at any time, even after the initial two-month period," Sharp said during a House of Commons debate on the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam.

"In any event, the Canadian government would not accept a commitment beyond two years," Sharp said.

According to the Hanoi version of the draft cease-fire accord, the United States and North Vietnam agreed that an "international guarantee conference" will be convened within 30 days of a cease-fire.

It is presumed that major powers and the parties involved in the Vietnam war will participate in this conference. But it remains unclear how long it will meet and to what body, if any, the supervisory cease-fire commission will report.

Canada has been concerned that it will find itself a party to a supervisory body that has no precise mandate, powers, or procedures and will be as ineffectual as the International Control Commission set up to supervise the 1954 Geneva Accords on Vietnam. Canada served as a member of the ICC, together with Poland and India.

During the House of Commons debate, the Canadian minister also disclosed further conditions posed by Canada for its participation in the supervisory agency, together with Poland, Hungary and Indonesia.

The Canadian commissioners serving on this agency, Sharp said, would refuse to be bound by the rules of unanimity and confidentiality.

"We are conscious of the danger of allowing ourselves

to be frustrated as a member of the new international organization through the possible application of the rule of unanimity," he said in an apparent reference to Canada's past experience on the ICC.

"One way in which this risk could be minimized would be by regarding the new body, not as a diplomatic conference held under the normal rules of confidentiality, but as an international forum where the proceedings are normally open to the public.

"Consequently, we would not regard the new commission's proceedings as confidential or privileged in any way unless there was in any particular instance a unanimous decision of all the members to the contrary. We would instead consider ourselves free to publicize the proceedings in any way we saw fit to insure that our view of events, and if necessary the difference between our view and that of others, were publicly available," Sharp said.

The minister also warned against saddling the cease-fire commission with unrealistic demands. He pointed out, for example, that the commission should not be expected to begin functioning in any part of Vietnam before a cease-fire had been established locally by the belligerents themselves.

Participating countries, Sharp went on to say, should pay the salary and allowance for their own personnel. But they should also contribute to the general overhead and expenses of the organization. Also, the logistical support necessary to make the commission's supervision effective should be available from the outset.

The Trudeau government simply wants to insure, Sharp added, "that Canada's attempt to contribute to peace not be reduced once again to impotence as it has been in the supervisory arrangements in Indochina that emerged from the 1964 and 1962 Geneva conferences."