HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

QUESTION

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

SPEECH

Wednesday, 27 September 1950

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Mr CHIFLEY (Macquarie—Leader of the Opposition) (NaN.NaN pm). - In the first place I would say, and I think that the Prime Minister (Mr. Menzies) will agree, that in any statement on international affairs to-day it is not possible adequately to cover all the ground even by speaking at the length to which the right honorable gentleman has spoken this afternoon. As a matter of fact, the canvas on which the picture of international affairs is painted is so wide that I think it would require at least a couple of hours' speech on my part to describe it, and I do not propose to inflict myself upon the House for more than a very short period. I must say at once that I was rather struck by the Government's present attitude towards the United Nations, to which the Labour movement has always given great support, and in the organization and function of which my distinguished colleague the right honorable member for Barton (Dr. Evatt) played such an important part. I do not want to introduce any particular bitterness into this debate, but I cannot help pointing out the change that has occurred in the attitude of honorable members opposite, who, only a few years ago, used to sneer and scoff at the United Nations and at the right honorable member for Barton, who represented the Australian Government at the deliberations of that body. Honorable members opposite seem now to have found in the United Nations very great merits that they were unable to discover in it in those days. However, in reminding honorable members of that fact I point out that the Prime Minister himself was not conspicuous amongst those who scoffed and sneered at it. I have always regarded the chief merit of the United Nations as being its availability as an international forum for the discussion of grievances and as providing an opportunity for causes of discontent to be brought out into the open. Furthermore, the United Nations provides most valuable opportunities for mediation and conciliation in the settlement of disputes. Quite frankly, I have always doubted the physical strength of the United Nations to enforce its decisions, although I realize that provision is made in the Charter for a force to be gathered together such as would be necessary in the event of the outbreak of another great world war. Whilst I have always realized the limitations of the United Nations, I repeat my belief that it is of very great value as a forum for the expression of views, for the adjustment of grievances, and for the exercise of conciliation among the nations.

The Australian Labour movement has always taken that view of the United Nations and has consistently supported it. Indeed, the United Nations must have the full support of every man and woman who believes that we should do everything we can to avoid another world conflict. I know that it is not fashionable to-day to talk about wanting peace. Indeed, there are people in the world to whom the very word "peace" is anathema. Such people, not only in Australia but also in other countries, seem to spend their time in blackguarding those who advocate peace. Any one who asserts that peace is desirable is accused of being associated with communism or something of that kind. I think that that is a most deplorable tendency. Statements have been made by public officers - indeed, in the case of the United States, by members of the Administration of that country - in which we have been invited to go to war with Russia straightway.

I do not discuss international affairs with the great bitterness and fanaticism which characterizes a number of people. We should avoid that attitude because, if there is one thing that is dangerous to the world to-day, it is the fanatic, whether political or otherwise, who can see only with one eye and with some particular obsession which causes him to endeavour to inflame the minds of others. I want to emphasize, as I have clone before, that the Labour movement recognizes to the full the pernicious doctrines that have been promulgated in the ideology of communism. We entirely disagree not only with the principles associated with communism, but also with the imperialism which now characterizes Russia's policy. We are gravely concerned at the complete failure of the Russians at the United Nations and at other world assemblies to show any real desire for peace, or to bring about agreement between the great nations, and so save the world from the devastation that would inevitably characterize another world war.

With regard to Korea, the principle for which this Parliament stands is enunciated in the motion that was proposed by the Prime Minister at the end of the last sessional period. It is the principle of resistance to the wanton and brutal aggression of the North Koreans, whether they be Communists or something else. There can be no doubt that North Korea is a police state and that its attack upon South Korea was premeditated. Some sections
of the press have been honest enough to state the real position in South Korea and other countries. Although we stand for the principle of giving assistance to the United Nations forces in Korea, which are largely American forces, we do not stand for the kind of government that was in power in South Korea before the present trouble began. I do not doubt that North Korea is a police state which is, if you like, Communist dominated, because the Communists tack themselves on to almost every revolutionary movement, but it is also true to say that the South Korean Government was completely corrupt. In support of that statement, I refer to a report on South Korea prepared by advisers of the United Nations. It stated that in 1949, under the national security provisions of the Rhee Government, 118,000 people were arrested and thrown into gaol, that the Constitution of the country was violated, that the arrests were, in many instances, made brutally, and that some of the arrested persons were subjected to torture. That is an indication of the kind of government that was in power in South Korea prior to the outbreak of the present fighting.

I want to make it clear that our acceptance of the principle of resistance to North Korean aggression must not be taken to mean that the Labour party of this country stands for the support of corrupt governments. There has been a tendency in some quarters to make a pretence of defending Formosa, which would be, in effect, giving protection to Chiang Kai-shek. I do not propose to relate the history of the Chiang Kaishek administration, which is well known to everybody. I am not speaking of the generalissimo himself, but of the Chinese nationalist administration, which was completely corrupt. Perhaps I may say in passing that the administration in the Philippines to-day is something of which no democracy has any reason to be proud. I have emphasized those points in order to make it perfectly clear that the acceptance by the Australian Labour party of the principle enunciated previously by the Prime Minister must not be taken to mean that we are prepared to help to restore to power the kind of governments of which I have spoken.

The Prime Minister has said that the South Koreans and the North Koreans are much the same kind of people. Generally speaking, North Korea is largely industrialized and South Korea is largely an agricultural area. In considering Eastern problems to-day, it is important to bear in mind that the great majority of the inhabitants of Eastern countries entertain a hatred of white people. I do not: think it is misstating the position to say that the great majority of the South Koreans and North Koreans bute tho.ce who are seeking to liberate South Korea. However, that does not affect the principle for which we stand. If, despite the saboteurs in South Korea and those who are not prepared to give support to the liberators, only 10 per cent, or 20 per cent, of the Koreans who have been unjustly and barbarously treated want the United Nations forces to take the action they are now taking, the action of the United Nations is fully justified.

There is another important factor to be borne in mind in considering Eastern problems. Despite all our talk about communism - and we know what communism means, because we have read of it in operation in other countries - there is no doubt that if, in the East, where national aspirations are strong, we persist in a policy of appearing, by becoming involved in these fights, to be supporting outmoded, reactionary and feudal forms of government, we shall finally incur the hatred and hostility of the Eastern peoples. I know that the Prime Minister has read deeply about these matters - perhaps more deeply than I have. I do not profess to know everything about international affairs, as do some people. The Minister for External Affairs (Mr. Spender) stamps round the country one day talking about fighting the Indonesian Government over Dutch New Guinea, yet on the next day talks of friendship with the Eastern peoples. If the honorable gentleman were in the racing world, he would be called before the stipendary stewards after one performance. Australia is a country with a population of approximately 8,000,000. To the north of Australia, excluding the 460,000,000 Chinese, there are approximately 700,000,000 or 800,000,000 Eastern peoples. If this country cannot be on friendly terms with the people of the East, irrespective of the forms of government that they have, the outlook for future Australian generations will be very bad.

I am sorry that the right honorable gentleman, during his travels abroad, was not able to make contact with some of the leaders of Eastern thought such as Mr. Nehru in India, Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan in Pakistan, and Mr. Senanayake in Ceylon. I should have thought that it would have been well worthwhile for the right honorable gentleman to have got from those leaders an appreciation of the position in the East to-day, but I know that his time was limited and that he was working very hard.

Mr Menzies (—) (NaN.NaN pm) - I saw Mr. Senanayake in Colombo. I could not see Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan, because he was in America at that time.

Mr CHIFLEY (—) (NaN.NaN pm) - I understand the right honorable gentleman's difficulties. I believe it to be perfectly clear that if the countries of the world established the principle that, merely because the label "
Communist is attached to a revolutionary movement or a movement arising from discontent, we are to seek to deny the people concerned what will finally be given to them - because what we do or anybody else does about it does not matter - we shall find ourselves in a difficult position. The population of the Eastern countries is increasing rapidly. The population of Japan has increased by 11,000,000 since the beginning of World War II, and is continuing to increase at the rate of 1,800,000 a year. The population of India and Pakistan is increasing by 4,500,000 a year, and it will not be long before there are 80,000,000 people in Indonesia and the countries associated with it. If we take the broad view that we must resist aggression, and thereby wedge a buttress against the ideology and imperialism of Russia, we must not be blind to the fact that there is an upsurge of nationalism in the East. Had it not been for the degree of independence that was granted to India, Pakistan, and Ceylon by the British Government, the whole of the East would have been aflame to-day. At once I give credit to Mr. Winston Churchill, who despatched Lord Louis Mountbatten as a mediator. Mr. Winston Churchill agreed, on general principles, that that was the soundest policy to pursue. If, as some people have suggested should be done, we were to pursue communism to every corner of the world, I contend that the western democracies would be bled white and would not achieve success. If Chiang Kai-shek were to return to China the effect on the population of that country of approximately 460,000,000 people would doubtless be revolutionary. I agree with what has been said about the Chinese by a prominent English statesman, and also by an eastern statesman. The history of the Chinese people shows that although they get what they can from other nations, they remain Chinese fundamentally. I am convinced that China will never become a satellite of any other nation. I refuse to believe that, whatever doctrines are absorbed by the Chinese, that country will ever be anything other than China. Indeed, it could very easily form a buttress against the inroad of communism in the East.

I shall not, during this address, attempt to deal with all aspects of this matter. However, I am convinced that it was a grave diplomatic mistake for the United States of America to set its face against the admission of the present Chinese Government to the United Nations. I understand that the representative of the Australian Government also voted against its admission. The Prime Minister has referred to realities. I agree with him that we should not forget realities. "We should recognize the real position in China. A country with a population of about 460,000,000 people, whatever faults and mistakes influenced the formulation of its policy, cannot be ignored in world affairs. I am not suggesting that we should appease China. But we should not decline to recognize the present Government of China merely because we do not agree with the politics of that country. It would be complete diplomatic foolishness to do so. That is why the British Government has already recognized the new Government of China. I repeat that we must apply cold logic to this subject. If the western democracies attempt to close down on every nationalist movement for self-determination in the East they will succeed merely in bleeding themselves white. The Prime Minister has admitted that the South Koreans and North Koreans are similar types of people, and that great difficulties will confront the United Nations forces when they reach the 38th parallel in Korea. If those forces continue beyond the 38th parallel they will become aggressors. The only alternative would be to establish an occupation force in South Korea and to re-establish a corrupt government in office. This problem cannot be resolved lightly.