

familiar to hon. members. The communiqué reflecting the proceedings has also been made public, and I should like to take this opportunity to table a copy of it in each of the official languages.

Mr. Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Trudeau: This meeting, Mr. Speaker, gave me an opportunity to emphasize to our NATO allies that it is in the interest of the alliance and in the interest of Canadians that our political adherence to NATO remain firm and that our military contribution remain effective. By effective, I mean both cost-effective and military-effective. The purpose of the defence structure review is to ensure that those goals are met. I may say that the contribution of the Canadian armed forces in Europe is highly prized. The professionalism of our troops and airmen is recognized by each member of the alliance, and it was impressed upon me by some of my NATO colleagues how disappointed they would be should any Canadian government at any time take any steps to lessen the effectiveness of the Canadian military contribution.

During the course of the meeting I proposed that there be more frequent opportunities for heads of government to consult with one another and that this opportunity should permit consultations of an informal kind for these, in my experience, were of great value. I used the Commonwealth heads of government meeting experience as an example as I put forward this proposal.

I am happy to report, Mr. Speaker, that the suggestion was taken up in positive terms immediately by the President of the United States and by the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. During the ensuing discussion, by far the greater number of countries indicated their interest in the idea.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity in Brussels to meet on a bilateral basis with President Ford and several other heads of governments. The meeting also allowed me to meet the president and two of the vice-presidents of the European Community, with whom I talked rather extensively about the formal support the commission gave to the Canadian proposal on the establishment of a contract agreement with the European Community. With the same objective in view, I also went to Denmark and to Luxembourg. Both visits completed the series of discussions I had in the capitals with the heads of the governments of all the member countries of the European Economic Community. During these visits, I could explain that Canada was willing to negotiate the establishment of official relations with the community; in return, I received the assurance that the matter is being considered favourably. During my discussions with the chairman of the commission, I was informed that the community will open an office in Ottawa before the end of the year.

[English]

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a very brief reply. If I am brief, let me add it is only because I am particularly well-informed on this subject that I can reply at all. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), I understand, had some

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difficulty in deciding he would make any statement; it was only at 2.15, apparently, that he made up his mind and I received a copy. I am glad I received one at all.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Just as well if you had not.

Mr. Stanfield: The Prime Minister referred to the respect in which our troops are held in Europe. There can be no doubt about the respect for the quality of our personnel. Frankly, though, I think there is a good deal of doubt about the way in which our troops are equipped.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

• (1620)

Mr. Stanfield: I must also say, not because of anything the Prime Minister said this afternoon but because of statements made recently by the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Richardson), that the government's position regarding our contribution to NATO is rather ambiguous. The Minister of National Defence, as I understood him, said that we have to consider the question of quality as well as quantity. I think there is a great deal of doubt in this country today about precisely what we are committed to do with respect to NATO, and I have to say to the right hon. gentleman that he did not do anything here this afternoon to clarify that doubt.

The Prime Minister said how disappointed our NATO colleagues would be should any Canadian government at any time take any steps to lessen the effectiveness of Canadian military contributions to NATO. I hope it is not unsporting of me to remind the right hon. gentleman that that is one of the first things he did after taking office.

I am also a little puzzled by the Prime Minister's reference to the desirability of more frequent opportunities for heads of government to consult with one another. That is another way of describing a summit meeting, I would think. I understood the Prime Minister, a few weeks ago, to have very considerable doubt about whether a summit meeting, at that time at least, would be useful. I do not know whether the right hon. gentleman has been so impressed by what took place at this summit that he has changed his mind or quite what he is getting at. As I say, he seemed to be taking the position a few weeks ago that a NATO summit was something that should take place only under quite precise and propitious conditions. He is now suggesting summits as a continuing institution.

Although he did not say so in this statement, in another statement the Prime Minister is reported as having said that NATO needs the continued support of the people. There can be no doubt about that. I would have to ask the right hon. gentleman how much he and his government have done to encourage the Canadian people in that regard. How much leadership have they given the Canadian people to enable them to appreciate and to support our role in the NATO alliance?

With regard to the missing link or the search for the link with the European Economic Community, I say this is good if it continues. The interest of the Prime Minister in the Common Market is a little late, but certainly it is better to be late than never. I for one would be grateful for some clarification as to what kind of contractual link the