

North Atlantic Treaty

It is a pact of mutual security, but one which under no circumstances can serve as a pretext for offensive aggression. We are signing it as a defence pact against aggression and I am positive that no Canadian would have it serve as an instrument of offensive aggression against anyone. None of the member governments would want to use it as communists claim we wish to use it, as a green light to shower atomic bombs upon them.

We want to avoid war. We want to resist any aggression; but if ever, which we do not recognize as a possibility, anyone sought to use it as authority to start an offensive war, we would be fully justified by the terms of the pact and absolutely bound by our responsibilities to our country and to our families to say: "That is not what it was designed for. It must not operate that way."

If, however, an act of aggression is committed against any of us, it will constitute an aggression against all the nations that have signed the pact. Then each will be bound on its national honour, to take in accordance with its own constitutional practice, such measures as the nation itself, its parliament and its government, consider best calculated to fulfil the obligations it has assumed in order to repel that aggression and restore peace.

I suggest that all hon. members of this house carefully consider the pact, and I venture to hope that, after they have done so, they will come to the conclusion that it constitutes a firm assurance to themselves and to future generations against the horrors of war.

(Text):

Mr. George A. Drew (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, this is the first time that the draft of the North Atlantic pact has been before us for consideration. For that reason it is the first occasion on which the hon. members of this house have had the opportunity to discuss this vitally important draft agreement with actual knowledge of its contents. It is therefore desirable to review the events leading up to the presentation of the motion now before us and what it is we are called upon to decide.

It is my earnest hope, and in this I am speaking for the party which I have the honour to lead, that this resolution will receive the unanimous and wholehearted support of every hon. member of this house. But our responsibility does not end there. Those who represent Canada at Washington, when the North Atlantic pact is put in final form for signature by the representatives of the participating nations, should receive from

[Mr. St. Laurent.]

us a clear indication of the sentiment of this house as to the way in which this pact should and can serve the high purpose for which it has been prepared.

As we acclaim this declaration of collective responsibility for the defence of freedom, let us remember that words in themselves offer little assurance of security through the years ahead. Far more important than anything stated by written words is the spirit behind those words and the extent to which the agreeing nations are really prepared to carry out the declared intention of the pact.

We will be deluding ourselves in a very dangerous manner if we believe that the signing of such a pact in itself assures peace, or the preservation of our freedom. It offers the promise of freedom and peace only if it becomes a living instrument of effective and continuing co-operation between the nations. It creates a great partnership of free people, but the success or failure of that partnership will depend, not upon the terms of the partnership agreement, but upon the way in which the partners work together after the agreement is signed.

It would be easy and very comforting to hail this pact as the dawn of a great new day and the positive assurance of peace in our time. We would, however, be unfaithful to the people of Canada if our discussions here left any such impression. This is nothing more than the draft of an agreement under which the free nations of the North Atlantic community undertake to work together to protect themselves against aggression and to preserve their freedom. Although the words may be different, and the nations which are prepared to sign the agreement may constitute a different group, there is little which distinguishes this pact from others which have preceded it. The tragic history of the past fifty years is very largely the history of the failure of one peace pact after another to preserve peace. Let us not forget for one moment the dreadful reality to which all our discussion of this subject is now related. A new pact is before us because the security council of the United Nations has failed to give us adequate assurance of security. Any evasion of that unpalatable truth will confuse the discussion here and mislead the Canadian people whom we serve. Every Canadian hopes that the dream of an effective world-embracing United Nations organization may still become a working reality, but we know that this has not yet happened, and we hope that this pact, which is within the provisions of the United Nations charter, will bring us nearer to that great and much desired objective.

We should also remember that we take on no new obligations which we have not