

the non-military aspects of the Alliance. Mr. Pearkes wondered whether a sort of European Colombo Plan was envisaged, under which the more fortunate countries of the NATO Alliance would make contributions towards the economic development of the less fortunate countries. Mr. Pearson replied that he did not see any such immediate requirement. There had been general agreement that NATO in its present form was not the best agency for economic planning for assistance to other countries, nor for discussions in order to bring about increased trade and commercial relations between its members. Other economic agencies such as the Organization for European Economic Co-operation and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade had been designed for this purpose and were working effectively. It would be wrong for NATO to duplicate the work of these and other international agencies. The Minister said that there was already enough international machinery and that the problem was rather to make this existing machinery work. He did not think that NATO as such would be a very effective agency for international economic assistance because the political and defensive character of NATO might give rise to doubts in the minds of some of the receiving countries, especially in Asia, as to the objective character of any assistance which might be given. The NATO Foreign Ministers had agreed that, while the NATO countries should take a lead in providing international economic assistance and the NATO Council provided a good forum for an exchange of views on this subject, existing machinery such as the Colombo Plan and the United Nations should not be duplicated or superseded. However, this was one of the questions which would be examined further by the Committee of Three.

Mr. Stick, M.P. for Trinity-Conception, enquired whether political co-operation as distinct from economic co-operation had been discussed at the ministerial meeting. Mr. Pearson replied that the Ministers had had the best and most comprehensive discussion on political consultation inside NATO that he had attended since the NATO Council was formed. There had been general agreement that the NATO Council had not been used for political consultation by its members to the fullest extent, and that they should try to develop political co-operation in the Council by holding more frequent meetings and by increasing the authority and prestige of the Permanent Council. Mr. Pearson stated that member countries should develop the habit of consultation to a point where no member government would take any major step in foreign policy which had consequences for the other members of the Alliance without first discussing it in the Council. However, although this was agreed in principle, it would not be easy to work it out in practice. One of the Council members had pointed out that consultation, in order to be effective, must sometimes lead to commitments. The Minister felt that a distinction should be made between two kinds of consultation: consultation through which the member governments simply exchanged information about what they were doing individually without asking for assistance or advice, and consultation designed to bring about uniformity in policy which often involved assuming additional commitments.

Mr. Stick then asked whether there had been any developments towards closer economic co-operation between France and Germany. Mr. Pearson replied that an illustration of closer economic co-operation between these two countries could be found in the discussions which began at Messina, and which were continuing between the six countries of the Western European Union,