

NATO

press briefing given by the minister at the Canadian embassy he was asked when the Canadian government was going to tell NATO what is proposed by way of reduction and, quoting from the transcript, he replied:

Mr. Sharp: The Prime Minister announced that at the meeting of the defence planning committee that the plans of the Canadian government would be laid before the defence ministers.

Question: So the decision is going to be taken before the meeting?

Mr. Sharp: Well, obviously.

Then we come back to the House of Commons and on April 14 the Prime Minister said, no, that is not right, the decision will be taken before, and the final decision will be made in August of this year. Just two days later the Minister of National Defence said the discussion would go on until December of this year before there was any final decision.

• (3:40 p.m.)

The Prime Minister succeeded in further shrouding the whole subject in mystery in his Calgary speech when he said:

And that is why we will not say, until our foreign policy has been determined and presented to parliament, and presented to the country—we will not say, in a final way, what forces we will put into NATO and what forces we will draw out of NATO.

That sounds like one of the statements on bank deposits by a former minister of finance. But unfortunately it does not enlighten us very much on the question of defending Canada or the free world. The Prime Minister explained that this process of policy review would be a long one. If we have to wait until it terminates, and if it is as long as he indicated in Calgary it would be, the Nato allies will not get any firm proposition from the government and we will not be told about it in May or August and probably not in December.

We all know that the Prime Minister went out west to ski, but some of us have the impression that he did some pretty fancy skating while he was in Calgary. The point is, how can anybody in Canada or in the world at large now have the slightest confidence in anything these gentlemen say about their plans in this respect?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: Having allowed for the attempt to confuse people, including his own colleagues, as to what the policy actually is, and leaving aside the very obvious ignorance of his own responsible ministers as to what

[Mr. Stanfield.]

this policy is and when it is to be determined, what do we have as a basis for judging the policy intentions and policy directions of this government? Principally, we have the Prime Minister's statement of April 3, his Calgary speech of April 12, and what I would call his non-speech of today in terms of further enlightening us on this matter.

I mean no offence to the Secretary of State for External Affairs or to the Minister of National Defence when I say that their utterances on this subject are of minimal importance, because like the rest of us they have to study the Prime Minister's speeches and then read Anthony Westell's column to get an idea of what the policy is going to be. The Prime Minister said in Calgary:

I think the people in the armed forces have a right to know where we are going.

That is one sentiment we can all heartily endorse. When they find out, let us hope they will tell the rest of us. The Prime Minister, no doubt after long reflection, has concluded that foreign policy comes before defence policy, that defence policy must flow from foreign policy. This, of course, is a vast oversimplification; the two obviously must be interrelated. It would be virtually just as foolish to develop a foreign policy without regard to defence policy as it would be to try to develop a defence policy without regard to foreign policy. They must be interrelated. The Prime Minister pronounced a geometric theorem in Calgary, and I quote him again. I hope he is flattered by all the careful attention I have given to his comments there. The Prime Minister said:

—NATO had in reality determined all of our defence policy. We had no defence policy, so to speak, except that of NATO. And our defence policy had determined all of our foreign policy. And we had no foreign policy of any importance except that which flowed from NATO.

It reads almost like the Old Testament, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: Euclid himself could not have evolved a theorem more clearly designed to demonstrate the incompetence of previous Liberal administrations in this country. When the Prime Minister of Canada says that we had no foreign policy of any importance except that which flowed from NATO, I say to him that is not so. I say to him that is a slander on the man he attempted to praise here today.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.