

would never have got us into that position. And now the Prime Minister says the facts are as he stated they were. There is no confusion so far as he is concerned. Everything is fine; the facts were as stated by him. If the facts were as stated by the Prime Minister on this matter in the house, why was it exception taken to those facts not only by the state department of the United States but by the minister of national defence in the government, up to the point where the minister felt he had to resign? Could there be a more dramatic example of confusion inside the cabinet, which leads to confusion inside parliament, and which leads to confusion inside the country?

Our concern on this side is to get the facts, to find out the truth in these matters before the efforts of the government to conceal all the facts or obscure all the truth will poison the relations between ourselves and our closest neighbour. The most dangerous and damaging result of the indecision, delay and confusion of the government in this field of defence policy is in the deterioration that it has brought about in our relations with our allies in NATO.

When the Prime Minister talks about the desirability of consultation before action is taken by one member of a coalition which affects the others, especially by the United States, we on this side agree with him. We have been talking like that for years. There is no doubt about that; but if the Prime Minister is so sensitive in these matters he should have been more careful than to get up in this house and disclose confidential negotiations, confidential negotiations which are apparently so secret and so important that we cannot find out from this government, as we tried even today, which department of the Canadian government is carrying them on.

This is just another indication of the kind of leadership we have been getting in this parliament and in this country. But now the Prime Minister says, "Well, we don't have to do anything now, notwithstanding the minister of national defence, notwithstanding this controversy regarding the carrying out of the obligations we have undertaken, because the NATO council is going to meet in May and we will leave it to the NATO council to advise us what should be done and what changes should be made in our defence policy."

This is just another excuse for delay. As the minister of national defence said, the time has now come to make a decision. The Prime Minister says, "No; no, we won't make a decision because the NATO council is going

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to meet here in May, and there was a conference in Nassau in December and they talked about these things; so let us wait for a while until we see what the other members of NATO are going to do."

Mr. Diefenbaker: Isn't that what the other countries in NATO are saying?

Mr. Pearson: It certainly is not. Every country in NATO, except Canada, have accepted commitments which they are in a position to try to carry out. They have either accepted commitments which require nuclear warheads on their territory and have made political agreements with the United States for that purpose, even though the nuclear warheads may not have arrived, or they let the NATO council know at the beginning that they were not going to have nuclear warheads. That is not the position the Canadian government—

Mr. Diefenbaker: What about the changes that are taking place in defence, in Turkey and in Italy—

Mr. Pearson: I know all about these changes and I know how the Prime Minister is seizing on these changes as an escape hatch for his own lack of policy. I know perfectly well that in Turkey and in Italy NATO nuclear, intermediate missile bases are now to be abandoned in favour of another form of nuclear tactical deterrent. I know also—and this was made clear by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom in the House of Commons the other day—that nothing that happened at Nassau, notwithstanding what the Prime Minister said, affects the obligations of Canada inside the coalition at this time; indeed that is what the secretary of state has himself said and repeated in his apologetic statement the other evening.

Mr. Green: Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Pearson) a question? Could he explain to the house why he changed his nuclear policy so suddenly?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): At least he had the courage to state a policy.

Mr. Pearson: I make my statement along the lines of the minister of national defence in the statement put out by him this afternoon. The time had come when somebody had to make a decision—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pearson: —and, Mr. Speaker, if only the government of this country would make some decisions on these matters, if only the government would accept its responsibility in these matters, then we in this house would be able to decide whether we would support or