

NATO

ability to play a part in the security system, and our ability to take initiatives in seeking ways of reducing tensions between east and west.

It seems to me that there is a real danger, and we have seen evidences of it in this debate, that we may lose our perspective and see our interests in Europe as being no more than military. I emphasize that we have infinitely more at stake than a mere military role. We need Europe, and Europe needs us.

Some 20 years ago, Mr. Speaker, Europe was recovering from a devastating war. There was all sorts of evidence of aggressive Russian intentions. Europe was weak and we were strong. We ranked behind the United States as the No. 2 power economically, and behind the United Kingdom and the United States as No. 3 militarily. But we also needed Europe because we needed collective security. And while Europe needs us today, it needs us in a different way.

Europe has recovered economically, but it requires our partnership in NATO for the political role that we can play. In this connection I would like to say something about the importance of Europe and NATO to our national identity. I think the sense of Canadian identity requires more than bilingualism or an acknowledgement of our multicultural nature. These are very important. They help to identify us, but bilingualism and multiculturalism by themselves are not the same thing as identity. We find our identity in the things we do well. It reposes in our self-respect and our national pride. It is revealed best when we share a common purpose with others. Our identity as a nation will not be viewed in the same way by all Canadians. Our experience and our cultural heritage will influence our point of view; but our identity as a nation will develop as we pursue common goals with others.

● (9:10 p.m.)

I should like to return to a view that has been put by some speakers. The voice has been heard in the land that today Europe is strong, that it no longer needs us. I should like to deal with two aspects of this as being misleading. I have already mentioned one. Europe today needs us for different reasons than it did twenty years ago. It needs us for the political contribution we can make by virtue of our military participation in Europe and our unique position within the alliance. Secondly, in my view the argument is false because it ignores, as I think I have already

said, the other side of the coin; Canada still needs Europe. NATO is important to us because it is multilateral, because it provides an institutional connection with the second most powerful area in the western world.

NATO also provides Canadian parliamentarians with an opportunity to meet and communicate with parliamentarians of the NATO countries. While I would not want to over-emphasize this as one of the benefits of our participation in NATO, I think it is something worth remembering and remarking on at this time. Again referring to the North Atlantic assembly, last November I was privileged to attend as a member of the Canadian parliamentary delegation, most ably led by Senator Aird. I very much regret his resignation but I respect his reasons for it. He will be missed.

Canadians do not have the same opportunities as Europeans to meet and discuss matters of public policy or of joint or international initiative at the parliamentary level; nor do we have the same opportunity to discuss conflicting international interests in a public forum with other parliamentarians. I think the North Atlantic assembly is important to Canadians because it provides them with an opportunity to discuss international matters with others so involved.

Thus, for reasons of collective security and stabilization of the world order, for reasons of national identity and for economic and trade reasons, NATO and Europe are important to us. More particularly, our membership is important to us because it will enable us to play a creative role in reducing the tensions of the world.

Finally, I should like to refer to one matter with which I dealt in my third point and which was dealt with in the Prime Minister's speech. I refer to the question of nuclear weapons. Surely, we have a major responsibility to seek ways of reducing and not just limiting the number of persons in the nuclear club. While we can take pride in the fact that we have signed the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, let us make every effort to reduce our own nuclear participation so that we may encourage others to take the same step. I refer in particular to the fact that Germany has not yet signed the non-proliferation treaty. I think this is a matter of concern to Canadians as I think it is to the people of many other countries. I feel our membership in NATO will be important in securing this objective.