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OTTAWA MEETING OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC ALLIANCE

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Mitchell Sharp, addressed ministers of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization on September 27 at the first meeting of the alliance ever held in Ottawa. Passages from his speech follow:

...The North Atlantic alliance is based on a treaty between sovereign nations as represented by governments. With few exceptions these are freely-elected governments, responsible to their citizens through powerful elected legislatures. These legislatures are at once an essential support to their governments and an essential check on the exercise of executive power. A treaty organization made up of freely-elected governments must be a voluntary association, held together by shared beliefs and shared objectives.

Despite the exceptions, our alliance is a reflection of the people's will expressed in the ballot-box. It is this foundation that explains why our countries have banded together for their common defence and it is this foundation which provides the sustaining force that has kept the alliance strong and closely knit for a quarter of a century.

It is governments that have the power to take decisions on NATO issues. Speaking for the Canadian Government, I can say that in the exercise of the decision-making power we recognize the vital importance of the role of individual Members of Parliament and the legislature itself. Members of Parliament can affect and have affected decisions on foreign policy by their votes on the Government's actions. They are in close contact with people in all walks of life across the country and keep the Government aware of and in touch with changing public views and attitudes. They are extending their knowledge and interest in foreign affairs and their views are increasingly well-informed. In Canada, for example, our Senate and Commons Committees on External Affairs and Defence have developed a considerable degree of expertise and are playing a useful role in the development of policy.

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DANGERS OF TRADE WAR

At the NATO meeting last December, I expressed Canada's growing concern about the dangers of a trade confrontation between Europe and America, and the harm this would do to the solidarity of our alliance, apart from its effect on Canada.

In the event these were prophetic words, such a confrontation is no longer just a possibility; unfortunately it is a fact. And all of us who are concerned about the future of the North Atlantic alliance should be doing all in our power to ensure that the problems arising out of the balance-of-payments deficit of the United States are handled in such a way as to promote, not impede, co-operation between the member countries.

I appreciate that, as Secretary Connally has indicated, the United States measures are intended to provide a deliberate shake-up, so as to create an

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