

*Report of Minister on Scandinavia*

that our action would necessitate readjustments within NATO and they stressed the importance of both the timing and the possible psychological repercussions as factors to be carefully weighed. However, I am confident that they have a better understanding now of our objectives and that they are reassured of our intention to maintain an effective Canadian military presence in Europe.

Another aspect of our foreign policy review which attracted considerable interest was our decision to open negotiations on diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. All the Nordic countries except Iceland have embassies in Peking and I formed the impression that they welcomed the Canadian initiative. I also took advantage of my presence in Stockholm to get a personal report on this subject from our Ambassador there.

We had some very useful exchanges of views in the Nordic capitals about the general question of east-west relations and European security. I explained Canada's vital interest in the search for détente between east and west and for a lasting solution to Europe's security problems. This was why we had welcomed the various initiatives, including the Budapest Declaration, that had been taken concerning the possibility of holding a conference on European security.

I expressed support in particular for the positive but realistic approach of the Finnish government and for their view that any conference that might eventually meet should be without pre-conditions, should be fully prepared, should involve all countries concerned and, above all, should be assured of reasonable prospects for success.

The west at least had no interest in a conference that failed and it would therefore be wise to proceed step by step, sounding out the possibilities of agreement beginning with the easier problems and moving on gradually to the more difficult ones. I explained that we envisaged this in terms of a steady on-going process, in which NATO consultations had an important role to play, rather than in terms of some great occasion on which there was likely to be an abrupt clash of views on stubborn points of contention. I also made it clear that Canada intended to be involved in this process from the beginning and throughout. I found that there was a near identity of view on these points between all the Nordic governments and ourselves, and it was agreed that we should keep in close touch as bilateral consultations proceeded.

[Mr. Sharp.]

We also had an opportunity to discuss developments in western Europe, including future prospects for the European Common Market and its relationship to proposals for a Nordic economic union. We found it useful to compare notes on the situation in the Middle East, in Nigeria and in Viet Nam. We exchanged views on the disarmament negotiations and on United Nations matters, including peace keeping operations and the provision of aid in disaster situations. On all these questions we found that more often than not our appreciation and approach were very close to those of the various Nordic governments.

In each capital we discussed a number of bilateral questions concerned with trade and other forms of exchange. It should be borne in mind that Canada is the second best customer for Denmark and Sweden. We found everywhere a desire to increase co-operation on a functional basis and some specific suggestions were discussed, particularly in the economic, scientific and technological fields. Interest was expressed in reciprocal visits by parliamentarians and I hope, Mr. Speaker, to have a chance to discuss this with you at an early date.

In meetings with the public media as well as with governmental authorities, I made a special point of explaining Canadian policies and objectives in terms designed to make clear that we had our own view of the world, our own aspirations and our own way of doing things that were not quite like anybody else's. As a result I think there is a better knowledge of Canada in the Nordic countries and a better appreciation of the possibilities for our working together. I, in turn, have a much clearer picture of these countries and their peoples and of the prospects for joint action.

**Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, ordinarily it might be difficult to know whether I should commence my remarks with a quotation from Confucius or from Hans Christian Andersen, but in the circumstances I must begin by protesting the failure of the minister to make this statement in the house on Friday.

**Mr. Sharp:** It wasn't ready then.

**Mr. Stanfield:** Mr. Speaker, it must have taken a long time to prepare this statement—

**Mr. Harkness:** It always takes a long time to try to make something out of nothing.