

NATO

Mr. Trudeau: To those who will tell me that this is not the time for change—tomorrow perhaps but not now—to them I refer to the nostalgic lyrics of the popular song “Those were the days, my friend, we thought they’d never end.” They did end, Mr. Speaker. In the history of mankind, many days have ended and those who have been unprepared to adapt to new forces have ended with them. We do not propose that fate for Canada and our civilization. We on this side are saying to Canadians: “These are the days, my friend”.

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I might begin by suggesting that this is not one of the Prime Minister’s better days. We have heard a lot of general discussion this afternoon and a lot of high-flown sentiment, most of which I suggest really has nothing to do with the motion before the house. The motion asks us to support continued Canadian participation in NATO, which we do. It also asks us to support the intention of the government, in consultation with our allies, to take early steps to bring about a planned and phased reduction of the size of Canadian forces in Europe. Those words could mean that only 12 servicemen will be left in Europe, that only 12 servicemen will be brought home from Europe, or anything in between. That is exactly what this resolution was designed to do, to mean anything anybody wants it to mean.

Is this the way honest men in government, to use the Prime Minister’s self-portrait in Calgary, state their policy? Is this the way a responsible leader of government tells Canada and the world what is the intent in respect of Canada’s foreign and defence policy, by making statements deliberately intended to mean different things to different people? This tactic would only be justified, sir, if it confused our enemies as much as it confuses the people of Canada.

Some people say that this technique is extremely clever, that it is cute and is smart politics, but I thought this was the age of meaningful dialogue between the government and the people. I thought this was to be a participatory democracy and that people were going to be plugged into the political process and the process of decision-making. I thought the dominant characteristics of the just society in the relationship between the government and the people was to have been a rigorous, intellectual honesty. Some intellect and some honesty, Mr. Speaker! Not even

Mackenzie King at his most devious, or Jack Pickersgill with his bag of tricks, would have tried to mislead and confuse the country to the extent now being attempted by the present Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). It is just not credible, it is just not believable, that the government has formulated a policy of making a planned and phased reduction of our forces in Europe without having come to some decision as to how big a reduction will be made, what kind of a reduction is likely and what the timing will be. Even the Liberal backbenchers do not believe that. They have to pretend they believe it, but we do not.

The Prime Minister says the government has not decided on how big a reduction, what kind of reduction or what the timing will be. Then what are we being asked to vote on in this motion? It is a nothing motion designed, as I said, to mean anything anybody wants it to mean. I feel sure it means something different to the Minister of Communications (Mr. Kierans) than it does to the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp). I do not know why the Prime Minister bothers to dissemble in the way he does. He would not have any trouble with this cabinet. If he were to decide to join the Warsaw Pact I am sure the Secretary of State for External Affairs would rationalize that decision for him. These cabinet members are as docile a bunch of kittens as one could find anywhere, and when the Prime Minister puts his tongue in his cheek at his press conference and told how “strong men have strong opinions”, you could have heard them purr.

As to the timing of the reduction and the method of bringing it about, of course the statements of the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Cadieux) and the Secretary of State for External Affairs have been contradictory. Both of them have contradicted the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister has contradicted both of them. Now the Prime Minister has contradicted himself. On April 3, at his press conference, the Prime Minister said:

The Canadian force commitment for deployment with NATO in Europe beyond this period will be discussed with our allies at the meeting of the defence planning committee of NATO in May.

He meant beyond the year 1969. Later at the same conference the Prime Minister said in reply to a question:

We intend to go to the alliance in May and say that this is what we want to do with our forces.

A week later the Secretary of State for External Affairs was in Washington and at a