

NATO

Adoption of an independent foreign policy has many consequences. First and most important, it involves the acceptance of the principle that Canada's independence, not just political independence but economic independence as well, is not negotiable. Here we must think particularly of our American neighbour. In all our relations with the United States it must be made entirely clear that, while we are willing and anxious to enter into co-operative arrangements in many fields, these arrangements must be on terms which will preserve our sovereignty and basic independence and leave us free to make our own decisions.

I repeat that such an independent policy is not a policy of isolation. It recognizes that our most basic requirement is peace and that peace must be based on collective security. Specifically, it recognizes our continued interest in relations with western Europe and the Atlantic area. But it emphasizes, too, that we are also a Pacific power and have a vital interest in developing relations with the countries in the Pacific area. It recognizes that we have vast resources in the north and in the Arctic area to protect and develop and vital interests in the vast, rich, continental shelf extending many miles from our shores. It also recognizes that while regional alliances such as NATO may continue to be necessary for many years, they are not enough, and that Canada's vital interest in the maintenance of peace can only be achieved through the continued evolution and strengthening of a world organization such as the United Nations.

Some of the military consequences of the adoption of this independent foreign policy are now being worked out by the cabinet. One can only speculate as to the result of this review. However, it is possible that it may lead to a decision to emphasize a multi-purpose mobile force based in Canada which would be available for Canada's own needs, in protecting its own territories and coastal waters, in assisting its allies, and for United Nations peacekeeping operations.

The Prime Minister has been careful not to promise that the changes would result in cutting military forces or expenditures. However, if a multi-purpose force were adopted, such a decision could conceivably lead over a period of years to a substantial reduction in our armed forces and a similar reduction in our military expenditures. This would be a target worth shooting for. Certainly, if we do not reduce troop strength, military expenditures will increase rapidly simply because of

[Mr. Wahn.]

the ever-increasing cost of equipment and services.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, our military expenditures amounted to approximately \$1.8 billion. In the war years our annual average expenditure was \$1.5 billion. I realize that today the dollar is worth less than two-thirds as much as it was during the war. Nevertheless, I was surprised to find that last year, in peacetime, our military budget was almost as high as our average military budget during the last great war, and I would hope it can be reduced very substantially if our forces are reorganized along the lines I have suggested.

As I have said, I interpret the Prime Minister's declaration as being a declaration of independence in foreign policy, a statement that henceforth we shall determine our foreign policy, in consultation with our allies and friends, basically in the light of our own national interests. The time has passed when we could rely on other countries to make these decisions for us. In future we must make our own decisions. Our policies may sometimes be right; they may sometimes be wrong. But the important thing, to my mind, is that they will be made in Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. W. B. Nesbitt (Oxford): Mr. Speaker, I must say I was surprised that the previous speaker, like the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), should have followed the line of making some unflattering observations concerning the conduct of our foreign policy by the former prime minister and, indeed, by the former secretary of state for external affairs. However, I suppose these are matters of opinion.

I believe there is one thing upon which we all agree, namely, that peace in the world is the object and purpose of our foreign policy, first, in order that we may develop our own great resources and, second, because Canadians are morally opposed to the use of war to solve world problems. Another consideration, and perhaps the most important of all, is that we should all be destroyed in the event of a nuclear war breaking out between the two great powers in the world today, the Soviet Union and the United States.

One should be cautious, however, about assuming that all other nations share these foreign policy objectives or act from the same motives. I would point out that the Soviet Union has seized by force some 13 of its neighbours since 1939. We should not make the mistake of assuming that because