

The North Atlantic Assembly enables parliamentarians to involve themselves in foreign affairs and expand their knowledge by discussing the vital issues of the day with their counterparts from other NATO countries. As the representative of a Government committed to the principles and policies of the Atlantic alliance, I hope that the exchange of views which takes place here will confirm the solidarity of the alliance - not for solidarity's sake alone, but as a result of analytical examination of why NATO exists and what we collectively and individually derive from it. While an open examination runs the risk of disenchantment, it is my view that a searching look at fundamentals can only benefit the alliance. Self-delusion and a stand-pat attitude based on a superficial appreciation of reality will only lead to the alliance's demise.

The alliance will remain strong as long as it enjoys wide public support in all its member nations. Parliamentarians have an essential role to play in explaining alliance actions and policies to the people so that their support can be based on a proper understanding of what the alliance is about. In the end, public support depends on public acceptance of the alliance as a body to which their country should belong. This acceptance is threatened when member governments fail to live up to certain minimum standards in the conduct of their affairs, whether this be by abrogation of the democratic process, by adherence to a colonialist policy or otherwise. Full acceptance of the alliance can also be threatened if it appears to others that a member nation is taking unilateral action in its own interest at their expense.

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 shakeup, so as to create an atmosphere in which some of the deep-seated problems in the monetary and trading systems can be solved by the world community working in concert. But the United States measures will be effective for this purpose only if our sense of mutual confidence is preserved. I regret to have to add that the result so far has been to disturb rather than to preserve that sense of mutual confidence.

I do not intend, this morning, to deal with the military aspect of the alliance. It is not my area of responsibility, nor do I think that there are any general comments I could make that would be particularly useful at this time. I should, however, like to draw to your attention the White Paper on Defence issued by the Canadian Government last month under the authority of my colleague the Honourable Donald S. Macdonald, Minister of National Defence.