

the department of External Affairs. It was inadequate for the job it was supposed to do, not in quality but certainly in quantity. We cut down to the very bone, so we were not able to do all the things we would have liked to have done. We are building up on that foundation and have reached a point, I think, where we are doing a better job than we were a few years ago.

I would not plead guilty--I am not suggesting any charge has been levelled--to the charge that we have defaulted in this obligation to keep the people informed as to what the government is doing in the field of external affairs. I have in my hand a report of the documents that are issued by the department in an effort to inform those who are interested in what we are doing. The annual report of the Department of External Affairs is now a comprehensive document. The annual report of the United Nations' activities is also a comprehensive and useful document outlining government policy. In addition to that the department has commenced the publication of a monthly bulletin on external affairs which includes articles, memoranda and other information explaining the policy of the government in this field. I have no doubt some hon. members have had an opportunity of reading that bulletin. In the recent issues we have attempted to explain not only what we have been doing but why we have done it.

That is one thing, but it is quite another thing, Mr. Speaker, to indulge in what I may call house-top diplomacy. There is a danger in prematurely making public the difficult, delicate and confidential negotiations between our government and other governments. I believe a good example of how that sort of thing should be conducted can be found in the negotiations leading up to the signing of the Atlantic pact. Long before that important pact was signed the government took various steps, through public statements of one kind or another, to inform the people of this country of the purposes and principles of government policy in respect to this matter. This was done while the discussions were under way in Washington. As I see it, however, it was neither necessary nor desirable to keep the public informed on the day to day details of those negotiations. There has to be a certain flexibility in these matters, and that flexibility would be lost if the press knew every detail of the negotiations every day.

Quite often one has to take a position in the morning which may have to be abandoned the next day. As I have said before, it is difficult to abandon a headline, and anything that is made public in the morning becomes a headline in the afternoon. The type of diplomacy, if I may put it this way, of publicity for the principles and objectives, publicity for the policies in broad outline without making public the confidential details of the negotiations, seems to me to be best designed to reconcile the efficient conduct of diplomatic business with the desirability, indeed the necessity of the people knowing what is happening when it is happening. I hope that in the future the Department of External Affairs will be able to discharge that responsibility to the public and to parliament.

There have been a good many questions raised in this debate, Mr. Speaker, and it is my duty to do my best to answer them. If I may, I shall answer them more or less in the order in which they were submitted. An extremely important matter was touched upon by the member for Peel and the leader of the opposition in their references to the use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes in this country. It was suggested that possibly the industries of this country were not being given the same facilities, the same information or the same assistance by the government in regard to atomic energy as the industries in the United States. That is an understandable preoccupation, but I can set it at rest because I am in a position to state that there is no agreement or understanding between the Canadian and United States governments which limits the information available to Canadian industry to any greater extent than it is limited in the case of United States' industry.

It is true that we do consult with the United States and United Kingdom governments on the release of information, and discuss with them the maximum extent to which information can be made available in the three countries