

Inquiries of the Ministry

a position proposing the extension of economic assistance and strengthening of economic ties?

Mr. W. A. Tucker (Rosthern): Before the Prime Minister answers, may I ask a supplementary question; he could deal with them both at the same time. I wish to ask a question of the Secretary of State for External Affairs or the Prime Minister. Has he received a copy of the four basic proposals to the North Atlantic treaty council deposited by the British government with the NATO secretariat? In particular I should like to ask whether, if he has received a copy of these proposals deposited with the NATO secretariat, which are purported to try to get NATO to evolve into more than a military alliance, a strong position will be taken in respect of item 2, which provides for increased economic interdependence in NATO?

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): The question asked by the hon. member for Assiniboia and amplified by the hon. member for Rosthern is one that over the years has had the attention of every nation within NATO, namely the realization that it is always very difficult to maintain a defensive organization based on military purposes and aims alone; for whenever there is any diminution in national fears there is an immediate weakening in the bonds that hold such organizations together.

Article 2 incorporated in the NATO declaration is one that has not received in the past that degree of implementation which many of us would like to see achieved. On the several occasions the NATO council have met, my understanding is that there has been a general discussion in this regard, but at no time has there been that degree of unanimity or indeed that degree of certainty as to the meaning of article 2. For that reason there has never been any material advance made in the implementation of the article.

I hope that article 2 will be one of those matters that will receive extraordinary attention on this occasion. As one of the representatives of Canada it will be my purpose to advance the need of a wider and more comprehensive implementation of that article, to the end that while maintaining our defences we shall co-operate in the economic fields that are available, to such an extent as to assure the strongest possible mortar to hold together the forces of freedom.

Mr. Argue: I have a supplementary question. Can the Prime Minister say whether Canada has deposited any documents with the secretariat setting out Canada's proposals?

Mr. Diefenbaker: I should say only in a general way. There has not been that specific application that Britain and the United States have applied to the problem of NATO, for it will be remembered that this meeting of NATO stems directly from the meeting in Washington of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom with the President of the United States and their declaration of interdependence. It also rises from the realization that recent scientific advances on the part of the U.S.S.R. have called for an intensified examination of NATO and its principles to the end that it may advance to the future stronger than ever before in its purposes and its aims.

Mr. M. J. Coldwell (Rosetown-Biggar): What does the Prime Minister mean when he says they have deposited documents only in a general way? What does that mean exactly? Does it mean that we have deposited no documents which will have any bearing on the proposals that are being made by some other countries?

Mr. Diefenbaker: No. What I say is this. Instead of being specific with regard to some of the matters, such as the four matters referred to in the British presentation, our purpose at the NATO meeting will be to enunciate general objectives—

Mr. Coldwell: Has that been done?

Mr. Diefenbaker: —to the end that we will be able to discharge our responsibilities as a middle power in NATO and bring together those who today have their disagreements, all of which I think are generally known and require no elucidation.

Hon. Paul Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, may I take advantage of the statement by the Prime Minister to ask him a further question, particularly in view of the fact that this may be my last opportunity to do so. I think the house and the country will be very grateful for what the Prime Minister has just said in regard to seeking to give further effect to the implications of article 2 of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In view of what the Prime Minister has said, therefore, will he not now state that the general attitude taken by the former secretary of state for external affairs, as one of a committee of three who examined the potentialities of the North Atlantic treaty in terms of article 2, is one that now affords to the right hon. gentleman an opportunity of placing before the NATO council the very constructive attitude which he has now put before this house.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, over the years when we occupied the other side of the