

NATO

paper figures run somewhere in the order of \$140 million. In the absence of a clearly enunciated policy in respect of what we would do with these troops when we bring them home, that is whether they would be employed in the surveillance of our territory and whether or not maritime command might form the basis for a specialized military role, and in the absence of any indication that we would substantially expand our air capability here in North America or our ground troops, I can only conclude that it is premature to seriously consider even a phased reduction. I think we all know a phased reduction will mean a total reduction.

To those who have supported the government motion in the hope that a phased plan of reduction will mean the withdrawal from NATO of only a few troops, I say they are whistling in the dark. They know very well, as do all of us, that once reduction starts, phased or otherwise, it will be total. If the Minister of National Defence remains in that capacity I predict he will find shortly after August, the first point at which we can indicate to our partners in the Alliance that we intend to withdraw in one year's time, that it will be a sorry day for Canada and its integrity among not only the western nations of the world but among all the countries of the world.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It being six o'clock this sitting stands suspended until 8 p.m.

At six o'clock the house took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The house resumed at 8 p.m.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérald Laniel (Beauharnois): Mr. Speaker, as a member of the External Affairs and National Defence committee and of the Defence committee since 1963, it is my duty to take part in this debate on the Canadian contribution to NATO. I fully support the government and the motion presented to the house.

The study undertaken during the last months has enabled me to come to certain conclusions which might even go somewhat beyond the views publicly expressed by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau).

I must admit that my views have changed progressively during the past five years, especially since the visit of the committee to Halifax in 1964, my trip to Berlin in November of

the same year with the NATO parliamentary delegation, the debate on the unification of the armed forces and finally this study by the committee.

Mr. Speaker, I must confess that sometimes I felt that I was going through so much brainwashing with regard to military matters that I was convinced for a while that no change in our foreign defence policies was possible unless that status quo was maintained.

On some occasions and in particular during trips and visits by members of the committee, I had a similar impression of being brainwashed by some military personnel. I first woke up when I finally realized that many other members around me were under the same pressures. Of course, as a veteran I was certainly slower than others to realize it because at that time you were either a member of the team or you were not. You had to agree with the commitments, the participation of Canada, and to accept without any reservation, the general policy of NATO and NORAD. Then, you were a responsible member of parliament, a representative of the people, who had the privilege of sticking out his chest and of being proud of the international stature of Canada, even though it was almost dictated to us by others and at times beyond our means.

The morale of our troops came first, as well as that of our generals, our admirals, not to mention that of the generals of our allies. The morale of our troops is most important, but not to the extent—and I realize that today—of keeping us from even thinking of the possibility of studying other possibilities for our external and our defence policies.

It is also true that the efficiency of our Canadian forces is recognized throughout the world and not merely with regard to our participation to NATO; our forces are also on duty in Cyprus and elsewhere. Why can our present role under SACEUR and SACLANT not be changed? Why has Canada's participation become sacrosanct to the extent where our allies, especially the military leaders in NATO, cannot even conceive of our changing it?

On the committee's last trip to Europe, I even argued a bit with an American general about this. He simply could not understand why Canada should consider revising its military participation to NATO. In reply, I said this and I quote:

[English]

Canada as a small nation with its limited financial capability is just as proud as others and just as