

NATO

role, there is, we believe, an important political role for NATO and for Canada within NATO in this attempt to remove or reduce the underlying political causes of potential conflict through steps toward political reconciliation and settlement.

The government's NATO decision is based on the belief that, during the forthcoming years, there are better uses of the Canadian forces, and that there are better political means of pursuing our foreign policy than through a continued military presence in Europe of the present size. For this reason we propose a planned and phased reduction.

[English]

The maintenance, Mr. Speaker, of the five conditions that I mentioned a few moments ago remains our objective: nuclear stability, resolution of conflicts, peacekeeping, disarmament, and economic assistance. It is in an attempt to further these conditions in a rational and effective fashion that the government has taken its first decisions in the defence policy area. We have undertaken the development of a defence policy based on Canada's interests and place in the world, a policy which will at the same time be supported by Canadians generally and accepted by our friends and allies.

Those aforesaid decisions I have already announced. They appear as an appendix to *Hansard* for Friday, April 18. They mean that this government is willing to state that the efforts expended in search of a secure Canada and a peaceful world in the last 25 years are in some ways inappropriate for the next 25 years. And they mean that following the same careful type of study and with the same resolve that launched Canada in 1945 into a then new and effective role in the world, we believe Canada is now on the threshold of another new role. This does not mean, however, that our present posture or our present attitude must necessarily be totally changed.

● (3:20 p.m.)

It is obvious from the foregoing that the government has rejected, for example, any suggestion that Canada assume a non-aligned or neutral role in the world. To do so would have meant the withdrawal by Canada from its present alliances and the termination of all co-operative military arrangements with other countries. That would be wrong; it is necessary and wise to continue to participate in an appropriate way in collective security arrangements with other states in the interests

of Canada's national security and in defence of the values we share with our friends.

The precise military role which we shall endeavour to assume in these collective arrangements will be a matter for discussion and consultation with our allies and will depend in part on the role assigned to Canadian forces in the defence of North America in co-operation with the United States. They will be consistent as well with our belief that, as a responsible member of the international community, we must continue to make forces available for peacekeeping roles.

I wish to pause at this point, Mr. Speaker, to emphasize that the government's decision should not in any sense be construed as a criticism of the personnel of the Canadian forces. We are all here aware, and take justifiable pride, in the high degree of professional ability which these forces demonstrate in their NATO roles in Europe and on the North Atlantic ocean.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Trudeau: The air division, the mechanized brigade, and our maritime force are first-class formations and carry out their respective NATO missions superbly. They set a standard of performance which other NATO forces find difficult to match.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Trudeau: The government has not the slightest doubt that this same high standard of performance will continue to be observed by the Canadian forces in the new roles which will be assigned to them.

[Translation]

Measured in terms of nuclear weapons and destructive capacity, Mr. Speaker, the threat to the continued existence of mankind is incomparably greater today than it was in the nineteen forties. In the early days of NATO it was said that the West could not wait for political settlements, but had to tackle first the security issue.

That remains true. Equally true, however, is the statement that we cannot wait for solutions of the security issue without at the same time accelerating our efforts toward political settlement, and particularly arms control.

In all history, arms by themselves have never guaranteed security for long. And just as there is no single cause of conflict, so is there no single technique of arms control. The present balance of deterrents is an absurdly