

NATO—European Defence Community

any other occasion on which I have spoken in this House of Commons. This matter cannot be approached from the point of view that we are dealing with an unimportant subject matter. This parliament is the first to make its voice heard not only within the four corners of this chamber but across Canada and the world with respect to this new approach in connection with European peace and stability. Because we are the first to deal with this matter, it becomes of the utmost importance to approach it with the calmest kind of judgment and the best common sense that we can summon to our command. In our approach to the NATO protocol we must remember that within the confines of Germany herself Canadian troops are stationed at the present time. For that reason the situation is of vital interest to the people of Canada.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, I have always been one of those who have leaned very heavily toward the idea of Canada speaking with a united voice as far as possible where great international issues are concerned. On this occasion I hope that we shall be able to follow that kind of policy and to show the world that we are united on this very important matter.

Without any further delay I want to indicate in the first instance that the official opposition, the Progressive Conservative party, supports the government stand on the NATO protocol and will give it full support in the house. Having said that, I want to make what I hope will be some pointed observations respecting the situation which surrounds the ratification procedure and the substance of the proposals themselves.

Perhaps hon. members have received with the compliments of the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Pearson) a rather thick booklet of 328 pages—at least I have received one—issued as a message from the President of the United States. In this booklet is contained in compact form information that is available to any country, and for that reason Canada has taken proper advantage of the message itself. Within those 328 pages will be found the convention on the relations between the three powers and the Federal Republic of Germany, signed at Bonn, May 26, 1952, together with related documents which are of a highly technical nature.

I mention this to raise a matter that I have raised before in this house. We have in parliament a standing committee on external affairs. I am not attempting to be unduly critical of the fact that in this instance this

protocol and the related agreements, complicated as they are, are not to be sent to the external affairs committee for detailed consideration. I know it is getting toward the end of a very busy session; I know that perhaps the atmosphere and the mood of the house generally may not be conducive to the kind of study that might normally be made of very complicated documents such as these. But I do think that our system of dealing with peace treaties and protocols of this kind is open to very serious criticism. If our external affairs committee is to function in its full sense then these are the subjects with which that committee should be dealing.

When the Japanese peace treaty was approved by parliament I brought the question before the house; I bring the question up again. I do it, not so much to seek this remedy at this time as to call upon the government to adopt a new, a more up to date and modernized approach to the procedure that parliament is to use when approving and ratifying international agreements and treaties in the future. Under a change of the rules, or under whatever may be necessary to effect it, it should be possible to see that when we have a resolution such as this, where there is no opportunity in committee of the whole to question the minister or to find out the facts, and where it is almost a question of "yes" or "no" and *pro forma* speeches made by those on this side of the house and by the minister, it is sent to the committee on external affairs. To deal with it otherwise is not good enough when it comes to educating and informing the Canadian people of just what these vast commitments mean to them in their everyday lives.

It seems to me that we cannot afford at any time to take any steps other than those which will give the fullest information to the people of Canada on these agreements. It is not enough to say that the Canadian people should read *Hansard* and that this knowledge should be in their possession. Perhaps that is true, but we in parliament ought to be able to dissect, to analyse and to place that analysis before the Canadian people so that from the questions and answers that come out in committee they may be able to assess for themselves just exactly where this country stands with respect to the various commitments under these agreements.

These agreements commit Canada very heavily. We are not objecting to them, nor do the Canadian people object to them, but I can say now that having in mind the far future, perhaps even the immediate future, when it becomes a question of Canadian