

NATO

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, today the house is being asked to place its stamp of approval on the NATO policy statement which was made by the Prime Minister on April 3 last and which he repeated with some embellishment today.

I think it is significant that the statement the Prime Minister made on April 3 was made on the day after parliament recessed. The Prime Minister seems to have adopted the de Gaulle technique of bypassing the elected representatives and facing the television cameras which are not capable of answering back. The statement the Prime Minister made on that occasion and the statement he has made today are in reality statements of no policy. He says, first of all, that the government proposes that Canada should remain in the NATO alliance. That constitutes no change. He says, in the second place, that in consultation with our allies there is to be a planned and phased reduction of our NATO forces in Europe. But when the Prime Minister was asked in the television interview which followed his statement when this would take place, he replied that he could not say. He was asked about the extent to which our forces would be reduced, and again he replied that he could not say. This was phase one, he explained, and we would have to wait for phase two. Mr. Speaker, how can we judge phase one if we know nothing about phase two?

I have been watching the Prime Minister for the last 12 months while he has been in office and I have been impressed by the extent to which he has reminded me of the late William Lyon Mackenzie King who once conducted a referendum in this country on the question, "conscription if necessary, but not necessarily conscription." The Prime Minister's policy now is "reduction if necessary, but not necessarily reduction"—referring, of course, to our forces in NATO.

When we consider the statement the Prime Minister made today, discounting all its meaningless banalities and tired clichés, we find that the government really proposes no major change either in foreign policy or in defence policy. The Prime Minister tosses off phrases such as "We must think and not conform" or "the time has come for change, we must not fear change", but what change do we find here? To what change has the government actually committed itself? Absolutely none. The Prime Minister's decision means that we will remain in NATO and that at

[Mr. Stanfield.]

some indeterminate time there will be, possibly, some indeterminate reduction of Canada's forces in Europe. Surely this is not the kind of challenging, adventuresome policy the Prime Minister was talking about one year ago.

● (4:10 p.m.)

As a matter of fact, the Prime Minister once again put the cart before the horse in his statement. When speaking in Calgary on April 12 he said that "it is a false perspective to have a military alliance determine your foreign policy." But this is precisely what the government is doing. While it professes to be waiting for a review of foreign policy it has committed itself to NATO and NORAD, thereby limiting its ability to deal effectively with its other obligations and opportunities in the field of foreign policy.

The Prime Minister has given us the usual list of vague generalities which are supposed to pass for a Liberal foreign policy. He has talked about nuclear imbalance, co-operation in settling international conflicts, an international peacekeeping force, arms limitation and foreign aid. These are precisely the goals set out by his predecessor six years ago. They are precisely the kinds of things Liberal spokesmen have been talking about for 20 years.

An hon. Member: What about Cyprus?

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): But policies and programs so vaguely outlined in general terms have not been followed up. There has been no carry-through.

The Prime Minister said we must do the right things in the right places. Having committed himself now to NATO and to retaining Canadian troops in Europe, to what extent has he been limited and restricted? Has his ability to do the right thing in the right place not been restricted?

As the first N.D.P. spokesman this afternoon I propose to advance three basic propositions. First, Canada should withdraw all its military forces from Europe. Second, Canada should insist on a reassessment of NATO's role in world affairs. Third, Canada should place its major emphasis on promoting and strengthening those international organizations and agencies most likely to foster world peace and security. At the conclusion of my remarks, Mr. Speaker, I propose to move a subamendment to inculcate the three basic propositions I now propose to argue.