

North Atlantic Treaty

Mr. Drew:—he would have known that I was referring to a press report and to a common understanding which prompted an earlier question. And what I have already said will indicate that no one in the house welcomes more than I do this assurance as to the course Canada followed in this case.

Mr. Pearson: Now, Mr. Speaker, if I may turn to the remarks of the hon. member for Peel (Mr. Graydon) who asked me a good many questions, some of them very searching ones indeed: The hon. member expressed the hope, in commenting on the North Atlantic council meeting in Rome, that we would not have any further intermediate meetings of the council; that at the next meeting in Lisbon—and I think I am quoting his words—we would come out with something worth while. Well, I echo that hope, Mr. Speaker. I should like to mention, however, as indeed the hon. member for Temiscouata (Mr. Pouliot) mentioned, that it is sometimes desirable in matters of this kind not to act too quickly, but to act surely and to act right. Possibly the delays that may have taken place in the consideration of some of these vitally important matters may be well justified if at the next meeting, or at an early meeting of the North Atlantic council, we come to the right decision.

I would also like to point out that the North Atlantic council has already come out with something worth while. It will be a great mistake indeed if the impression is created that this organization has not a record of constructive achievement to its credit already. After all, this organization is not very old, I think something under two years. During that time its members have received and have confidence in the assurance of the collective support they will get from each other. They have drawn up plans to make that support effective, and they have made very considerable progress—though not as much progress as any one of them would like—in implementing those plans. We have an integrated force now for the defence of the Atlantic area, and we have a supreme command under a supreme commander—and he is supreme in more ways than one—General Eisenhower. I think by what we have already done in the North Atlantic organization a contribution has been made not only in Europe but in the whole world to peace and stability. This organization is not a failure and is not going to be a failure. It has had its disappointments, of course, but it has taken on one of the biggest collective jobs in history, and in two years it has made a real contribution to that job.

I agree with the leader of the opposition and with other hon. members who have said that what we must do in pursuing our work with the North Atlantic organization is to remove uncertainty, to remove hesitation if possible, to leave no country in any doubt as to what will happen if that country contemplates or undertakes aggression. In emphasizing this point, and rightly so, the hon. member for Peel used the illustration of Korea, and asked what would have happened if there had been no uncertainty in Korea when the aggression began there a year and a half ago; and he said that it was the hesitation as to what might happen in Korea which probably brought about that aggression. That may or may not be true. The corollary to that statement surely is that hesitation is almost inevitable when one is weak. And in Korea the free nations were very weak indeed. In order not to have that kind of hesitation in Europe we must get strong; and we are getting stronger in the North Atlantic organization.

The hon. member for Peel went on to ask about the new commitments that we were undertaking in accepting this protocol, new commitments for Canada. I think he put it in this way, by saying that they were the most far-flung military commitments we have ever contemplated. That may be true; but I would point out—indeed, I think hon. members would agree with me—that the absence of commitments does not save us from involvement in war. History has shown that. Effective commitments, however, might make war impossible. And by adding to our commitments in the way which we are now doing, in theory at least, we are adopting a course which may make them unlikely ever to be discharged. In other words, these new commitments are commitments for peace. It is because of this that there is such unanimity in this house and indeed in the country in regard to these new commitments.

The hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Low) in discussing this aspect of the question said that while he did not object to these new commitments, for the reasons I have indicated, the people of Canada should be aware of their implications. I agree entirely they should be aware of those implications; and when they are aware of them they will realize, as we do, that they are commitments to prevent war, to make war impossible. As such we all welcome them.

In so far as the new members of NATO are concerned—we hope that shortly they will become new members—the hon. member for Peel said this morning they should come in as partners. That is what the North Atlantic