

Oral Questions

desire to work and build a country of which they and their children could be proud. We have them here from Italy, Germany, Ukraine, the Netherlands, Sweden, China; in fact we could say every country in the world. They brought with them their trades, their cultures, religions, songs, dances and their hymns. All those things put together are what makes Canada great today.

I like to think of Canada not as one or two founding nations but as a mass of nations whose cultures have been woven into a tremendous mosaic. Canadian culture is composed of the culture of almost every country in the world. Canadian songs, hymns, and Canadian literature come from all parts of the world. Such a mosaic for Canada, Mr. Speaker, can make Canada one of the greatest nations of the world.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

PRIME MINISTER'S COMMENTS ON STRATEGY AND POLICY

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (York-Peel): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister. He undoubtedly noted over the weekend the public musings of his Prime Minister, particularly those during an exchange with Mr. Raymond Barre in Davos, Switzerland, in which the Prime Minister appeared to be questioning NATO strategy and policy, in fact raising serious implications with respect to Canada's position in NATO councils themselves.

Would the Acting Prime Minister indicate whether his Prime Minister was giving public expression to views held in NATO councils by the Canadian Government, or was this indeed some type of new government policy?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, most world leaders go around these days saying that a nuclear war would be so disastrous that no side could expect to win. At the same time, our Prime Minister, trying hard to foster the need for political energy in the discussion of that issue, is presenting a number of specifics, for example about parity in conventional arms in central Europe, reduction of nuclear weapons, non-proliferation treaty strengthening, and that sort of thing. So one might not be surprised that in taking part in a symposium or seminar in DAVOS, Switzerland, he would not hesitate to tackle some of the greatest difficulties of the peace objective, particularly the intricacies of even our NATO policies. That is what he has done. He has raised questions which are in the minds of specialists and non-specialists in the world today, and that of course implies no relaxation, no change in our NATO policies whatsoever.

EFFECT OF PRIME MINISTER'S REMARKS

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (York-Peel): Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that the Prime Minister's off-the-cuff remarks, if you like, have had an impact on NATO's credibility itself, such an impact that at the moment of their being stated the former Prime Minister of France attempted to correct the impression being left, would the Acting Prime Minister indicate what steps his Government plans to take to reassure the world publicly of our commitment to NATO and our allies, and that we are full partners in and completely supportive of the policies of NATO itself?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I do not think this is needed, really. The Prime Minister, all through his recent discussions with foreign leaders, has repeatedly said that Canada stood with NATO. He has presented himself as a NATO man. So I do not think reassurance is needed. There is indeed a debate than can take place—my hon. friend can agree or disagree—about the opportunity of those very discussions on what I call these intricacies, these debatable points in NATO policies. In Davos the Prime Minister said that democracies can take that kind of debate.

● (1420)

I am rather surprised at the chastising tone of the Hon. Member in the Opposition, the critic on foreign affairs. In a speech on December 4 his own Leader said: "I would call on the Secretary of State for External Affairs to go further in a non first strike policy by urging consideration of that policy at the upcoming NATO Foreign Ministers' meeting." Everybody thinks he meant non first use. His own Leader appeared to be suggesting that there should be a debate of these NATO policies, and that is what the Prime Minister did in Davos.

REACTION OF NATO ALLIES

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (York-Peel): Mr. Speaker, my final supplementary question is also for the Acting Prime Minister. He appears to be failing to recognize that, as a head of state, the Prime Minister is speaking for a country that is an ally within the NATO alliance. How can we expect our allies to trust Canada, and the Government of Canada as such an ally, when the Prime Minister publicly questions NATO and NATO's deterrent position in Europe itself? Mr. Speaker, the Government has left a serious cloud over the question of NATO's credibility as a result of the irresponsible musings of the Prime Minister in Switzerland.

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have already indicated that this is a debatable subject. My hon. friend seems to be saying that these subjects are so serious that they should not be debated in front of children. That is not the case. They are being openly debated now by specialists and non specialists. The willingness of the United States to live up to its commitment respecting use of nuclear arms in Europe, and the philosophy of the flexible response, are being questioned now. Our allies have a sufficiently high