

NATO Ministerial Meeting

Canada's attitude to France. That was a most unusual statement and one that deserves to be debated in this house. I do not have it before me, but in summary it was that Canada had given its assurance to General de Gaulle that in any course of action that might be taken in NATO, Canada would do nothing that would run contrary to the course being developed by or the attitude of mind of the Republic of France.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, may I just point out to my hon. friend that a correction was made in regard to that report. I saw the report, and the next day I made a correction of it.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, these corrections do not seem to catch up with the ebullient declarations of the hon. gentleman. He held a press conference; he expressed himself; he had with him a host of pressmen; and each and every one, press, radio and t.v., reported the statement allegedly made by the minister. It is one that needs to be clarified, for what it amounted to—and it was so interpreted—was that he, on behalf of Canada, had made a declaration that regardless of the attitude of the United States in its contribution to the preservation of the peace of the world through NATO, if France was in disagreement Canada would follow the lead of France.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Diefenbaker: That is something that is not realistic and cannot, as I see it, be accepted by the Canadian people.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The minister says he corrected it. Well, Mr. Speaker, the place to correct it and say what he in fact did say is in the House of Commons, so that the misunderstanding that was created, if such indeed took place, would be removed and obliterated. But, as it is, all the pressmen, radio and t.v. reporters took the same view and made the same interpretation of the words used by the minister when in Paris. There was no exception. We in this house have the right to know what is the attitude of the government of Canada in relation to the views being expressed by General de Gaulle, and above all France, which so often do not coincide with the views of the other members of this great alliance.

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, in commenting on the statement of the Secretary of State for External Affairs

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

I would like to confine myself to three brief points. The first is that, as is usual, the communiqué from the NATO council is vague and reassuring in its terms; it papers over the very real problems and difficulties that exist. I regret that we are not able to hear from the minister a clearer statement of where Canada stands on the problem of the control of nuclear weapons and the further dissemination of nuclear weapons.

The second point I would like to make is this. We regret that there appears to be nothing in the statement of the Secretary of State for External Affairs to indicate that Canada has now initiated the renegotiation of her role in the area of tactical nuclear weapons, which was promised by the government before the election; I believe by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for External Affairs. We regret there is no indication that this point was raised by Canada, and that this renegotiation of Canada's role—long overdue, in our opinion—has now begun.

Third, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that we do welcome the indication in the statement made by the Secretary of State for External Affairs that Canada will accept the invitation of the secretary general of the United Nations to continue her peace keeping role in Cyprus. We believe that Canada should do this, notwithstanding the remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition that it is perhaps an unfair financial burden to put upon Canada. We think that financial burden is small compared with the tremendous constructive value of Canada's contribution to the peace keeping force in Cyprus, and we hope that notwithstanding any difficulties and feelings—and they are natural—such as the Leader of the Opposition has expressed, Canada will continue to accept this very important responsibility.

Mr. R. N. Thompson (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, in attempting to be as brief as possible I would say that we welcome the summary report given to us by the Secretary of State for External Affairs on the recent NATO conference in Paris. I believe we all agree that the record of NATO has been tremendous; it has accomplished far more than was originally expected. I believe that, in spite of the difficulties which are being faced today, there is a very urgent need and a very definite role for NATO in world affairs.

It is obvious that the most important work at this conference was done not so much in the formal meetings that were held but in the discussions and direct contacts among