

It seems to me, then, that the preparation of the North Atlantic alliance has admirably combined the virtues of classical and confidential diplomacy with free and open discussion of the general principles under consideration. We have now reached the stage of discussion in parliament prior to signature of the treaty. The result of all this will be an open covenant privately negotiated but publicly debated and decided.

At this point I should like to direct the attention of the house to the actual text of the treaty. On another occasion, when we discuss the treaty before ratification, I shall be able to go into this matter probably in somewhat greater detail than is possible or desirable tonight, but if I may I should like to take up the treaty article by article and give the house the government's interpretation of the various articles before this resolution is dealt with.

There is first a brief and simple statement of the purposes of the states which propose to sign the treaty. I admit that in one or two respects the language of that preamble could be improved, and I admit also that there are some omissions from the preamble which might well have been filled in. But, as I have said, this is a text which represents the highest measure of agreement among a number of governments who negotiated it.

After the preamble, then, in article 1 the states reaffirm the pledge they gave in the United Nations charter, to settle by peaceful means all international disputes and differences in which they may be involved. Here is a clear statement of the peaceful intention and strictly defensive nature of this alliance, and I think it proper that it should be put in the first article of the draft treaty. By signing the charter every member of the United Nations has already given a solemn pledge to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. The states which will sign the North Atlantic treaty believe in this pledge and will respect it to the letter.

We come now to article 2. The second article of the treaty is one of particular interest to the government of Canada. Under this article, the member states promise to strengthen their free institutions, and to bring about among their own people and the peoples of other countries a better understanding of the principles upon which those free institutions are founded. They also undertake to promote conditions of stability and well-being and to seek to eliminate international economic conflict within the North Atlantic community.

I do not think, Mr. Speaker, that any sinister or dangerous interpretation can be read into those words. Surely, they can be taken at face value. The face value seems to me to make it quite clear that all we are trying to do in those words is to take a pledge that we will do our best to remove economic conflict in our international economic policy. It is a pledge, if you like, for co-operation in economic policies to the greatest extent possible and subject, of course, to our complete control over our own economic policies. It is hoped that by this co-operation we will help create, not only in the North Atlantic community but throughout the world, a progressive and prosperous society in which peace and security can flourish.

Positive and constructive consequences will, we hope, flow from article 2 of the treaty. It is by virtue of this part of the agreement, that the nations of the North Atlantic community will work together to strengthen the common foundations upon which society rests in the western world. The Brussels powers in their treaty took the same kind of pledge a year ago, and have already taken effective steps to implement that pledge. I hope that under this article the nations of the North Atlantic community will undertake every practical step to promote the social progress of the western world. As has been stated by more than one speaker today, communism feeds on discontent and injustice which it stirs up without providing any real answer to the problems it exploits. A resolute and vigorous assault on these problems where they exist in the western world will be possible, I hope, under the North Atlantic treaty.