

NATO

military arrangements in Europe is essential, or useful, in making this collective response effective in the future. Is Canada's participation important enough to give her influence on the design of these defence arrangements and could her resources be used to equal, or better, purpose in seeking some other foreign policy objective?

It appears to me that the maintenance of a credible, flexible response in Europe is the paramount responsibility of the European countries themselves. Our original commitment to keep forces resident in Europe was expressly temporary, designed to assist in defence until Europe was sufficiently recovered economically to provide for its own defence. One cannot argue that a renewed Europe remains economically incapable of providing an effective collective defence. Europe does not participate in the defence of North America and it is difficult to argue that the participation of Canada is essential to the defence of Europe.

Some hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Forrestall: The voice of experience.

Mr. Roberts: I am not suggesting a new policy. It is a reiteration of what has always been the basis of our commitment to Europe. I suggest we should now make it clear publicly to our allies that our commitment is still temporary, and that we look forward to terminating it in the near future as soon as it can be arranged without grave disruption to their interests. Above all, since re-equipment is now at a critical stage, we should not allow ourselves to undertake any re-equipping which could lock us into a commitment for several years and thus preclude us from exercising our option to withdraw.

It is clear that our present military role in NATO is unsatisfactory. There was almost unanimous agreement on this point among knowledgeable witnesses who appeared before the committee on external affairs. Almost all witnesses with military expertise stressed that our air-strike reconnaissance role in Europe, which costs \$70 million each year, and the mechanised brigade, constitute an expensive and wasteful use of our military resources.

Mr. Forrestall: Nonsense.

Mr. Roberts: The hon. gentleman should simply look at the record of the committee. He can do it.

Mr. Forrestall: I have had a long look at it.

[Mr. Roberts.]

• (8:40 p.m.)

Mr. Roberts: The hon. member did not look at it long enough or, if he did, he did not read it thoroughly enough. Rather than disperse our efforts in varied military tasks, our forces should be tailored to one concept, the mobile concept. The mobile concept gives an opportunity to do a very great variety of jobs. We have now two types of ground forces. We have a heavy brigade in Europe devised for limited nuclear warfare on the continent of Europe, which has to be supplemented, of course, by forces in Canada for the necessary rotation and we have the beginnings of a true mobile force which is much more lightly equipped fulfilling a different concept. It is an intervention force for small conflicts. We should drop our heavy ground force altogether and establish one type of mobile force. It would be much more economical because we could rotate from a much greater reservoir. We would not have to have two types of equipment and two types of training.

Similar arguments apply to our air role. Here, too, we have a force in NATO for a task that is not duplicated anywhere else in the Canadian defence organization—that is, the strike reconnaissance role. For our six squadrons we have to maintain rotational capabilities and training capabilities. We have to feed new crews into it. If all our air efforts were in the tactical field or supplementary to our mobile ground forces, then we could not provide squadrons of nuclear strike aircraft. I am not arguing, Mr. Speaker, that we have no interests in the defence of Europe nor in maintaining a deterrent capacity in North America. May I say, however, that the objectives we have do not require us to maintain our present military commitments.

I suggest that the NORAD bomber defence system is obsolete and, in any case, one cannot conceive that bombers would be used until I.C.B.M.'s have already been brought into play. Money spent on improved bomber interception is completely wasted, since it neither adds to our defence nor to our deterrent power. Anti-submarine warfare has reached a level of technological development which makes it inordinately expensive for us to continue in this activity.

The economic recovery of Europe and the increasing crystallization of a separate European strategic interest have removed the original justification for the presence of Canadian forces in Europe. The temporary nature of our original commitment to NATO forces in Europe should be reiterated and we