

NATO

both these amendments were predictable. The amendment proposed by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) is very good at negatives, but it fails to propose any alternative to the policies that the government has put forward. The amendment moved by the Official Opposition contends that Canada is retreating from internationalism to isolationism, according to the Prime Minister's (Mr. Trudeau) statement. But surely the Prime Minister's speech and the statement he made on April 3 indicate that the government is moving in exactly the opposite direction, in an outward direction in favour of more internationalism and less isolationism.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Sharp: The Prime Minister's statement makes it very clear that Canada is broadening its horizons in every direction and is intent on playing a still more active role in world affairs. There was an absence of constructive, Conservative suggestions in the speech made by the Leader of the Opposition. I did not hear a single one although I listened most attentively to a very good political speech by him, a speech completely lacking in constructive suggestions. I really did admire the way in which he put in the needle, but the trouble, Mr. Speaker, was that there was nothing in his speech. It was just emptiness. It was without any constructive suggestions as to what Canada should do in the world today.

I suggest that the debate so far has indicated that it is the Conservative opposition which is isolating itself in this house. Members of the government party and of the New Democratic party have proposals to make, but what the Leader of the Opposition has said is, "Let us not disturb anything. It is now nice and comfortable. So far as my party is concerned I will not put forward any proposals for change."

An hon. Member: Where are your proposals?

Mr. Sharp: We have a motion before the house in very clear terms, and the Leader of the Opposition has done nothing but condemn the government for its statement. The sub-amendment offered by the New Democratic party does some condemning too, but at least it also makes some positive suggestions. The problem with their amendment, however, is one which appears to haunt that party. It is based not on the world as it is but on a world that they would like to think exists. But the government is in a position of responsibility

and it has to deal with the world as it is. Canada and Canadians have to operate in a world that is much more dangerous and complex than members of the New Democratic party would lead us to believe.

The Leader of the Opposition has developed a complicated line of reasoning to suggest that in some way the government has determined upon its defence policy before settling upon its foreign policy. The superficiality of this argument becomes obvious when we consider the circumstances under which we are having this debate.

The government felt under an obligation, and certainly as Secretary of State for External Affairs I urged this upon the government, to give to our NATO allies as much information as we could about our future position before the Washington meeting of our NATO friends. It would have been very simple for the government to limit its announcement, in contemplation of that meeting, to its decision to remain in NATO. That would have been the simplest thing to do. It would have avoided the kind of debate we are having now. We could have avoided any mention of our decision to reduce, in due course and in an orderly way, the size of our forces on the ground in Europe.

I can well imagine the accusations that could properly have been made against the government if we had simply announced our intention to stay in the alliance prior to that meeting, and then later let people in on the fact that we intended to reduce our forces in Europe. That would have been dishonest. That would have been concealing. We felt that the only frank and honest thing we could do was to convey to our allies, first, our foreign policy decision to stay in the alliance and, second, our military decision, still incomplete, to reduce our forces in Europe. I say that this decision is still incomplete since it cannot in the nature of things be completed, and it was impossible for the government to have gone any further at that stage than to make the decision it made on April 3. I say to the Leader of the Opposition who made so much of this argument, who said the government's statement was deliberately intended to mean different things to different people, that it would have been quite impossible for us, in advance of our consultation with our allies, to have gone any further than we did at that stage.

As I say, we had an alternative. We could have said nothing. Then we could have been charged with deceit. As it is, I suggest to the