

Adjournment Debate

say that the task ahead is to reinforce the fundamentals of the system and restore a more active role for all members of Parliament.

CRUISE MISSILE TESTING

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Madam Speaker, on January 20, 1994 I raised a question in the House with respect to the government's upcoming decision on the testing of cruise missiles in Canada.

This question dealt both with the substance of the tests as well as the credibility of the government and the promises it made when in opposition. Although the Liberal government of 1983 had signed the first testing agreement, in opposition it took a very different position.

The written commitment that was made during the last federal election stated it would bring this testing program to an end. It went on to speak about the importance of public hearings that would involve northerners, peace groups, aboriginal peoples and others.

What happened? There were no parliamentary hearings. In fact there was only one northern member of Parliament who spoke in the debate, the hon. member for Nunatsiak. He spoke very eloquently against the testing of cruise missiles. He indicated that he was also speaking on behalf of his colleague, the member for Western Arctic.

I know my colleague from the Yukon has spoken eloquently on many occasions both in this House and outside on behalf of her constituents in the Yukon against the testing of cruise missiles. Of course the Reform Party was ready. It supported the testing of cruise missiles.

[*Translation*]

I must admit that I was really shocked and disappointed by the Bloc's position on this issue. At the same time, I was not overly surprised because Mr. Bouchard had gone to Washington to reassure the Americans that an independent Quebec would remain a faithful and loyal ally, that there would be no change in Canadian policy, that the policy would remain obedient to the United States.

• (1845)

The sad thing is that today, just two hours ago, I have heard a member of the Bloc Québécois say: "Now, the Bloc is thinking as a block". If that is the case, it is sad indeed.

[*English*]

Quite clearly there is no legal obligation whatsoever to conduct these tests. In fact the minister himself said it was a courtesy that he was extending to the United States. I suggest there was an alternative. The alternative was to say no. There is a foreign policy review. There is a defence review.

Let us look at strengthening multilateral institutions. Let us look at working toward peace. Let us look at ending the tests of low level flights over Innu lands as some Liberals have called

for on a number of occasions. Indeed today I met with Daniel Ashini and Elizabeth Penashue from the Innu nation who talked about the devastating impact of these tests over their lands.

Let us support the World Court project. The World Court project is a very important project in which Canada is being called on to join in submitting a legal brief to the International Court of Justice making the use of nuclear weapons illegal under international law.

Those are the kinds of alternatives that the government could have had. Those are the kinds of alternatives that would have meant that we had a truly independent foreign policy. In fact retired U.S. Admiral Eugene Carroll, one of the most respected commentators on this question, said that any decision by the Liberal government to end the testing would be viewed as "an assertion of Canada's independence" and have no negative ramifications.

That is what we thought the Liberals were promising in opposition. That is what they talked about in their red book. Certainly that is not what they deliver.

Let us hope these tests will be the last tests and that Canada will have an independent foreign policy based on peace and preservation of the environment and a respect for aboriginal peoples and northerners.

Mr. Fred Mifflin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, when I was in opposition and asked questions of the government I never got any answers. I can tell the hon. member that he is going to get an answer. In fact he has answered his own question so I really could sit down now.

However, I will say that in 1993, two months before the election took place, the hon. member would know that the previous government authorized these tests. They were due to take place on January 25, 1994. After this government came to power and while in opposition we promised a parliamentary debate on this subject.

Mr. Robinson: Public hearings.

Mr. Mifflin: We promised a debate on this subject. When the government was formed we had a debate on it in a reasonable time, on January 26 as a matter of fact. Twenty-nine members participated in the debate and 30 or so participated in question and comment.

I have to tell members that the preponderance of the debate and the comment was in favour of testing. As a result, the government made the decision and on February 3 announced that the test would be authorized to continue. We expect they will be done this month.

At the same time, the government made it clear to the United States government that it should not presuppose any outcome of the parliamentary debate and the public hearings on both the defence policy and the foreign policy which will address, and the hon. member is right, the very strong feelings still in this