

Statements by Ministers

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (Saint-Henri—Westmount): Mr. Speaker, I should say at the outset that I have rather mixed feelings about the appearance here today of the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) and the comments he has just made. I should also say at the outset that he had the courtesy to deliver to me a copy of his comments this morning so I have had an opportunity to look at them. I am pleased that he is here and using the House as a forum within which to advise the Canadian people and parliamentarians of the policy of the Government. However, I hope that when he appears before the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade he will be somewhat more forthcoming and somewhat more courageous than he has been here today. It is not clear to me why this statement has been delivered in the House of Commons.

[Translation]

I must say I was very disappointed in the substance of what he just told us, Mr. Speaker. We have been offered nothing but generalities and *clichés* on disarmament and Canadian policy.

[English]

His comments are optimistic in the aftermath of the Reykjavik Summit meeting. He saw progress arising from that summit between Mr. Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev. To a degree I share that optimism. However, I must say it has been very much tempered by the outcome.

[Translation]

In my view, a historic opportunity was lost in Reykjavik. Will there be others? We can only hope so. Mr. Speaker, behind the clouds the sun continues to shine and for a few moments in Reykjavik, the clouds lifted.

[English]

Yet the clouds returned and, as I said, the opportunity was lost. It was lost because of the insistence of the United States on continuing to develop its star wars initiative, the Strategic Defence Initiative, beyond laboratory testing.

The Minister declared, and I read from his statement:

[Translation]

"Canadians have always worked for peace and international understanding. We have not hesitated, and will not hesitate to make our views known: Publicly when that is appropriate, privately on a permanent basis."

● (1120)

[English]

Canada has not made known its true views on the SDI initiative of the United States. The Secretary of State for External Affairs certainly did not do that this morning. In fact, if anything, the Minister's statement waffled on a very important issue. I am amazed at the extent to which the Secretary of State for External Affairs has attempted not to speak out, having declared in the closing paragraphs of his remarks that Canada never hesitates to speak out.

The Minister referred to the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems Agreement which was adopted in May, 1972, between the superpowers. That ABM Treaty is very much at the heart, from a legal point of view, of the disputes surrounding the Strategic Defence Initiative. With respect to it the Secretary of State for External Affairs said:

The agreement on what precisely is intended in that treaty is for these two Governments who are the parties to the agreement to work out.

That sounds as though this were some sort of private contractual relationship between two individuals or two corporations. As the Secretary of State for External Affairs himself has said, this treaty goes to the very heart of world security, yet he refuses to offer the Government's view as to how the star wars initiative can be rationalized with the terms of that treaty.

I will read the most relevant article from the treaty. Article V reads:

1. Each Party undertakes not to develop, test, or deploy ABM systems or components which are sea-based, air-based, space-based, or mobile land-based.
2. Each Party undertakes not to develop, test, or deploy ABM launchers for launching more than one ABM interceptor missile at a time from each launcher, nor to modify deployed launchers to provide them with such a capability, nor to develop, test, or deploy automatic or semi-automatic or other similar systems for rapid reload of ABM launchers.

Does the Secretary of State for External Affairs not have a view on the application of Article V to the Strategic Defence Initiative of the United States? I suspect that he does have a view and has not yet disclosed it to us in the House. I hope he will before the committee.

My real point this morning is not to debate legalities, not to get into nitpicking legal argument as to whether something is or is not covered by Article V. The real issue is political will, the importance of world leaders exercising their respective judgments on behalf of the peoples they lead and not being the captives of nitpicking bureaucrats. That applies to the Soviet Union as it applies to the United States and the Minister. If I ever saw a statement which was prepared by nitpicking bureaucrats, it is the one which the Minister read to us this morning. When Pierre Elliott Trudeau put the nuclear accountants in their place he made the point that it is up to leaders to exercise their judgment. That is the only way in which progress is going to be made. That is the way in which progress must be made. There must be trust between the leaders.

I suggest to the Minister and my colleagues in the House that the Strategic Defence Initiative is, by definition, a statement of mistrust. We in our Party see it as much more than a statement of mistrust. We see it as destabilizing, as an escalation in the arms race and as an incredible waste of precious resources which could and should be applied to raising the quality of life on this planet, especially in the Third World. We all know that in the long term it is that growing economic disparity which poses the greatest threat to mankind.

The Secretary of State for External Affairs has not spoken out. He has not revealed his true beliefs. Surely he saw