

NUCLEAR ARMAMENTS

REQUEST FOR FREE VOTE ON ISSUE OF CRUISE MISSILE TESTING

Miss Pauline Jewett (New Westminster-Coquitlam): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. Yesterday in the House, the Prime Minister suggested that the NDP should use an opposition day to debate the Cruise missile question. I take it that by making that suggestion the Prime Minister would welcome such a debate and the ensuing vote. I would like therefore to ask the Prime Minister whether he would allow and welcome free expression of opinion and a free vote should the Cruise missile be debated, and not follow the example set the last time the NDP had an opposition day on the Cruise missile and related matters, on April 29, when the Government took all this as a want of confidence motion in the Government and therefore insisted that its Members could not be free, if they wished, to vote against the Cruise missile. Will the Prime Minister in other words, not use this issue as a confidence measure, but indeed allow a genuine free debate and free vote?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, on the first part of the question, indeed I would welcome such a debate. I believe the matter is extremely serious and I certainly share the Hon. Member's concern with the importance of this issue being aired in Canada, it being properly understood and the proper decisions being taken by Government, so on the question of a debate, I repeat that I would welcome the debate and I hope the NDP will follow up on that suggestion.

Insofar as the latter part of the question about a free vote is concerned, I think the Hon. Member is showing a slight misunderstanding of the rules. If it is an opposition day and there is a vote, under the rules that is a vote of non-confidence in the Government. Of course, I would not suggest that these Members should support the NDP in a vote of non-confidence in the Government of which they are Members.

REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT ALLOCATE DAY FOR DEBATE

Miss Pauline Jewett (New Westminster-Coquitlam): Madam Speaker, many of the Members on the other side, including the Minister of Employment and Immigration, would welcome a free vote.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss Jewett: I would like to remind the Prime Minister that there is not, in fact, an NDP opposition day left. The Prime Minister probably knew that at the time he made the suggestion. In view of that fact, plus the fact that he has to regard votes on opposition days as votes of want of confidence, that is all the more reason why he should take up the suggestion we have made time and time again, and indeed follow in the footsteps of his distinguished predecessor in 1958. At that time, the Liberals in opposition insisted on a parliamentary debate and vote in the House on the last most significant inter-

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governmental matter between Canada and the United States in defence, namely NORAD. Will the Prime Minister therefore, in view of all this, set aside a Government day, as the Liberals forced Mr. Diefenbaker to do then, for discussion, debate, and vote on the Cruise missile testing?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

• (1425)

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, for one part, I would remind the Hon. Member that between now and March 26 there will be seven opposition days. Therefore, it is possible for the New Democratic Party to use one of its days, if its members think the subject is so important, to debate this issue. I repeat, we on this side are happy to debate the subject. In so far as referring to experiences in previous Parliaments is concerned, I cannot say. I do know that under the rules as they stand now, if the Opposition uses one of its days to call a vote it is, by definition, a vote of non-confidence.

PROCEDURE ADOPTED IN 1958

Mr. Doug Anguish (The Battlefords-Meadow Lake): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. In June, 1958, the late Right Hon. Lester B. Pearson insisted that the Government of the day, under the Right Hon. John George Diefenbaker, set aside a Government day to discuss the very important question of the agreement between the United States and Canada, the NORAD Agreement. In fact the Leader of the Liberal Party at that time said it was normal procedure for matters of such importance to be debated and vote on in this House of Commons. Does that not fly in the face of what the Prime Minister is telling us now?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, repeatedly since I have been Prime Minister this Government has agreed to put government days aside so that we would debate issues of international concern. This is one example. I remember another example when one of the opposition parties put, forward one day and we put forward another government day so that there could be a two-day debate. This is something we certainly envisage if the House Leaders want to discuss the use of government time in such a way. I repeat, if there is no such discussion, the New Democratic Party, sensing the urgency of this, can certainly move a motion any time on one of its opposition days between now—

An Hon. Member: He said it was normal procedure.

Mr. Trudeau: Well, they are talking of the lack of days. Did they suddenly just discover today that this was an urgent and important matter? Our own Liberal Convention held early in November debated this subject very thoroughly and there was a vote at the end of that. If the Hon. Member wants to know how we voted, she can refer to that convention.

Mr. MacEachen: She might rejoin the Party.