

*Nuclear Armaments*

with a view to making weapons, without really beginning to understand exactly what incredible power for destruction they were beginning to unleash.

That realization began to dawn in the 1940s, that this was not just another geometric expansion of dynamite, but something of unspeakable potent destruction that was unknown in the annals of humankind. Those scientists, including Niels Bohr, Fermi, Oppenheimer, and others who worked on those projects made a proposal to the politicians, specifically President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill, that the possession of that weapon was a two-edged sword whose political application, if used correctly, could actually bring about an understanding among all nations that war of major proportions was impossible.

Some Hon. Members will recall the fierceness of the fire bombings of Cologne and other cities that our Armed Forces were able to wreak upon them at that time. We were able to understand that in our time we were able essentially to unleash the genie from the bottle.

The recommendation was that this weapon was so immense in its destructive power that it might just bring about a tone of sanity and perhaps form the basis for stopping wars since no one would be a winner any more. Unfortunately, the politicians did not listen to the creators of the atom bomb. In 1945-46 they decided that since our side had the advantage, we would attempt to use it to attain strategic advantage. They were warned that the Soviets would soon catch up because the power of the atom is not confined to any nationality, it is a universal knowledge. It was just a matter of time before someone from another country figured out how to make the bomb.

● (1730)

This resolution brought to mind that small history because it made me realize just how much of an eyelash away we came to actually controlling nuclear weapons and how much we lost it then. I am not saying we have more wisdom than our predecessors. Certainly we do not. However, I do mean to say that politicians, policy makers, have been faced with a number of crucial questions along the way about the application of nuclear weapons, and that we have made a lot of mistakes, beginning with the first one.

I think 1945 was when the new history began. Everything up to that was a prelude. The first explosion in New Mexico was the beginning of a new history. Since that time we have been trying to find various ways and means of putting the stop back into the bottle. We have not been too successful. When we think of it, Mr. Speaker, how many successful nuclear weapons agreements have there been since 1945? There was the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in 1963 which limited test bans in the atmosphere. There were SALT negotiations to which the United States did not become a signatory but adhered to informally up until last year. There was the Non-proliferation Treaty of which Canada was the major architect. It tried to

control the application of nuclear weapons to other countries. That is about it. That about summarizes 43 years of trying to come to grips with this incredible, destructive power.

So much of it is involved in the cold war rhetoric. Somehow nuclear weapons have become intermixed with the competition between East and West, the Soviets and Americans, NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and all the other competitions. We tend at times to believe that there is something plausible about a nuclear weapon. I mean, there are military people and some politicians on our side and certainly on the side of the Soviets, who believe that we could actually use nuclear weapons in wartime and get away with it. They actually say we can have a nuclear war fighting capacity. There are those people in the world and they are not locked up in insane asylums. There are in many cases people occupying very important positions in very important countries, who talk about using nuclear weapons in wartime. They say that if there are only 50 million or 60 million people killed in North America, that is an acceptable level of damage.

We have the same thinking on the Soviet side. Its military people are saying: "If we have to fight one, we will. We survived the Second World War and we can survive a Third World War". When we read these things we think, oh, my God, what are these people saying? In heaven's name, what are they talking about when they say it is okay to have 60 million or 70 million casualties in the first day, to say nothing of the impact on the environment and the atmosphere and the fact that it will totally destroy our social and economic cultural way of life? We cannot reconstruct what we have built up over the past 3000 or 4000 years after a nuclear war.

Surely, the real issue is how to get rid of the fighting. If we can never get rid of the knowledge, how can we finally find a way of putting down such implacable guidelines and controls? As I tried to point out, part of the question is not the techniques but the psychology. Part of it is the understanding. It is people like us in this Chamber and people in other political decision-making Chambers who have that power. We can listen to the scientists. We have listened to them in the past and we have not responded to their recommendations. It will be people like you and I, Mr. Speaker, reflecting ordinary Canadians who will be making those decisions.

Is it so wrong to think in terms of a nuclear weapons free zone? Many Canadians have latched on to that concept, not necessarily because they see it as the perfect answer, but it has a symbolic value, if nothing else. It is one way of ordinary Canadians expressing their gut reaction to us as politicians, as policy makers, which is to get rid of those things. They say: "Do not put myself and my kids in jeopardy". That is why we have resolutions in Ontario, Manitoba, the Territories and various towns and cities. It is one way for people to express themselves. I think we have to listen to that expression. We can be critical of the specifics. However, let us recognize what it represents. It is a heartfelt underlying current of opinion in this country, as it is in other countries around the world, that