

create jobs. We can do it effectively by making use of some of the armamentarium we have available to us.

● (1730)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to take part in the debate on Bill C-218, an Act to declare Canada a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone. This Bill would declare Canada to be a nuclear weapons free nation. It is true that today, we have no nuclear weapons in Canada, so that the purpose of this Bill is to guarantee that in the future, there will be no nuclear weapons on our territory.

[*English*]

The Official Opposition supports the introduction of Bill C-218. We feel it is an appropriate time—

Mr. McDermid: That is something new.

Mr. Gauthier: I said that we support the introduction of Bill C-218. I do not see anyone in the House who would disagree with what I just said. The principle of debating a Bill in this House is something which all of us have supported at first reading, so I support the introduction of this Bill. That is clear. It is appropriate that at this time in Canada we debate the issues at hand and that the vital question of declaring Canada a nuclear weapons free zone be the object of a public debate.

In offering our support to this motion, we wish to make it absolutely clear at this time that we are neither for nor against the concept of a nuclear weapons free zone in Canada. Rather, we feel, as I have said, that this is an appropriate time in our history to have an in depth review of this complex matter so that all Canadians might participate in this crucial debate and help parliamentarians determine our future direction with regard to this question which is of fundamental importance to all Canadians.

We feel certain that the Government opposite will support this motion in light of its promise to the Canadian people to conduct an open government, one which will listen to the Canadian people and will strongly encourage the participation of all Canadians in our political system.

This question deserves a serious hearing. It deserves input from all Canadians. We have been promised over the last few months that indeed the House would be receiving two green papers—one on defence and one on external affairs. Here again we have an occasion to get to the essential matter of these important questions which preoccupy Canadians.

I do not want to debate the matter very long. I think there is some merit in having it discussed and referred to committee. I would just like to say that I strongly support the principle of the Bill. The implications, the ramifications, the “zap you are frozen” attitude is a bit naive. I should like to see more input from all Canadians who are interested in this matter. They can tell parliamentarians what they feel should be done. We must take time to listen. We must take time to consider.

Nuclear Weapons Free Zone Act

Because of what the Parliamentary Secretary said and because I think there are some arguments which will prompt debate, serious consideration should be given to refusing to pass the Bill today. To avoid any difficulties in this regard, I would suggest that indeed the subject matter is very important. It is essential that we discuss it. The Bill could be withdrawn—and there is a formula for that—and the subject matter of it could be referred to a committee along with the other papers which will come forth, I understand, after we are finished with the “blarney summit” in Quebec City. I understand that the two papers I referred to will be tabled—the green paper on defence and the green paper on external affairs. Perhaps at that time we will address this question and have a chance to talk seriously about the matters of nuclear disarmament and a nuclear freeze in Canada.

Some time ago I had the honour and the pleasure of seeing a gentleman named James Stark run for the socialist party, the NDP, in my riding. Mr. Stark and I have had a long, ongoing relationship. I could point to letters which I have exchanged with Mr. Stark. I will not read them into the record because I have a personal view on this issue which I think is very valid; people in my riding know where I stand on the issue.

I should like to move, Mr. Speaker, seconded by the Hon. Member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Baker) and the Hon. Member for Saint-Denis (Mr. Prud'homme):

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word “that” and substituting the following therefor:

“That Bill C-218 be not now read a second time but that the order be discharged, the Bill withdrawn and the subject matter thereof referred to the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence”.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The Hon. Member for Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes).

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to follow the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier). In listening to his motion, I began to wonder whether or not the Opposition would treat the special committee on foreign affairs and national defence with any sense of seriousness.

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): What special committee?

Mr. Hawkes: Surely the subject matter of the Bill before us today belongs in the hands of that special committee. It must be an important part of what that committee discusses. It is almost inconceivable that we should conduct a thorough review of Canada's foreign affairs policy and Canada's defence policy without dealing with the nuclear issue. I think it would be a shame to have it fragmented into two forums.

If the motion of the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier ever comes to a vote, I would urge Members not to split the issue into two committees of the House. The proper context for discussion of this issue surely must be in that special committee which will hold hearings across the country and will totally explore our foreign affairs and defence policies.

Ms. Jewett: It is not set up yet.