

*Air Defence Modernization*

position has been taken without effective consultation in this Parliament.

By the words the Minister has brought to this Parliament this afternoon, is he now saying that this Government agrees with the change in North American defence strategy as announced by the United States President and several defence officials that they will no longer rely upon the question of deterrence as a form of stability and security but will now be pursuing an active defence system for North America which will in a sense break the pattern over the past 30 or 40 years? Are we now committing ourselves to that defence policy, as already announced by the Americans and the U.S. Secretary of Defence in front of Congress to justify its participation in the North Warning System? Does the Minister not believe that that will now result in a major militarization of northern Canada, with the placement of a number of military facilities, communications systems and networks? Is this Government now saying that it is prepared to agree with that change in defence policy without ever having had it debated or discussed in this Parliament and without any opportunity being given to Canadians themselves to know the implications or consequences?

It is very important to know at this point in time—perhaps because we are denied the opportunity in committee to have this kind of debate—if the Minister is saying that this Government does agree with that fundamental change in defensive policy and agrees with the U.S. President and the Secretary of Defence that they are now pursuing an active defence system and are no longer relying upon the deterrent basis for security in North America?

**Mr. Nielsen:** Mr. Speaker, the point has been made by the Hon. Member for Cochrane-Superior (Mr. Penner), the Hon. Member for Brant (Mr. Blackburn) and now, surprisingly, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry (Mr. Axworthy), that there has been no opportunity to discuss this matter in Parliament. The last time I looked, the standing committees were still part of this Parliament and the matter has been before the House of Commons Standing Committee. The Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) told the committee that he was prepared to sit there for as long as Hon. Members had questions, but they ran out of questions.

The matter has also been considered by the Senate Committee. It is being considered now. There is no doubt in my mind that it will again be considered before the end of the supply period in this semester by the committee. It is not true what the Hon. Member for Cochrane-Superior says, that there has been no commitment to appear before that committee. I have given that commitment, and the Secretary of State for External Affairs has already been there. I do not know what arrangements he has made, but chances are that the Secretary of State for External Affairs has agreed to appear again.

With respect to the consultation process, I might point out that the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry was a member of the Government—not of the administration but of the Government—which commenced these negotiations in 1976. He was part of an administration which was active in

those negotiations. What the Hon. Member is saying now, that there should be a consultation and that he should be the recipient of further and better information on the North Warning System, rings a little hollow, to use, I believe, his phrase, unless it was that of the Hon. Member for Brant.

The Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry knows full well what the North Warning System is all about. I agree with the Hon. Member for Brant—and it seems to be evidenced by the intervention of the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry and the Hon. Member for Cochrane-Superior—that very few people know very much about what they are discussing. That is quite obvious after listening to the intervention of one who should know better, namely, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry, who, it appears, does not know his atmospherics from space. He does not know what is on top of the ionosphere and what is below it. NWAS has nothing whatsoever to do with—

**Mr. Axworthy:** Nonsense, you had better read what Weinberger had to say.

**Mr. Nielsen:** The Hon. Member says “nonsense”. Fundamentally, the North Warning System replaces a system which was put in place under a Liberal Government, the DEW Line, and under a system put in place by the Liberal Government of the day, the Pine Tree Line.

**Mr. Blackburn (Brant):** That’s what they are telling you today, Erik.

**Mr. Nielsen:** With respect to sovereignty, I do not hear those Hon. Members now howling about sovereignty. My goodness, when I first came here under the Diefenbaker Government, Ministers of the Crown had to make an application to the United States management corporation even to visit those sites on our own Canadian territory. That is the Liberal idea of negotiating the security of Canada’s sovereignty over our own lands and airspace. That is not the case here.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. With great respect—

**Mr. Axworthy:** Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** No, I am going to try to recognize everyone who has risen. My normal practice is to try to recognize everyone who has a question. If there is time, I will allow supplementary questions. I would encourage everyone to be brief so that those Hon. Members may get a chance to ask supplementary questions.

**Ms. Jewett:** Mr. Speaker, as you know we have had no hearings on this agreement, none whatsoever, and actually only one hour in committee with the Minister. This has put us all in the position of having to use whatever occasion there might be to get information from the Government.

The Minister has said previously, has said again today and keeps reiterating, that there is no connection between the modernization of the DEW Line, the so-called North Warning System, and the development of the star wars, the Strategic