

Adjournment Debate

Mrs. Pauline Browes (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, in the wake of the Reykjavik summit and in view of the Hon. Member's expressed concerns about the Strategic Defence Initiative and its role in the discussion held in Iceland, it is important to re-emphasize the Government's current policy on this issue. The Reykjavik meeting was specifically dealt with by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) in the statement he made in the House on October 21, but I will offer the House the following additional comments to supplement his remarks.

● (1815)

The Hon. Member will recall that the SDI is a research program aimed at investigating various concepts of defence against ballistic missiles. The successful implementation of an effective ballistic missile defence would alter the basis of nuclear deterrence from the threat of retaliation to denying a potential aggressor the military objectives of a nuclear attack. Senior U.S.A. officials have stressed that should SDI prove ballistic missile defence to be feasible—and this will not be determined for several years yet, if ever—the U.S.A. foresees a co-operative transition with the U.S.S.R. to a greater reliance on defensive systems. This has been the U.S.A. negotiating position at the Geneva Arms Talks.

The Government considers SDI research to be prudent in light of similar Soviet activity in recent years. Despite this, the U.S.S.R. has until recently refused even to discuss the relationship between strategic offence and defence in Geneva.

The discussions in Reykjavik on this matter centred primarily on the relationship of the SDI to the Anti-ballistic

Missile Treaty. In Reykjavik, Secretary General Gorbachev suggested all ABM research be confined to the laboratory. As the U.S. found this interpretation even more restrictive than the current terms of the ABM Treaty, the proposal was clearly unacceptable to them. It should be emphasized that prior to this point, President Reagan had agreed to a 10-year commitment to the ABM Treaty. Furthermore, any linkage established by the U.S.S.R. that agreement on other arms control issues be tied to our resolution of the SDI/ABM question would represent a step backwards from previous Soviet positions.

We have been assured by the U.S.A. that SDI research is being conducted within the restrictive interpretation of the ABM Treaty, in spite of the view in some circles in the U.S.A. that a broader interpretation is legally warranted. We are satisfied with the assurances we have received from the administration. The position of the Canadian Government continues to be that both sides should adhere strictly to the ABM Treaty.

Since Reykjavik both sides have indicated a willingness to discuss their remaining differences and build upon the progress registered there. The Government welcomes this and urges the leaders of both nations to complete the task at hand.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 3(1).

The House adjourned at 6.18 p.m.