

*Private Members' Business*

geographic fate to have been between the two super powers, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. throughout the cold war. Now that that has changed and the cold war as we knew it has ended, the time has come to reappraise and reinterpret a lot of the relationships that developed during that time.

• (1130)

The resolution before the Canadian House of Commons this morning is a very timely and important one because it deals with one aspect of the furniture of the cold war, the North American Air Defence Agreement, NORAD. I would like to make some general comments as a Canadian, as a parliamentarian, and someone speaking also for the government on this issue.

First I would like to address specifically the provisions of the resolution which the hon. member for Victoria has asked this House to support. There are two elements to this resolution. The first is that the Canadian government should unilaterally notify the United States that we want to terminate this agreement which exists between our two sovereign countries. The hon. member sets an outside date for that of 1994. Then he goes on and says that in the meantime the government should institute a thorough public review of Canada-U.S. defence relations including discussions between U.S. and Canadian parliamentarians.

The member is suggesting that we cancel a long-standing treaty between our country and the United States and then begin to hold hearings, discussions and public debate as to whether or not that treaty is valid, whether it has a continuing role. I cannot understand the logic of giving notice of an intention to annul an agreement today and then calling for discussions about the appropriateness of it that would begin tomorrow.

Second, as I read this motion, I see that this parliamentarian from the New Democratic Party wants the government to institute a public review, including discussions between Canadian parliamentarians and the United States elected representatives. I have a serious problem with that as a parliamentarian. I think one of the great difficulties we find in Canada today is the diminished role of our House of Commons, this Chamber of the people's elected representatives. We have lost our historical position in relation to power, going to the

cabinet; policy, going to the senior public service; and public opinion, going to the opinion pollsters.

We have abdicated our role for far too long to these three other elements. It is little wonder that today Canadians have a low view of the Canadian House of Commons because we parliamentarians have not adequately asserted our right, our position and our voice on behalf of the Canadian people.

When we have a motion brought to the floor of the House of Commons by a New Democrat member urging that the government get parliamentarians to have these discussions rather than parliamentarians themselves, who after all populate the committee on defence, who after all have the capacity to debate right here on the floor of the House of Commons, as we are doing this very moment, these important issues affecting the future of our country, then I think this is certainly not worthy of a party that includes the word democrat in its name. I think we can expect better than that from a so-called New Democrat.

These are the problems I have with this motion. These are the reasons I cannot not support it. I do think it is very timely that we discuss this issue and bring into perspective what is happening for our country's future in relation to defence. The hon. member has outlined some of the history of the cold war threat and how the initial response was to manned bombers and with changes in technology shifting that to rocket technology, intercontinental ballistic missiles and, over time, although he did not go into it in great detail, the shifting role of NORAD in response to that.

I think it is important to stress not only the historic evolution, the technological changes and the military and political dynamics in this relationship, but equally the fact that the NORAD agreement itself has not stood still, frozen in time in relation to this evolution. The NORAD agreement has been revised and renewed on six or seven occasions, most recently in April. These have been opportunities to take into account the changing world around us.

If we were so good in the past at being able to negotiate treaty changes with the United States when circumstances warranted, why should the New Democrats throw overboard the whole approach of co-operation and negotiation between two sovereign countries and say now that things are changing yet again, we are no longer going to change the agreement yet again to