

Nuclear Armaments

necessarily include prohibitions as comprehensive as those set out in this motion. For example, the South Pacific nuclear free zone, which Canada welcomed, does not prohibit transit through the zone by vessels which may be carrying nuclear weapons. This reflects the fact that even in the few regions where steps have been taken to establish such zones, the measures are adapted to the specific strategic realities and security interests of the countries concerned.

Our Government's approach is pragmatic. Our central concern is to ensure that our policies contribute to national security and international stability. A central pillar of this Government's national security policy is collective defence as exemplified by our membership in NATO and NORAD. The primary role of the alliance is to safeguard the security of member nations by deterring aggression. This Government believes, as do other NATO Governments, that the nuclear deterrent strategy of the alliance has been a critical factor in maintaining peace in the East-West context for over 40 years. Canada voluntarily shouldered the obligation to contribute to the capability of the alliance to implement its strategy of deterrence. It would not be consistent with our alliance membership, or with our own security interests, for Canada, as a matter of principle, to attempt to dissociate itself from any and all aspects of the nuclear deterrent strategy.

The second central pillar of our national security policy is arms control and disarmament. The Canadian Government, like other alliance Governments, recognizes the desirability of moving toward reduced reliance on nuclear weapons. The fact that the U.S. and the Soviet Union appear close to successfully concluding an agreement on the elimination of both short and medium-range nuclear weapons is most encouraging. I remind you, Sir, that those negotiations began as a result of an alliance initiative, and progress has in no small measure been due to the ability of the alliance to maintain a consistent and co-operative approach to the negotiations. Similarly, the alliance is lending its support to the efforts of the superpowers to negotiate radical reductions in their strategic nuclear weapons. As we move toward a less nuclear world, the conventional balance of forces gains an importance. In this area, too, alliance members are co-ordinating their efforts to bring about negotiations toward balanced, and preferably lower, conventional force levels in Europe.

Canada has been able to offer serious and constructive input to these several arms control negotiating efforts because of our presence at the table as an alliance member. Even in multilateral arms control forums, much of Canada's credibility and capacity for influence derives from our alliance membership. This signals to others our level of knowledge about arms control developments and our enhanced access to the deliberative forums. Without that membership we would have been poorly informed of developments, and our credibility seriously depreciated.

The question must be asked: What would be achieved by passing the motion before us? In many respects, as I noted, nothing would change. Canada would remain a country

without nuclear weapons and without direct involvement in the manufacture or maintenance of nuclear arsenals. By signalling a desire to dissociate ourselves from key aspects of the collective defence strategy, our credibility and influence would be significantly diminished. Our own security would certainly not be enhanced, and it could even be compromised. Our influence elsewhere would in no way be enhanced, and it could in fact suffer. It would, in sum, be worse than a futile gesture which would fly in the face of the reality of interdependence, which is as real in the area of national security as it is in other policy areas.

It took the world 40 years to get itself into the current situation of East-West tension and the build-up of nuclear arms. During the last year we have at last begun to see agreements which lessen tension and actually reduce the number of nuclear weapons. It has always been my contention that there is no easy half-hour television solution to disarmament and arms control. It will take patience as we move step by step towards the goal desired by everyone.

The conference on peace and security held last year, in which Canada played a major role, provided new measures to reduce tension in Europe. The proposed agreement between the U.S. and the Soviet Union on short and intermediate range nuclear weapons will eliminate, it is true, only about 3 per cent of the world's nuclear weapons. However, it is an important start.

Let us work towards the reduction of tensions and suspicions to a more open verification system for nuclear arms, troop movements, and chemical weapons. Let us continue to work carefully towards further verifiable reductions while at the same time keeping NATO strong. It is my contention, Sir, that the resolution before this House at this time does not do that.

Mr. Dan Heap (Spadina): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to speak to this motion put forward by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Beaches (Mr. Young). The motion says:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the advisability of declaring Canada a nuclear arms free zone by prohibiting the deployment, testing, construction and transportation of nuclear weapons and associated equipment through and within Canada, the export of goods and materials for use in the construction and deployment of nuclear arms and further, the government should encourage cities, provinces and states throughout the world to undertake similar action.

• (1720)

This, of course, is a very large subject. In the ten minutes I have I wish to concentrate on only one part of it. First, I wish to respond to two things said by the Hon. Member who just spoke. He said toward the end of his remarks that arms reduction will take a long time and will need patience. I agree with him. He, I, and many others in this House can remember discussions of this more than 40 years ago. I also agree with him that it is very heartening that now that the Soviet Union has achieved some parity with the United States on nuclear arms there seems to be some willingness on the part of the