



House of Commons Holds Debate on Nuclear Arms Free Zone Concept on October 10, 1985

On October 10, 1985, the House of Commons debated a private member's bill urging that Canada be declared a nuclear arms free zone. Following is the text of the intervention by Mr. Gerry Weiner, then Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Mr. Weiner is now Minister of State for Immigration.

"Last March 18 the House had a full debate on Bill C-218, an Act to declare Canada a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone. Today we are asked to debate the question of declaring Canada a nuclear arms free zone which would prohibit the deployment, testing, construction and transportation of nuclear weapons and associated equipment through and within Canada and the export of goods and materials for use in the construction and deployment of nuclear arms. From my point of view, there is no difference in substance between a nuclear weapons free zone and a nuclear arms free zone. This being the case, although the Government position on this matter has not changed between March 18 and today, this is a good opportunity to repeat certain aspects of our policy on nuclear weapons free or nuclear arms free zones.

On June 30, 1984, Canada removed the last remaining nuclear-tipped Genie air-to-air missiles which were to be used in wartime in an air defence role by Canadian CF-101 Voodoo interceptors. The air defence role has now been taken over by CF-18 aircraft which can do the same job using conventional weapons systems only. There are no nuclear weapons stationed on Canadian soil which is not the case, however, for at least eight of 16 members of NATO. Overflight of American aircraft with nuclear weapons, or port visits by nuclear-powered war ships, some of which may bear nuclear weapons, were they to occur, would do so only with the express permission of the Canadian

Government. The same consultations and permission would be required for the deployment of any other nuclear weapons within Canadian territory.

Thus, while in some respects Canada may be regarded as a *de facto* nuclear weapons free zone following the withdrawal of the last nuclear capable aircraft from service with the Canadian Armed Forces, we continue to participate fully in the defence alliance, NATO, which employs a nuclear deterrent. Accordingly, possible comparisons with the practices of other countries which are not members of NATO are not particularly valid.

Canada is a member of the North Atlantic Alliance and has now been for more than 36 years. We joined the Alliance because we believed in the concept of collective security — a united effort to deter aggression or to counter it should conflict occur. There were many advantages to such an Alliance. However, the most telling advantages were then, and continue to be, the united strength which accrued to the Alliance enabling it to resist undue external political and military pressure to reduce the cost of defence by dispersing the burden of armaments among the member states.

Similarly, NATO has enabled the West to speak with a unified voice on critical issues of international security and to pursue the progressive development of east-west relations in a coherent fashion. It is an invaluable forum for nations such as Canada to express their views and to exert a constructive and moderating influence on the policy directions taken by the western powers in their relations *vis-à-vis* the East Bloc.

However, while Canada enjoys the collective security and influence given by membership in NATO, Canada also recognizes the need to share the burden of this collective security. It should be

noted here that no NATO country has declared itself unilaterally a nuclear weapons free zone. As a point of clarification, Iceland has not declared itself a nuclear weapons free zone as has been erroneously reported in some news media. The Icelandic Parliament, in its resolution of last May, simply reiterated its old policy that no nuclear weapons be situated in Iceland without the prior consent of Icelandic authorities. The Icelandic Parliament has also envisaged that its Foreign Affairs Committee explore possible participation and further discussions of a nuclear weapons free zone in northern Europe encompassing an area from Greenland to the Ural Mountains.

The proposal to make Canada a nuclear arms free zone might have the effect of prohibiting the testing of the cruise missile in Canada. The decision by the previous Government to allow the United States to test unarmed air launched cruise missiles in Canada was seen as consistent with that Government's support for NATO's two-track policy which led to the deployment of ground-launched cruise and Pershing II missiles in several NATO European countries. This Government decided to allow the United States to continue with its testing program because it believes that the cruise missile is an essential element in the global balance of deterrence and is part of the western response to the modernization by the Soviet Union of its offensive and defensive nuclear systems during the 1970s. This Soviet modernization continues into the 1980s.

It must also be remembered that NATO has had to rely on nuclear weapons to overcome the potential threat present in the great preponderance of Warsaw Pact conventional forces. It would not be in NATO's interest to give up the option of the