

Cruise Missile Testing

I must take exception to another aspect of the motion which implies that any progress in the area of arms control could be achieved through declaratory and unilateral action, rather than through negotiable and enforceable treaties.

In the area of arms control as in any other, the first stage, often the easiest, consists in setting up the objectives which we want to achieve. In such a vital and complex area, we must have long term objectives, for I do not think it would be realistic to expect to achieve them overnight.

We might even seriously jeopardize the arms control process by not setting this issue in its proper context.

When we examine the arms control process objectives, it is important to remember that weapons are the result and not the primary cause of international distrust. Arms control could limit, and even eliminate, some manifestations of this distrust, but it would not get to the heart of the problem.

We have to take arm control for what it really is, that is a management tool in the East-West competition and a contribution to our security. It is not, as some are led to believe, an end in itself.

Arm control plays a central role in the reduction of tensions, in the reinforcement of trust and consequently of security. We often say that increased confidence on all sides is necessary to conclude those agreements. However we must take care not to interpret those agreements as being a clear indication of a lack of distrust. To the extent that they are verified and complied with, arm control agreements can restrict and focus competition. They cannot remove it.

Indeed, it would be interesting to ask ourselves what the world would be if we agreed to radical proposals for arms control. Some say that it would lead to quick progress in some areas such as development. Others contend that the reduction of nuclear arms would give rise to other problems and that issues such as the unbalance of conventional arms between the Eastern and Western countries, the Middle East and Southern Africa as well as human rights would be even more burning.

Consequently, I think that if we have to assess more carefully the arms control process, it is also essential to consider critically the various proposals made in that respect.

It is important in that respect to consider a wide variety of factors, the first one being the global dimension of the East-West rivalry. That global aspect implies that solutions to international relations as well as arms control problems must have a wide support and a wide application.

Any serious approach to arms control, and Canada's approach is serious, Mr. Speaker, must bear the stamp of caution. Proposals that do not produce the expected effects, that are easily bypassed or that do not take into account the complicated relationships which I just mentioned, must be avoided. They are useless if not misleading, and maybe even dangerous.

It is the very complexity of the arms control issue, and the interdependence of its technical, political and military aspects that explain the protracted negotiation process and our reluctance towards declamatory statements. Public discussions are full of statements of good intentions and miraculous solutions. However, we know from experience that no effective and rational initiative can ever be elaborated and applied if it has not first been negotiated.

Since we have the United States as neighbours and we are partners with other democratic countries, we inevitably share the threat that hangs over the West. Our geographic position, the powerfulness of nuclear arms, their terrible effects and the way those arms could be used make it impossible for a nation gathered along the U.S. border to escape that threat. Any claim to the contrary would be delusive.

We share the threat, thus we must also share the responsibility to protect ourselves against it. By helping the United States ensure the reliability of the cruise missile, which is an important element of the strategic arms deterrent, we fulfill a responsible task for a country that benefits from the protection of these deterrent forces.

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I cannot support a motion suggesting that we escape our utmost responsibilities.

● (1450)

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Heap (Spadina): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to have an opportunity today to speak in support of the motion of the Hon. Member for New Westminster—Coquitlam (Ms. Jewett). The motion reads:

That, in the opinion of this House, the Government should consider the advisability of giving notice, under the terms of the weapons testing umbrella agreement with the United States, for the termination of cruise missile testing in Canada.

To put it mildly, that is an idea whose time has come. It came before, but the majority of this Parliament missed it. It has come again with changed circumstances that are even more favourable now than they were before.

One of the changed circumstances of course has been what has already been mentioned by several Members, the INF agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States to eliminate a number of intermediate ranged weapons. However, another changed circumstance which I wish to speak about is the change in the outlook of the Canadian people. I am referring in part to an extensive survey done with a large number of questions by the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security. About half a year ago, in their survey, they found these opinions, among others, among the Canadian people. One is on a simple question: "Do you agree or disagree that there can be no winners in a global nuclear war?"

Ninety-six per cent of Canadians agreed. The large majority, 81 per cent, strongly agreed and another 15 per cent agreed. This means that 96 per cent of Canadians have come to understand that there can be no winners in a nuclear war.