

On 24 March 1986, the NDP Member Derek Blackburn asked the Minister of National Defence whether he had been asked at the NATO Council Meeting earlier in March "to commit Canadian troops in any way to chemical warfare preparedness or participation within the NATO Command"? The Minister said "Of course not...the Canadian Government is not involved in any form of chemical warfare." Mr. Blackburn termed that answer "rather strange" as chemical warfare is "on the agenda of the North Atlantic Assembly and...on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament." He went on to ask the Minister for a clear statement that under no circumstances "will Canadian troops anywhere be involved in the use of chemical weapons or chemical warfare." Erik Nielsen said he was unable to give such an assurance as it is impossible to predict that Canadian troops would not be involved in "whatever kind of warfare might break out." He added: "we are certainly not planning to get involved...[as]...our every effort is directed toward the achievement of a lasting stable world peace." ¹⁸

On 23 May 1986 Pauline Jewett, the NDP critic for External Affairs, asked Mr. Clark why Canada, unlike several of the other NATO countries, did not express reservations at the recent NATO defence ministers' meeting, where the American plan for modernization of their chemical weapons was endorsed. Mr. Clark told the Commons that while Canada would prefer a ban on chemical weapons, that would first "require some reasonableness on the Soviet side with regard to verification. That has not occurred." Pauline Jewett replied that "...basically the minister is saying that the talks are momentarily stalled and let us keep them permanently stalled. That is what he is saying by his enthusiastic support for chemical weapons."¹⁹ Mr. Clark replied:

We are looking for a global ban. In order to get a global ban there has to be a system of verification which will work in the Soviet Union....That is the problem with verification.

¹⁸ Commons Debates, 24 March 1986, p. 11808.

¹⁹ Commons Debates, 23 May 1986, p. 13563.