

by my colleagues with respect to the absence of the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) and the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Coates) indicate that we have in their place a Minister who is not even prepared to state what the Government's position is on this question. What is the Government's position on this very important question?

[Translation]

Mrs. Vézina: Mr. Speaker, I simply want to tell the Hon. Member that if she had been here during the 20 minutes when I explained the position of the Government, she would now know the answer—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Hon. Member for Lotbinière (Mr. Tremblay) for a short question.

Mr. Tremblay (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker—

[English]

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. The Minister will know that this is the age of telecommunications. I was here in the Chamber and I was also watching her remarks on television in the lobby. She will be aware of the fact that there are Members who watch from the lobby and I heard all the remarks she made.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair rules that this is not a question of privilege.

Ms. Copps: Yes, it is.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is not a question of privilege. As a result, the period for questions and comments is now over. The 10 minutes are up.

Ms. Copps: On a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker, about five minutes ago I understood the Chair to state that it was not the right or privilege of any Member to comment upon the presence or absence of any Member. It seems to me this is exactly the case in point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair has ruled that the period for questions and comments is now over. We shall now resume debate with the Hon. Member for New Westminster-Coquitlam (Ms. Jewett).

Ms. Pauline Jewett (New Westminster-Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, it has been pointed out that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Coates), and the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) are not here. That underlines—

Mr. Bradley: And there are three NDP.

Ms. Jewett:—and I say that more in sorrow than in anger, the real reluctance of the Government to present to Canadians any new or fresh initiatives on the most crucial matter facing humankind.

Supply

The speech the Minister was given to read to us in the House really did not address the nuclear freeze motion that the UN will be voting on next week except in a very narrow, technical sense. I wonder if the people in the Department of External Affairs think they are dealing with an issue when they nit-pick it to death. That is not facing up to this peril that the whole planet is facing. I started taking a few notes as the Minister was reading the speech but I stopped because, again, there is no sense of urgency on the part of the Government and only a little more on the part of the Official Opposition. They sort of say: Well, we have not had a nuclear exchange or nuclear war for 40 years. Where is their historical sense? Forty years is a very short time in the flow of history. Therefore it is not enough for us to congratulate ourselves that somehow or other this 40 years has made it possible for us to avoid the nuclear peril and to continue to avoid a nuclear exchange of either minor or major proportions.

Instead of nit-picking the resolution, Mr. Speaker, why do Members of this House, all of us, not look back over the last few years and all the deadly gambits—and some of you will, I hope, have read Strobe Talbott's book called *Deadly Gambits*—and realize that the reason world public opinion demands a nuclear freeze is exactly because you have to freeze the production and deployment and testing of nuclear weapons in order to bring about reductions in nuclear weapons. As the old saying goes, you must stop the car before you put it in reverse.

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Hon. Members in both of the other Parties do not seem to realize, although the Canadian public thoroughly realizes and understands, that the increasingly sophisticated galaxy of nuclear weaponry that is constantly coming on-stream from both superpowers, usually, in all but one case, led by the United States, is making the chance of a verifiable nuclear freeze close to impossible.

One of the reasons we so opposed Canadian complicity in the development of the Cruise missile is that its numbers and locations are almost impossible to verify. Every military strategist has told us for years that we cannot have arms reductions if the location and number of those arms cannot be verified. People seem to forget this. The whole point of the freeze, which seems to have been lost in all this nit-picking, is to prevent the development of any more unverifiable nuclear weapons by both sides. If we have more unverifiable nuclear weapons we will never have a negotiated arms reduction that is verifiable. I wish some of the Members in the House would address this extremely serious matter which they seem to have lost sight of.

I recall when we had the reference on security and disarmament in the standing committee about which several of us made a minority statement. One of the most senior strategic analysts in the country, Harriet Critchley, appeared before the committee and stated explicitly what I have just stated. She said that the Cruise missile, the testing of which by Canada had just broken in the press, was virtually undetectable and