

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

● (2:20 p.m.)

States, the Soviet Union and a sufficient number of other states to bring the treaty into force.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Sharp: This convention is the culmination of more than five years of negotiations in which Canada played a significant role. Canada ratified the treaty on January 8, 1969 and was in fact the first nation with a technological capacity to produce nuclear weapons to renounce this weapons option by ratifying the non-proliferation treaty. We shall continue to stress the importance of adherence to the treaty by those states that already have or are close to attaining the technological capacity to produce nuclear weapons—the so-called “near-nuclear” nations.

Canada welcomes the coming into force of this treaty and urges all countries to make it an effective means of counteracting the dangers inherent in the proliferation of nuclear weapons. We hope that those nations which have signed the treaty but not yet ratified it, as well as those which have not yet signed, will proceed to ratification and to implement its safeguards provisions designed to preclude proliferation. Finally, we hope and expect that, in accordance with Article VI of the treaty, this substantial step forward will inspire renewed efforts to curtail the arms race.

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to associate myself with the remarks of the Secretary of State for External Affairs. This is a very significant day. While we must, of course, bear in mind, as I am sure we will—indeed, this announcement constitutes a reminder to us—how much yet remains to be done before we can feel that we really have effective control of nuclear weapons or their proliferation in the world, nevertheless this is a step about which we can be very pleased.

I think it is appropriate, as we welcome this development, to bear in mind not only the effort made by the present Secretary of State for External Affairs but also those of his predecessors, going back to the days of the Hon. Howard Green, all of whom were concerned about atomic weapons and their proliferation. Neither must we forget the efforts of the devoted officials of the Department of External Affairs. As I say, I am happy today to associate myself with the remarks of the minister.

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, it is, of course, true that every citizen in every part of the world will be happy to hear that the non-proliferation treaty has at last been ratified by a sufficient number of states to bring it into force. I join with the Leader of the Opposition and the Secretary of State for External Affairs in greeting the importance of this event.

I am sure I am not saying anything more than is in the hearts and minds of every member of this House when I warn that we should not become too complacent about this treaty, first, because it touches a matter which is not as basic to the problem of the nuclear arms threat as some other matters; second, because important nations in the world have not ratified the treaty, one of them being France and another China, so that the family of nations under this treaty is still very dangerously incomplete and, third, this treaty, like the test ban treaty, only touches the periphery of the problem of the threat of the nuclear destruction of humanity. It merely indicates the need for further steps and discussions in SALT and at the disarmament conference in Geneva.

In brief, while I join everybody else in greeting the importance of this day, I am conscious of the fact that it is a small and relatively less important step toward relieving the world of the danger of nuclear destruction, than the very important and much more difficult steps that lie ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): We are glad to endorse the comments made by the Secretary of State for External Affairs. We rejoice at this historic event which is the most important accomplishment so far in the field of arms control.

We are certainly glad to see that Canada, which ratified the treaty in January 1969, was in fact the first nation to ratify this treaty, because we were the first nation with a technological capacity to produce nuclear weapons to renounce this weapons option by ratifying the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Speaker, Canada stands as a shining example for humanity, because this treaty will certainly help men refrain from killing each other, as could easily have been the case.

It is with pleasure therefore that we join the government and the leaders of the other parties in welcoming this achievement.