

*International Peace and Security*

[English]

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg-Fort Garry):** Mr. Speaker, I too, would like to offer some comments on this very important institution we are debating this afternoon. I think there is a certain flow in the history of events of this country where certain institutions all of a sudden take on special meaning and significance for the Canadian public. I can recall that over a year and a half ago, when we were still in Government, we were discussing the kinds of initiatives which could be taken to give further force and direction to the issue of arms control. The necessity for the establishment of a centre which would co-ordinate a number of important research projects was considered to be of the highest priority. I think the wisdom of that step was demonstrated to me very actively during this past summer when I was part of the special joint House and Senate committee which was looking at the star wars issue. I had the experience of observing the concern, care and interest of a large representation of Canadians which was expressed before that committee. I saw the necessity to have an outlet in this country for those cares and concerns.

● (1710)

We do not talk about peace and arms control in this country in much detail. However, I am reminded of the testimony of representatives of a group called Educators for Social Responsibility which is basically a group of high school teachers from across Canada who are interested in the issues of arms control and disarmament. We asked them where and how young people in high schools could discuss the vital issue of peace and they said that that did not take place in the schools because most teachers are afraid to bring forward such controversial topics as arms control in the classroom.

To my mind, Mr. Speaker, it is shocking that in the schools of this country it is difficult for teachers who are interested and involved to provide the forum in which young people can discuss an issue so vital to themselves and their futures. When we probed a little deeper we found that that intimidation was by school boards, administration, parents, and the community. It is considered to be a topic which is too sensitive to handle. It is considered to be a political topic and, of course, we neutralize our schools and do not want them to talk about politics. However, there are too many strong feelings on both sides. One teacher who was part of the delegation said that if he spoke in his classroom about the issues of peace and arms control, people would say he was a "pinko" and not a good hardliner like he is supposed to be. That is a more respectable position to take. The testimony of the educators was that on issues which are essential to survival and to the future there is a paucity of information, a lack of opportunity for discussion, and a lack of opportunity for people going through our school system to become aware and informed about them through good material and programs.

My caucus colleague from Saint-Denis said he hopes there will be lots of studies. We do need studies. There are many experts in the country and studies will certainly help Parliamentarians, bureaucrats, strategists, and the Armed Forces.

God knows we can all use some help in coming to grips with these issues. I think this House has paid too little attention to them. I hope that the institute will not just do studies for the Ottawa crowd and expert analyses for the policy makers. I hope that the institute will undertake a more populist approach and use the resources which are given to it to disseminate information across the country into the schools, community clubs, and churches, and make it respectable to talk about peace in this country on a learned, informed basis. With that kind of underlying foundation of well-developed opinion and judgment we may ultimately get better foreign policies and results. I think it is essential that Parliamentarians have the opportunity to put forward what we think the agenda of the institute should be. Parliamentarians should learn from our experiences.

**Ms. Jewett:** They will do their own agenda.

**Mr. Axworthy:** I find that a highly elitist point of view, which is perhaps typical of the NDP—

**Ms. Jewett:** I want them to be independent.

**Mr. Axworthy:**—that they will set their own agenda and that Members of Parliament are forbidden to offer opinions and to express their heartfelt hopes and aspirations for this institute. After all, it was Parliament that established it. The previous Government put it in place and Members of Parliament voted for it, but now it is being taken over by the in-house crowd so that they can all get together. That is not what should take place. I think it would be a serious mistake if the Peace Institute became a little green house factory—

**Ms. Jewett:** You don't know anything about it.

**Mr. Axworthy:**—for people to do their own inside studies. Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the Member that I know an awful lot more about it than she does because I was in the Cabinet that put this into place and decided, so don't tell me that I don't know anything about it.

**Ms. Jewett:** You didn't even know about cruise missile testing when you were in the Cabinet. You didn't know anything when you were in the Cabinet.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest):** Order.

**Mr. Beatty:** Mr. Speaker, this is very unseemly.

**Mr. Axworthy:** It is very unseemly, but it is also very important. I know the Conservative Members are not particularly interested in this Bill because it is not of their own creation and they are houseworking on something that is very important, but let us talk about what we are saying is an important priority. I know the Member for New Westminster (Ms. Jewett) is not interested in a populist approach to these issues. That is too bad because her and her cosy club of friends would not want to share with the public at large. I think that that kind of elitism has been part of the problem with the making of foreign policy in this country. Part of the difficulty