

Nuclear Weapons Free Zone Act

Our country agreed not to encourage the further development of nuclear weapons when we signed the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. We further agreed:

Each non nuclear weapon state party to the treaty undertakes not to receive the transfer from any transferor whatsoever of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, or of control over such weapons or explosive devices, directly or indirectly; not to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices; and not to seek or receive any assistance in the manufacture of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

We further supported the inclusion of a provision placing an obligation on nuclear weapon states parties to the treaty to negotiate effective restraints on the nuclear arms race and to meet their commitment to seek a halt to nuclear weapon testing. Surely, at the least, the spirit of this agreement has already been violated by the testing of the Cruise. The weapon itself is not functionable in this case without the testing of the delivery system. It is all one and the same. The spirit of the agreement has been violated by the manufacture of weapons components in Canada, not to mention the fact that there have been nuclear arms on Canadian soil.

However, if this agreement still reflects our intentions on this issue, then let us send this Bill to committee and take some positive actions toward the objective of the agreement we signed when we gave our word 17 years ago. It has been 17 years, Mr. Speaker, and we are still playing Simon Says with the two schoolyard bullies who have been taking no initiatives to get out of the game. That is what it will take: initiative, action and courage. But some Hon. Members will have a problem with getting up the courage to take a pacified stand on this issue. They will say, "Why should we if they are not going to as well?" But there will be followers. As we join New Zealand and a number of other nations, others will join us, and the positive effects of the international movement by countries like ours will eventually cover the globe.

● (1710)

There may be some who call the Bill anti-American or anti-NATO, but we have no commitment or no responsibility to NATO on nuclear weapons and there is no disloyalty in excusing ourselves from our friends' company while they are engaged in an activity which is morally wrong and not in our best interest. Did our mothers not teach us that?

The Bill is not anti anything other than nuclear weapons. It won't affect other forms of nuclear technology and it will not open the doors to a communist or any other invasion. We will have to debate this Bill for what it is, a bold move toward peace and an even bolder move toward the elimination of nuclear weapons. It has to start somewhere; it may as well start here.

It is impossible for this Bill to protect immediately the people of Canada from nuclear war, though I believe it will help in the long run. However, it does protect us from the ignorance of nuclear deterrent advocates and the false sense of security that they create in the minds of Canadians when they expose their simplistic myth of maintaining nuclear balance. Having taken a stand on this issue and having had our awareness raised, new opportunities of hope will be found.

Obviously, even more discussion on this topic raises hope. That is why the Bill also supports the idea of a world referendum on disarmament. Some Members will suggest that the idea is silly because no one wants a nuclear war, but there is nothing silly about a world discussion on this issue, leading to a democratic expression. Neither is there anything silly about the amount of support this initiative has around the world. Even the Soviet Union has said that it is prepared to investigate the methodology of the referendum with other interested countries. No, there is nothing silly about that, and all for an estimated cost of two cents per participant when done in concert with regular elections. I hope other Hon. Members do not have a problem with this part of the Bill. Certainly all Parties showed support for this initiative prior to the election when they were surveyed. When surveyed, 76 Liberal candidates said yes, nine said no; 84 Conservatives said yes, nine said no; and all 128 new Democrats who answered the survey said yes. Of the Conservatives showing support, 19 are now Cabinet Ministers.

I hope we can expect general support for the proposal for a world referendum as a golden opportunity to further the cause of peace through world discussion.

I have tried to make my comments brief. The Bill has been debated in the House on previous occasions. I am sure all Hon. Members have enough information to be able to form an opinion.

There are two other reasons that I urge the House to allow this Bill to be referred to the appropriate standing committee. One concerns Canada's credibility. We have had a marvelous record in peace-keeping. In beginning a good record of peace-making, if we are a nuclear weapons free zone, we can go to other countries to talk about a nuclear arms freeze, reduction and eventual elimination in a stronger position. If we are not party to or in possession of nuclear weapons or allow others to have nuclear weapons or delivery systems on Canadian territory, including the testing of weapons or delivery systems, we will be in a stronger position. There must be no hypocrisy when our nation goes to other nations to discuss this issue. This has nothing to do with our NATO commitment.

The other reason is that both the United States and the Soviet Union have a nuclear capacity within their territories and on the oceans that is sufficient to wipe all of us out anyway. There is no real necessity for Canada or dozens of other countries like us to be party to the possession of or to allow the stationing or testing of nuclear weapons and delivery systems to try to influence the deterrent or balance of power.

In the event that either or both of those nations were to launch a nuclear attack, they would overfly us and destroy us anyway. Any contribution that Canada would make to such a catastrophe would be so small as to make no difference in such a final suicidal result.

Mr. Gerry Weiner (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the adoption of Bill C-218, an Act to declare Canada a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone, has many implications which go well beyond the Bill's