

Government Orders

February 1993 the debate should have taken place at that time if it were that important.

• (1805)

I do not hear any complaints or any concerns from people in my riding. I just came through an election campaign where I campaigned extensively and this issue was not raised on one single occasion. I do not know anyone who is opposed to the testing. There was little support in the riding for the ban of testing in 1983 and I think there is even less now.

I do want to say that I welcome the review of defence policy that is coming up. We certainly encourage the government to do that, but we do have commitments that have to be met in the meantime. We have to honour those commitments. We signed a renewal in February and I believe we are bound by it.

We heard yesterday in the peacekeeping debate that there still are trouble spots in the world, trouble spots that could develop into something major. The former Yugoslavian republic was the area where World War I started and that is a trouble spot again. We know it has the potential for growing.

We know there is some potential for problems in Russia although we certainly hope that democracy has taken firm root there and is going to continue to develop. However I do believe we have to be prepared.

I wanted to say as well that we have relied heavily on our neighbours and friends to the south for help with our defences in the past. We need to continue to do that. We do have partners in NATO that we rely on. We are part of greater defence organizations and I believe we have to honour these commitments.

It is my view the people of the Peace River riding support cruise missile testing in our area and in Canada. It is part of our defence. It is a deterrent. We have seen that deterrent used in Iraq very effectively. The UN had a mandate to go in and Canada was part of that UN mandate in that situation. The cruise missile was a big part of that deterrent.

I support the continuation of the cruise missile testing in the riding. In my view that is backed up by the people in the Peace River riding as well.

[Translation]

Mr. François Langlois (Bellechasse): Madam Speaker, we have been dealing with the concept of sovereignty on the opposition side for some time now and obviously we are in a good position to place the debate in the context of protecting Canadian sovereignty. Our concept of sovereignty is not, however, fragile or timid, but open to the world. Our vision of sovereignty would allow us to get along with our neighbours and friends, and particularly in this instance, with the United States.

Because we have a great deal in common with the United States, Quebec sovereigntists can easily understand why the

Americans did what they did two centuries ago. We too will soon be taking similar action, that is clear. We also understand that the defence of a country cannot be confined to geopolitical boundaries that begin at a certain parallel. The issue here is the defence of a continent which we share with the United States of America and we will continue to defend it and be good friends with the U.S. when we achieve sovereignty.

This being said, I have a question for the hon. member for Peace River. I did not quite understand the thrust of his remarks in support of cruise missile testing. I got the impression that he was in favour of allowing testing to continue simply because we have already signed an agreement.

• (1810)

Can the hon. member for Peace River tell me if he agrees with some of the substantive arguments put forward in support of continued testing or if he simply feels bound by the legal and technical aspects of the question and believes we must respect the existing agreement with the United States?

[English]

Mr. Penson: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. It is a good question. I want to leave with him the reassurance that I believe strongly in the reasons for the testing. It is part of a deterrent that we need to continue to develop in terms of our own sovereignty and of peacekeeping roles we as Canadians undertake throughout the world.

I also believe in it because we signed a commitment in good faith and I think we need to honour it. I very strongly want to say that I believe it is an important part of our defence. It is something that should be part of the overall review when defence is reviewed. I would make the case that I support it on the basis of a strong defence of Canada and a need for peacekeeping.

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport): Madam Speaker, when this proposition surfaced for the first time in 1981 within the restrictions imposed by cabinet solidarity I opposed it tooth and nail. I still oppose it. I appreciate very much the opportunity the government is offering us to debate the matter on the floor of the House today.

The reason for opposing comes from two beliefs. One is that Canada is committed to arms control, to disarmament, and as a peace loving and peace promoting nation it should not lend its territory for the testing of weapons which could carry nuclear warheads and which could launch a disarming nuclear strike against another country.

We all know that Canada has a fine record in the world for opposing any form of nuclear warfare. We voluntarily refrained from using nuclear weapons. We eliminated from Canadian territory the stationing of nuclear weapons. Canada was among