

Parliamentary Comment

On 22 November 1985, NDP Foreign Affairs critic Pauline Jewett made a statement in the House concerning the Government's position on the nuclear freeze.

Despite the fine words of peace of the Prime Minister and the earlier record of Canada's Disarmament Ambassador who supported a freeze when he was a Conservative Member...Canada has failed to take even this modest action [of voting in favour of a freeze at the UN] to halt the nuclear arms race. Canada can and must do more for peace than send the Prime Minister to Brussels to be debriefed....It is time for initiative and action. At the very least Canada should support the initiatives being taken by others at the UN and elsewhere. I urge the Government to change its vote when the freeze issue comes before the General Assembly of the UN.³

Ms. Jewett pursued the issue with Mr. Clark during the SCEAND Hearings. Specifically she pointed to the examples of Australia and New Zealand, both of whom had changed their previous voting record on the freeze at the UN and were now voting in favour. She asked Mr. Clark whether the Government would consider changing its vote to an abstention. Mr. Clark responded:

We now have an agreement to look at the question of quite large-scale reductions by the two superpowers. They have both...put forward a proposal for a 50% reduction. A freeze has the world in a much more dangerous state than the 50% reduction would have. Indeed, a freeze indicates an acceptance of the status quo, rather than moving away from it.... The time taken in negotiating the application of a freeze to keep things at a dangerously high level is time taken away from negotiating reductions, in which both superpowers have now indicated they are interested.⁴

³ Commons Debates, 22 November 1985, p. 8707.

⁴ SCEAND Proceedings, 4 December 1985, p. 26.