

Oral Questions

Miss MacDonald: These changes are quite separate and distinct from those included in Bill C-3 which applied to federal and provincial agencies and Crown corporations. They will be proceeded with. However, the changes as they affect municipalities and volunteer fire departments will not be proceeded with.

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[Translation]

NUCLEAR ARMAMENTS

SALT II TREATY—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (Saint-Henri—Westmount): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. Thursday I put a question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs about the cruise missile tests and the SALT II Treaty. In response, he stated that the Prime Minister had advised President Reagan that it would be better for the world if the United States met the commitments it made under SALT II. Mr. Speaker, the President does not seem to have heeded this wise counsel. Could the Prime Minister advise President Reagan that Canada does not intend to proceed with the cruise missile tests until the U.S. Government decides to meet its obligations under the SALT II Treaty and the ABM Treaty?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): This question was asked and I answered it on Thursday afternoon. Canada believes it was a mistake on the part of the United States not to observe the SALT II Treaty. We have advised them accordingly several times, most recently in a personal letter from the Prime Minister to President Reagan. However, we have NATO commitments in connection with the cruise missile tests, and we intend to respect those commitments. I deeply regret the fact that on the weekend, the Liberal Party rejected the commitment signed by Mr. Trudeau and also rejected Canada's membership in NATO.

[English]

CANADA-UNITED STATES AGREEMENT

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (Saint-Henri—Westmount): Mr. Speaker, if I am not mistaken, the testing of the Cruise missile comes under a bilateral agreement of February, 1983, with the United States. Paragraph 23c of the undertaking reads:

Either Government shall reserve the right to cancel, suspend, postpone or terminate any specific test and evaluation project, if in its opinion, any unforeseen imperative circumstances should so warrant.

Surely the breach by the Americans of their obligations under SALT II would constitute such an eventuality if the Government so elected to stop testing the Cruise missile.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I noted with interest and dismay the position of the Liberal Party on the weekend in respect of our

capacity as a country to fulfil our obligations to NATO as it regards—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): It is not a NATO agreement.

Mr. Fulton: You need another briefing, Joe.

Mr. Speaker: I know Hon. Members would want to hear the Minister.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): I was dismayed at the agreement of the Liberal Party with regard to its vote on a nuclear free zone to reject Canada's obligations under NATO in so far as the protection of Canada is concerned against some 300 Soviet submarines in our waters. I also regret the concern—

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): In whose waters?

Mr. Ouellet: Where are they?

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): I also regret the action of the Liberal Party now in suggesting that we have no obligation to contribute to the collective defence of NATO, an obligation which we have accepted. Unhappily the nuclear deterrent remains a reality in the world. This country cannot opt out of our obligations. This Government does not intend to walk away.

REQUEST FOR HALT TO CRUISE MISSILE TESTING

Ms. Pauline Jewett (New Westminster—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, the Minister seems to be reading the briefing books of the past Liberal Government. Would he just answer one or two straightforward questions on the issue? Does the Government yet recognize that there is a link between the breaching of the SALT II limits and air-launched Cruise missiles? Does it see the link about which we are talking? If so, why does it not do the honourable thing and dissociate us from the breach of the SALT II limits and cancel air-launched Cruise missile testing?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): There is an area of profound disagreement between the New Democratic Party and now the Liberal Party which has joined it, and the Progressive Conservative Government. Somehow or other the Liberals and New Democrats believe it is honourable to break agreements and to say that other people should defend freedom but we will only talk about it, and then back away from the obligations which those involvements entail.

Ms. Jewett: The Minister is apologizing for the American breach of the SALT II treaty; that is what he is doing. His own colleague, the Minister of Communications, when she was External Affairs critic, pointed out that it was not a breach of NATO—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Hon. Member will put her question.