

Mr. Winegard: Mr. Speaker, I cannot answer that at the present time. It is still a matter of some discussion. The committee has made its feelings known to the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark), and the chairman of the committee and the Minister are still in discussion on this matter.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): I might just remind the Hon. Member for Saint-Denis (Mr. Prud'homme) that the questions should be related to the speech made by the Hon. Member for Guelph (Mr. Winegard), not necessarily to what is going on in the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence.

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River): Mr. Speaker, it is with a great deal of pleasure that I participate in this debate today and speak in support of the motion by the New Democratic Party. The motion asks basically two things. It asks the Government to adopt a position in support of a nuclear freeze and, in doing so, make a definite split with the program put forward by the previous Government. That program, if it was not schizophrenic, certainly worked against the wishes of many people in Canada, and I think it caused concern around the world.

The resolution supports a statement by the United Nations that basically asks for a nuclear arms freeze. It would be subject, of course, to verification and it would be for a five-year duration. In the process of asking the Government to adopt this particular policy, we want a very clear statement on the part of the Conservative Government that it accepts these goals and that it will rationally pursue them in Canada.

There are sound reasons for this, Mr. Speaker. After the Conservative Government authorized our representatives at the United Nations to vote against this particular nuclear freeze motion, the explanations given by the Government were rather schizophrenic. The Government's opposition, I think, is rather ill-conceived and ill-founded, and many people have expressed the same feeling. It is interesting that Mr. Roche made some comments about why the Government did it. He suggested that the reason it voted against the motion was not that it disagreed with it but, rather, that it was a question of the practicality of the concept. There was no point in supporting simply a declaratory effort at the United Nations; it would have no effect, and certainly would not lead to constructive alternatives. He also indicated that he was opposed to it because there was no provision for dealing with peaceful nuclear explosions.

● (1720)

This is complete nonsense, Mr. Speaker. Any declaratory effort or any effort whatsoever that moves the world one inch closer to nuclear disarmament is worth making. It is almost immoral not to take a position in support of this. It is incomprehensible that the Government should have authorized the country's representatives at the United Nations to vote against the motion unless one accepts the statement of the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark). If we

Supply

accept his statement, we begin to understand why the Government voted against such a logical and important motion.

The Secretary of State for External Affairs said he did not want to lose his influence in NATO. It strikes me and my Party and many people in Canada that we do not have any influence in NATO. The United States, in fact, reserves the right to act unilaterally in the defence of western Europe. If something arises in western Europe, we will not be consulted. If we are lucky, we may be informed after the event, but we certainly do not have the influence that the Secretary of State for External Affairs is attempting to suggest to justify this.

He is also suggesting that he does not want to lose his influence with the United States. Again, I do not believe that the Government has any influence with the United States. I think the United States tells the Government of Canada what to do, when to do it, and how much to do. I think the previous Liberal administration, run by the former Prime Minister, followed the same course of activity. There were occasional schizophrenic outbursts, with attempts at disciplinary action by the United States, then he would fall back into line. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, we do not have the kind of influence that Canadians want within NATO. The United States would follow unilateral action without its NATO allies. The western European defence community has stated in the past that it will act unilaterally in defence of western Europe. Ultimately, voting against a nuclear freeze is not going to cause us to lose whatever influence we do have. I think it is extremely unfortunate that the Government authorized its representatives to vote against it.

The communication between the Secretary of State for External Affairs and the Government with the officials at the UN was obviously not very clear. That is an extremely unusual thing to do and I believe that the Conservative Government will pay dearly in political terms for this. There is an enormous number of people in the country who want to have a nuclear freeze and nuclear disarmament. They go to bed at night in fear of what the end result of failing to take positive action on this is going to be. There will be political repercussions.

The briefings that they are giving to people at the United Nations would not lead Canadians to have very much confidence in what is happening. The ambassador for disarmament has stood up and made comments which are virtually ludicrous. He has stood up and said that there is no point in supporting a declaratory statement. He has said that we cannot vote for a declaration of a nuclear freeze because we are afraid of peaceful nuclear explosions and other technical details. That is complete nonsense. Someone, whether the Secretary of State for External Affairs or someone in the Prime Minister's Office, is not giving our officials at the United Nations a clear briefing on what is expected of them. The Minister must be prepared to stand up and take the political consequences of saying that if we vote for the nuclear freeze, the Americans are going to be mad at us and our NATO allies might be mad at us and we are therefore afraid to take a proper action. If they have not got the guts to stand