



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

COMMITTEES

Treaties Committee

Report

SPEECH

Thursday, 17 September 2009

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Thomson, Kelvin, MP

Source House
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Question No.

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (1.32 pm)—On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, I present the committee's report entitled 'Report No. 106: *Nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament*', together with the minutes of proceedings and evidence received by the committee.

Ordered that the report be made a parliamentary paper.

Mr KELVIN THOMSON—by leave—The road to nuclear hell is paved with defensive intentions. The United States developed nuclear weapons after it was attacked during the Second World War by Japan, and both the United States and Russia developed nuclear weapons as a defensive strategy during the Cold War. Because they had nuclear weapons, China, which at various times during the nuclear age has had poor relations with both America and Russia, developed nuclear weapons as well. Because China had nuclear weapons, India felt threatened and developed nuclear weapons. Because India developed nuclear weapons, Pakistan felt threatened and developed nuclear weapons. The strength of religious fundamentalist terrorist groups in Pakistan has created an ever-present and alarming risk that nuclear weapons could fall into the hands of non-state actors, terrorist groups who have no respect for human life and will take no notice of doctrines of deterrence and mutually assured destruction in the way that governments might reasonably be expected to. We must do all that we can to try to break every link in this dangerous nuclear chain. Every one of us has a responsibility to help re-energise the international political debate against the background of a decade or more in which the international community has been sleepwalking when it comes to both non-proliferation and, especially, disarmament.

I want to thank my fellow committee members not just for the hard work involved in producing a 230-plus-page report but for the attitude of cooperation and determination to say something significant and worthwhile with which they approached this task. The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties has members from the Labor Party, the Liberal Party, the Nationals and the Greens, with very different perspectives on a range of nuclear and foreign policy questions, but each member of the committee wanted to play their part in protecting people from the nuclear threat and to ensure

that Australia's voice is heard loud and clear around the world on these matters. So we have worked through the issues until we achieved an agreed outcome, a platform for progress.

What is that platform? We want to see the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in place. This treaty is incredibly important in halting the momentum for nuclear proliferation and ultimately ringbarking the nuclear weapons tree. We want to see a verifiable Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty in place. This would stop countries building up fissile materials and therefore reduce the risks of proliferation and limit the risk of nuclear arms races. We want all uranium-exporting countries to require that the countries to whom they export uranium have an additional protocol to guarantee International Atomic Energy Agency inspector access. We believe that the International Atomic Energy Agency's budget needs to be increased so it can do its work properly and thoroughly. The committee examined proposals for a nuclear weapons convention and for a multilateral fuel bank. In each case more work needs to be done, and we have recommended the allocation of research and consultation resources to the development of a nuclear weapons convention with a clear legal framework and enforceable verification.

It is important to understand that the friction between the nuclear haves and the nuclear have-nots is alive and well. Throughout the history of the non-proliferation treaty the nuclear haves have stressed non-proliferation—that is, making sure no other country gets nuclear weapons—while the nuclear have-nots have stressed disarmament—that is, obliging the nuclear armed countries to get rid of their bombs. The countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, essentially have-nots, are frustrated by the lack of progress on disarmament. Too often this difference of approach has led to international stalemate. Clearly we need to have action on both fronts: non-proliferation and disarmament.

The committee strongly supports the work of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, co-chaired by Gareth Evans. We support the Conference on Disarmament and the forthcoming Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. We have made recommendations which reflect this support. We have also made recommendations designed to encourage

parliamentarians all around the world to engage with and talk up a world without nuclear weapons, for—borrowing a little from the late great Edward Kennedy—the dream of a world without nuclear weapons is a dream that must never die. We must never accept that it is all right to live in a world where some people have the power to kill tens of millions of their fellow human beings and make the planet uninhabitable in a heartbeat. That must never be acceptable.

I wish to place on the record my great appreciation for the mighty work done by the committee secretariat, in particular inquiry secretary Julia Searle and committee secretary Jerome Brown, in enabling this report to happen. I urge my colleagues here in Australia and in other parliaments, and ordinary Australians and citizens of other countries, to read it, think about it and make a world free of nuclear weapons a reality.