

October 10 MPI Dinner Speech

Though I will retain the MPI Chairmanship until midnight on December 31, 2008, tonight marks a rite of passage. The Middle Powers Initiative is acquiring a new Chairman and I honour Henrik Salander who will assume office on January 1, 2009. Tonight is a celebration of the transition.

It means a lot to me that my wife, daughter and son are here for this happy occasion. As I said in my Memoirs, my family has sustained me through a long professional career.

Bill Epstein used to say to me, “Never quit.” I am heeding his admonition and, as long as I breathe, I will fight for the total abolition of nuclear weapons. And I will support the Middle Powers Initiative as it heads into a new era. But it is time – at age 80 – to relinquish responsibilities.

Stepping down for me has been made easier in the knowledge that in moving from Doug Roche to Henrik, Salander, MPI is trading up.

Henrik Salander’s outstanding international reputation as a diplomat, thinker, activist and proponent of a nuclear weapons-free world makes him the ideal choice to lead MPI. As a father of the New Agenda Coalition on behalf of the Swedish government, Henrik already has a place in history.

MPI has a brilliant future with Henrik at the helm, and I will give him my fullest support.

Not the least of the virtues he brings to the post is Henrik's rock-star status. If logic won't win over the nuclear weapons states, maybe your music will. I should also point out that Henrik is a tournament-level chess player. Here I have a warning for Henrik. You will recall that your countrywoman, Alva Myrdal, a Nobel Peace Laureate, titled her book on the old diplomatic game of moving pawns around the disarmament chess board *The Game of Disarmament*. Henrik, we want you to go after the rooks, the knights, the bishops and even the queen and king and never allow the Chairman of the Middle Powers Initiative to become a pawn.

Henrik, aside from the above admonition, you will find in me an ex-chairman who will not be constantly giving advice to his successor. I respect your knowledge and abilities far too much for that. In handing you the chairman's gavel, I will only utter one word to you: confidence.

We in the Middle Powers Initiative must have confidence in ourselves. We must be constantly aware of our brains, our ability, our persistence, and our knowledge that we are on the right side of history.

The business that we are in is not for the faint of heart. All around us, in our daily lives, are people who do not understand us, who oppose us, who

thwart us, who are indifferent to us, who do not, in short, get it. There are so many dangers in the world, so much violence, so much frustration with governments that taking on the abolition of nuclear weapons seems either a fantasy or just a waste of time.

We, who know too much about the subject, dare not lose our motivation, our courage – and, most of all, our confidence that we truly are building the conditions for peace.

The great cathedrals of the world were built brick by brick. The stonemasons working on the foundations of the edifices would never live to see the towering structure, but their precise work was essential for the building to endure.

I personally do not expect to live to see the end of nuclear weapons. But I must work, and so must we all, in the confidence that our work is essential now if our grandchildren are to see that day.

This confidence in ourselves gives us the strength to fight the arms merchants and other odorous adherents of the military-industrial complex that embraces far too many politicians. It gives us the creativity to find ever new ways to penetrate the fog of the public policy formulation process. It gives us the persistence to keep demanding “systematic and progressive” steps to nuclear disarmament.

We must not forget that public pressure has been responsible for many of the gains already made in curbing nuclear weapons. The freeze movement of the 1980s, the work of physicians, lawyers, engineers, women and other components of the modern movement, the outreach of Abolition 2000 – all these, and others, have been responsible for achieving the “unequivocal undertaking” to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. The Middle Powers Initiative is proud to share in the accomplishment of moving the nuclear disarmament process forward.

We here tonight are part of the great civil society movements that have, in the past, turned the tide in favour of positive social change. This is not a dream. It is a reality. A look at history reveals that almost all progressive, equitable developments, including the end of slavery, decolonization, the advancement of civil rights, the recognition of women’s rights and the victories involving environmental protection, have been largely the result of popular mobilization. The ban on landmines, the International Criminal Court, the Kyoto Treaty would not exist today were it not for the dedicated professional work of civil society advocates.

We in the nuclear abolition movement have taken on perhaps the biggest problem of all. The mountain before us is huge. The weather often seems inclement. But scale that mountain we must. We know we are right

on the issue. We are leaders lighting the path. We are David taking on the new Goliath.

Nothing can stop us. No one can hold us back. We will never quit. We will climb that mountain.

We will succeed because – most of all – we have confidence in ourselves.