EXCERPT OF ADDRESS-IN-REPLY TO GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S SPEECH MOVED BY MALCOLM FRASER, M.P., IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON THE 26th FEBRUARY 1968.

Last week when I moved the Address-in-Reply to the Governor-General's Speech, I spoke in part on international affairs. I did this only after a great deal of thought because I believe it difficult to say something useful in this field. Very often in the past too much has been said and too little has been done. Too much has been said purely as propaganda in order to attract the eyes of the uncommitted nations. In international affairs there is a great need for statements made on behalf of all countries to be objective. I realize the immense difficulty that there is in being entirely objective in the making of any statement. All people are governed to some degree by their environment, and this is understandable; but others, of whom there may be some in this House, lean over backwards to be fair to the other side. I should like to explain what I mean by that observation with a short analogy. When I was at the university, a new young tutor was chosen to set the examination in one subject for all the students of the university who were in a certain year. The young tutor was terrified at the thought that the older dons might say that he had set a paper that was specially designed to take it easy for his own students to pass. Therefore, he set a paper containing questions about aspects of the course on which he had not coached his own pupils. There was not one question in it that his own students could answer. That is what I call leaning over backwards to be fair to the other side.

It may be wrong to be governed too much by environment when one is trying to be objective in discussing major problems, but it is a betrayal of trust to go too far towards the other extreme. The tutor whom I have mentioned betrayed his students. Any politician or statesman who acts similarly in major political matters betrays his own people and his own background.

Recent exchanges between some of the major powers have indicated the harm that lies in playing to an audience in important international exchanges. Playing to an audience makes it impossible to be objective, because, in public exchanges, statesmen are always thinking of the uncommitted nations, and trying to attract them a little more to their side, or at least a little further away from the opposing side.
If any useful purpose is to be served, negotiations between the great powers must be conducted behind closed doors and an announcement made only after success or failure has been recorded.

Fear may play a much larger part in negotiations in the present international situation than any of us would like to think, or would admit. The extent of its influence depends on the character and courage of international leaders, and it is impossible to gauge, because no world leader could ever admit to fear. Nevertheless, it is a very real emotion and I am sure that it exists among international leaders. We have the basic fear of militant or subversive Russian communism. Traditionally, Russia has had a fear of the West. Even at the present time Russia’s occupation of eastern European countries, in addition to being based on the Communist philosophy, could be motivated by Russia’s very great fear of a revival of a united Germany, which could dominate Europe as firmly and vigorously as Germany has done in the past.

I believe that fear enters greatly into negotiations over disarmament. There is the fear that an agreement would not be kept, because it could not be adequately supervised or enforced. At present, we have the protection of our own known strength and deterrents. These are known. But after an agreement following negotiation, which must be a clear and plain objective, there would be many things that were not known and were perhaps a matter of value judgment or of opinion. For this reason, it will take great courage to sign an agreement with the Soviet powers. These fears are legitimate, because the position of the world would be infinitely worse if an agreement were signed, and then proved to be a failure. The signing of an agreement on disarmament will take great courage also because an agreement cannot be based entirely on fact. Many fears arise from ignorance, and these can be destroyed by research into fact and by knowledge. But other fears arise because value judgments or matters of opinion are involved, and these things can never be absolute or certain. Here the human element constituted by the strength, the character, the integrity, and the determination of national leaders becomes of supreme importance. Any agreement with the Soviet Union will be based almost wholly on fact, but there will be an element of opinion or value judgment in it, and on this element the fate of the world may well hang.