

Supply

that efforts are being made to address this problem as effectively as possible.

In conclusion let me say that I think the population of Canada at large is not at risk with respect to the nuclear cycle as it applies to the use of its various components and by-products. I think there are hazards which put the workers at risk, but I believe those professionals who are trained and capable of dealing with the problem are addressing it quite effectively.

I do not take exception to the House of Commons or a parliamentary committee studying this in the form of an inquiry. I am surprised that the NDP has asked in this motion for a royal commission of inquiry. If the person responsible for writing this motion had taken the trouble to speak to their NDP Whip, the Hon. Member for Beaches (Mr. Young), he would have been convinced that the proper way to handle this would be within the House of Commons. The Hon. Member for Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes) and the Hon. Member for Perth (Mr. Jarvis) spoke about the mechanism of a royal commission that is being proposed in this motion. I think we are fed up with royal commissions in this country and we are beginning to realize the opportunity that exists for Parliament to study these contentious issues. If the NDP had consulted its own Whip, it would have realized that probably we have never had a more effective parliamentary committee than the one which studied the disabled and the handicapped. I think one of the strongest proponents of my assertion would be the Member for Beaches who is fully aware of the effectiveness of that type of committee in approaching these issues. I am appalled that the NDP did not realize it was missing a grand opportunity to have Parliament study this rather than a royal commission.

I am grateful for this motion being raised today. If the next Member to speak is from the NDP, I hope he will address the issue of why Parliament was not asked to study this question, and also indicate the official position of the union with regard to the special program called the National Uranium Tissue Registry. I hope the union will reconsider it and fully endorse the program in order to support the advancement of medical knowledge in this country.

Mr. Heap: Mr. Speaker, during the question period I will not undertake to answer all the question that were just raised by the Hon. Member for Oxford. However, I want to touch on a couple of points which he raised.

I wish to say that I appreciate the very careful presentation of the medical information which the Hon. Member has given to us. I know that he is entirely sincere because I have met with the Hon. Member previously on a related subject and was quite impressed with the conscientious way he handled the debate at that time. However, there are a couple of things in his presentation that surprised me. At the end of his remarks he acknowledged, as others did, that it was beneficial to have this subject raised since it has not been raised before.

He talked about the benefits of cobalt treatments as though a royal commission would somehow eliminate those benefits. I do not understand why he is opposed to that commission. I

remember the time when radiation treatments for cancer were available before World War II, before the atom bomb and the big uranium industry. I do not understand why he brings that subject into the debate and implies that an inquiry would mean that no one would have the benefit of the cobalt bomb.

Second, I was quite surprised when he said that this issue concerns only a few people when it is compared to unemployment, for example. I understand that he may be concentrating primarily on certain medical aspects such as the health of miners, of whom only a few are affected, but surely he would acknowledge that there is a horrendous unforeseen cost. For example, Ontario Hydro went into debt for more than \$16 billion for equipment and plant, much of which now may not be fully useful. Ontario Hydro wildly overspent, and this is only part of the cost.

Surely he would acknowledge that in the last 40 years we never succeeded in separating the peaceful use of atoms from the weapons' use. Argentina received our materials and said it would make the bomb if it chose to and would give it to Libya if it chose to. We have not succeeded in avoiding contributing to proliferation.

Surely he understands that the health hazard is more widespread than only as it applies to miners. He must be aware of what Sister Rosalie Bertelle revealed about the many deaths and continuing deaths of islanders in the western Pacific where tests have been conducted on uranium products, including, originally, some Canadian uranium. Finally, he must be aware of the problem of centralization and the difficulty of obtaining information and therefore the necessity of having a royal commission which can require evidence under oath. Would he consider whether this is not really a very important and timely issue that should not be brushed aside, as he seemed inclined to do?

Mr. Halliday: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate some of the comments made by my friend from Spadina. I did not mean to brush aside the importance of the medical hazards as they exist around the world where this technology has been used in an indiscriminate fashion in some cases. This is something we have to study.

I believe that we are dealing with a subject that is of primary concern to Canadians presently and, like two of my colleagues have suggested this afternoon, I would support a parliamentary committee looking into it. I do not preclude that at all and I suggested in my comments that I would welcome that happening. I am opposed to a royal commission, and my hon. friend from Spadina did not suggest, unfortunately, why his Party was asking for a royal commission instead of a parliamentary committee. If he could convince me that a royal commission is better for some reason, I would be interested in hearing it. I happen to be convinced that those of us who served on the special parliamentary committee have been able to obtain answers to many problems. Where necessary, we can have people present evidence under oath; that is my understanding. I would be prepared to see this issue brought before the House, if that were the wish of the House.