

Adjournment Debate

government with respect to its involvement in the uranium cartel.

If we look back at the record of this government with respect to its involvement in that cartel, Mr. Speaker, it is clear there has been an admission by the Prime Minister that indeed the government was involved in a price-fixing scheme, or cartel. This is quite different from a situation, such as international trade agreements, where there is disclosure, publication and full public knowledge. In those cases the people of the countries involved, indeed their legislative bodies, will involve themselves in arrangements respecting the setting of floor prices, or prices in general, of commodities. There are a lot of examples of quite proper international agreements on floor prices. The international wheat agreement is one which comes to mind. However, those kinds of agreements are always in the public view. They are not concluded in secret smoke-filled rooms in a capital of one of the countries involved. This is the situation which existed with respect to the uranium cartel. It was a secret agreement. There was no public knowledge.

● (2215)

The government has admitted that it has been involved in this whole matter. Of course, the question arises as to whether or not this cartel arrangement, which one can describe as a secret arrangement, had consequences to the consumer in Canada. We have been trying to obtain information on the floor of the House of Commons with respect to this agreement. No information has been forthcoming. There was an attempt to thwart the inquiries made by people in opposition, and secrecy prevailed. There was an attempt to cover up any indication as to exactly what transpired.

Let me give hon. members a little history in case they have forgotten the extent to which this government has gone to cover up its involvement in this cartel arrangement. The government issued a gag order prohibiting discussion by any official of any circumstance relating to the alleged offences. In this country, where we take pride in our free speech, a law was passed by order in council of this government which made it an offence for any official to discuss the arrangements made for this price-fixing agreement.

There was a failure on the part of the government to release 60,000 documents relevant to the prosecution of any charged in connection with domestic price-fixing. There was a failure on the part of the government to make public the report of the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission, the Bertrand commission, which investigated the domestic price-fixing. It was alleged by the Crown in the right of the minister of justice and attorney general who was prosecuting, that government agencies or Crown corporations were involved. There was a failure on the part of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde) to take any responsibility for the actions of the government's Crown corporations, Uranium Canada Limited and Eldorado Nuclear Limited, which were charged as co-conspirators after this investigation by Mr. Bertrand. Now there has been an attempt by the government to extricate those Crown corporations from prosecution by allowing them to claim Crown immunity.

The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has tried to distance himself from this whole sordid mess. He says, of course, that he has no part in this matter and that somehow things are going along without his knowledge or intervention. Indeed, he indicates that this attempt to extricate the Crown corporations from prosecution is really not his idea; rather, it is a matter which sort of developed by magic, and somehow the corporations are winging it in terms of putting in a defence. He indicates that he has no part or interest in this whole matter and that, of course, these corporations are quite apart from the government.

I think we should look at what is being submitted on behalf of the Crown corporation in question, by Uranium Canada Limited, through affidavit and other supporting material. Uranium Canada has admitted that it has no assets except the sum of \$9 representing the payment of the qualifying shares of the former members of the board of directors. It has no separate place of business, and conduct of its affairs lies within the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. It has no employees of its own. On May 1, 1981, it stated that all of the qualifying shares of the directors of Uranium Canada Limited were transferred to and are now presently held by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources in trust for Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada.

It is evident by affidavit and submission to the court that the direction and administrative control of the activity of Uranium Canada Limited directly resides with the minister and the governor in council. Uranium Canada Limited has no discretion in the matter. Further, for operational and practical purposes, the company is within the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. Accordingly, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and the governor in council direct the mind and will of Uranium Canada Limited. Finally, it is stated that Uranium Canada Limited is a mere servant of the Crown whose acts are directly and completely controlled and determined by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources as well as the governor in council.

Let me explain. The "governor in council" means the cabinet of this country. The company enjoys the status of the Crown. It is the submission of the company that it is directed by the minister, but the minister refuses to accept ministerial responsibility in respect to this matter and continues to cover up. Today I want some answers from the parliamentary secretary as to precisely what the government is trying to cover up. What has it got to hide concerning this whole sordid mess?

Mr. Dave Dingwall (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I should say at the outset that I am somewhat appalled by the substance of the remarks by the hon. member, for his assertions are completely ridiculous. It is mere witch-hunting, and his innuendo is certainly not acceptable.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I am taking it right out of your own documents.