

Energy

mention all the other hidden costs into which any inquiry should look. On these grounds alone we need to debate the topic of nuclear power.

Nuclear power has many effects on our relationship to the environment. There are many concerns about its effect on, for example, uranium miners, which in the end may be the most important environmental consideration of the whole question of nuclear energy. There is the effect on the environment as such, particularly in the area of the long term and unsolved problem of how to dispose of radioactive waste. This long-term problem of the potential of this waste material for contaminating ground water, for example, is what distinguishes nuclear energy from other forms of energy. And it is the long-term risk which makes it the appropriate object of a special political debate, and that is what I am calling for tonight. It is dishonesty on the part of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, Ontario Hydro or anyone else to suggest otherwise and to trivialize the qualitative difference between the risk involved in nuclear power and the risk involved in other forms of energy. It is that long-term uncertainty which must be taken into consideration.

This brings me to the third point which I raised about the way in which energy forms affect our relationships, and that is with regard to the future. Nuclear power affects our future through long-term uncertainties which cannot be allayed by any false faith in science and technology. God knows, they have gotten us into enough trouble already. So, as in the case of other energy forms, the decisions we make have an effect on our future. Our decision to use up all the conventional oil reserves uncritically and foolishly for no better reason than to adopt a way of life that cannot be sustained and will eventually have to be abandoned was a decision which affected our future. It means now that the people in the future will not have the petroleum resources they may need in order to manufacture plastic goods essential for medical technology or the fuels which are necessary to agriculture for the production of food.

All these energy decisions which we made in the past have affected the future, and nuclear power will be no different except, and here again I want to make the point about the qualitative difference, that there is an irretrievability about the effects of nuclear power which makes it different from other forms of resource depletion or pollution. The half-life of many of the substances about which we are talking is beyond our ability to guarantee structures that will enable us to deal with the risk inherent in their exploitation.

This leads me to say that the government has a responsibility to provide the context for a conscious political choice on the part of Canadians so that they may decide what they really want, what kind of society they want to live in, whether they want the kind of society which nuclear power implies, whether they want the highly centralized, capital intensive, etc, kind of society which is involved, whether, indeed, they want to take those kinds of risks with regard to the environment and the future. These are the topics which I think the Canadian people should be given a chance to debate openly, without feeling that the nuclear power program of this country seems to be going

on inevitably in any case, and perhaps we should set aside time for debate in Parliament even though it seems we have already decided. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said in response to a question by me some time ago that we are either in the game or out of the game. The government is obviously in the game.

I contend that this decision should not have been made without the appropriate political debate. We call on the government at this time for an opportunity to debate this topic. Having the opportunity of choice is particularly important to Canadians because we do not need nuclear power. We are not in the position of a Third World country which has its back to the wall in the area of energy and is in a moral dilemma and must make the decision between all the moral and environmental implications of nuclear power and whether or not they will have enough energy to bring up the standard of living for their people to the barest minimum. That is not the position in which we find ourselves.

Canadians have other choices. If half of the money invested in nuclear power were invested in renewable energy resources and other alternative energy resources which are more environmentally responsible, then perhaps we would not need this debate at all. We in the NDP are ready for this debate, but that is not to say we are unanimous in our position.

The question of nuclear power crosses ideological boundaries. There is debate within our party on nuclear power with regard to, for example, the policies of the government of Saskatchewan vis-à-vis uranium mining in the north of that province. We are not afraid to admit that this topic is the subject of debate within our own ranks. I personally am proud to stand up and say that within the New Democratic Party of Canada the subject of nuclear power is taken seriously enough that we are divided on it, that we debate it and that it is still a matter of conscientious debate when it comes up on the convention floor.

We are not a bunch of uncritical sheep like the other parties, both of which would in the final analysis allow Atomic Energy of Canada Limited and Ontario Hydro to go on completely unchallenged, and I have no hesitation in saying that.

Mr. Paproski: Broadbent has a divided party.

Mr. Blaikie: I encourage the government to create the environment for the kind of healthy, political and philosophical debate on nuclear power that we in our party have had up until now and no doubt will continue to have.

Mr. Doug Lewis (Simcoe North): Mr. Speaker, my comments today are motivated by both a specific concern for 33 people and a general concern which I am sure is shared by all members of this House for the health of a Canadian economy.

• (2120)

There is a company in my riding called Fahramet Limited and it is a Canadian company. It has four plants in Orillia, Ontario. It is a high alloy steel foundry employing a wide variety of production methods. It manufactures heat corrosion