

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS—PROPOSED AMCHITKA UNDERGROUND NUCLEAR TESTS

Mr. Barry Mather (Surrey): Mr. Speaker, in the very few moments at my disposal tonight I want to ask the government whether it is going to allow another and very much greater nuclear underground test in the Aleutian Islands of the North Pacific, to the potential peril of British Columbia and coastal communities. Is it going to protest this intention of the United States government, as indicated over the weekend in President Nixon's speech, as it did in 1969 in the case of a smaller test? If such a protest is made and fails, will the government consider other protective action on behalf of British Columbians?

I should like very briefly to interpolate the fact that my concern over the proposed Aleutian explosion is underlined by two other developments also exposing British Columbia to foreign pollution. I refer very briefly, Sir, to the announced intention of the Atlantic Richfield Oil Company to ship oil by tanker from Alaska down the B.C. coast, through Puget Sound to a point within a few miles of British Columbia recreational and beach areas in my constituency, with its attendant danger of oil spills. I also refer to the application for the right to build a spur railroad line from a B.C. coalfield to link with a U.S. rail line in order to ship coal to the United States and up through the existing rail line in White Rock and Crescent Beach in my area. This is some of the most beautiful beach area on the continent.

Specifically in connection with the news we heard over the weekend of the intention of the United States government to provide funds for this very much greater nuclear explosion in the Aleutian Islands in the north Pacific, I want to say that this is an area which is earthquake prone. While there was no quake and no tidal wave as a result of the small test in 1969, there is certainly no guarantee that this will not happen as a result of the test which I understand is to be made next fall. British Columbians, at least, can recall the effects of the Alaskan earthquake which took place a few years ago. There was a tidal wave generated in the same area which resulted in high waves crashing into B.C. communities such as Port Alberni, causing tremendous damage.

The underground nuclear test planned in the Aleutians by the United States—I have studied this matter at some length—will be of immensely greater blast power than the previous one, having the power of thousands of tons of TNT to be exploded underground in the Aleutians in what we could call British Columbia's back fields. I think this proposal is a very foolish one from three points of view. In the first place, it will cost millions of dollars to the United States even if it does no damage to Canada, to Alaska or to other areas on the Pacific coast. In the second place, it can do no conceivable good; it will only

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spur the Soviet Union to undertake similar, insane tests. In the third place, it really poses a threat to the health and property of Canadians.

I remind hon. members that in 1969 this government warned the United States, in the case of a smaller test, that if damage resulted to Canadians we would expect the U.S. government to compensate Canadians for that damage. In other words, we objected to that test. Now we are faced with a much larger one. My general contention is that British Columbia, and British Columbians in particular, are in danger from what is proposed. I ask the government whether it is going to accept this threat of foreign pollution or whether it is considering what efforts it may make to prevent the test being conducted.

[Translation]

Mr. André Ouellet (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, as hon. members know, the decision of the United States to undertake a series of nuclear tests on Amchitka Island in the Aleutian Islands prompted Canada to make very energetic representations to the American government.

I understand the point of view of the hon. member, especially as the Canadian government is extremely concerned about the very serious consequences the explosions could have on the environment. But it is also worried about the whole matter of nuclear testing. In fact, Canada is extremely worried about all nuclear tests in general and our aim is that nuclear tests everywhere, including of course underground, must stop as soon as possible. We hope that it will be possible in the near future to come to an agreement to end all nuclear tests. This is our hope in Canada, and this is what the government is endeavouring to realize.

In this connection, we expressed the hope that every country which is not a party to the 1963 treaty which provides for partial prohibition—including nuclear powers such as China and France—will sign and ratify this treaty. In the meantime, in order to facilitate progress toward a total prohibition of tests everywhere, the Canadian delegation to the Geneva Committee on disarmament kept up its efforts to further an agreement, by requesting international exchanges of seismic data which would assist in identifying underground nuclear tests. At the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1969, Canada moved a resolution urging member states to provide information on their methods to detect earth tremors and to indicate which data they would be prepared to communicate on a guaranteed basis, in an international exchange on detection and identification of underground tests through seismological methods.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.22 p.m.