

Summer Recess

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): When the debate on the motion to adjourn the House was interrupted at four o'clock, the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Kristiansen) had the floor and had three minutes remaining.

Mr. Lyle S. Kristiansen (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, just prior to four o'clock I was making an appeal to the government that, in line with the request of the Canadian Forestry Association, there should be a special task force or special subcommittee on the forest industry.

It is one of the anomalies of the Canadian political and industrial scene that it sometimes takes a work stoppage such as the one now taking place in British Columbia, where the industry there accounts for significantly more than half of the Canadian industry, for people to realize how important the forest industry is to this country in terms of government revenues and the spin-off throughout the private and public sectors.

As do the Canadian Forestry Association and many others throughout the industry, I believe that a task force or some other means is needed to draw certain matters to the attention of the public in a concrete way. We must take advantage of the increased joint interest demonstrated, for instance, by the Canada Forest Congress held last September in the city of Toronto, and the renewed interest and the working together of management, labour and professionals throughout that industry from all parts of Canada. Such a committee could take advantage of that interest and that tripartisanship, which is really a first in the history of this country to take place on such a dramatic and important scale.

The attention of the public across Canada, including politicians, should be drawn to how vitally important it is that we begin paying some attention to the supply side in the country. I suppose I am what is sometimes called a supply side socialist. That in itself may be an anomaly to some people's way of thinking, but within the democratic left many of us have been very interested in the productive side of the ledger for many, many years. Most of the arguments, no matter from which party they emanate, seem to refer most often to the problems of distribution. It certainly goes without saying that unless the industry which produces more for our balance of trade than all of the other major industries, other than manufacturing, combined, is in a healthy state—and it is not in a healthy state today—we are in for very serious trouble as an economy and as a society.

The last point I want to make was commented on to some degree by the Minister of Labour yesterday. It relates in a sense to the stoppage not only in the Post Office but also in the forest industry. There are some in the House who decry the right to withdraw one's labour. That right is as old as Magna Carta. I believe the phrase was "No man shall be forced to build bridges". The right to strike was not granted by government. The right to withdraw one's labour was not granted by government. It exists because it was claimed and because it was exercised, and when government recognized that right it did, by so doing, limit it—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order. I regret to interrupt the hon. gentleman, but his allotted time has expired.

Hon. Judy Erola (Minister of State (Mines)): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak this afternoon. Indeed I feel compelled to speak this afternoon in defence of the uranium industry. I feel that there should be some perspective put into this entire argument, and I ask members of the House to bear with me for a moment while I talk about the situation as it was in Elliot Lake, an area adjacent to my area, some years ago.

This area is a one-industry town. It is a uranium town, and I urge the people in this House again to ask themselves, "Was I there?"—I do not mean here in the House, I mean there in Elliot Lake—when the markets went bust. It was not a pretty sight. People who had invested heavily in brand new homes had to pack up and leave. People who had invested in businesses walked away from them. A brand new booming town boarded up is not a pretty sight. It was a very, very difficult situation, and those of us who lived in the north were suffering very badly in that situation. I was there. At that time I was the mother of young children. We were in business, and people such as ourselves were desperate. We were very, very grateful that the government acted responsibly and wisely to help the uranium industry.

The other day an hon. member was brandishing a copy of the UCAN annual report and suggesting there was something subversive in the report and something not of benefit to Canadians. However, the hon. member neglected to read the report. I suggest it is a success story and not a failure.

How did UCAN come about? May I fill in the background? UCAN is a Crown corporation created by this government. Why? To buy uranium when nobody else was buying it, to save an industry, to save jobs, and to save a town. It was successful beyond its wildest expectations. I would like to read the president's letter included in the annual report:

Sir,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I have the honour to submit the Annual Report of Uranium Canada, Limited (UCAN) for the year ended December 31, 1980.

UCAN's task over the report year has been to administer the Government's general stockpile of uranium concentrates which were acquired during the 1963-70 period. As action has been taken subsequent to the end of the report year to transfer this residual stockpile to Eldorado Nuclear Limited, it is appropriate that I take this opportunity to review briefly the performance of the Corporation as manager of the joint venture and general stockpiles.

In summary, the following specific actions have taken place:

1. A joint venture uranium stockpile was developed with Denison Mines Ltd. and later sold to Spanish utilities over the period 1972-78 together with a portion of the general stockpile. UCAN's cost of acquisition for its 76 percent share of the joint venture stockpile and the acquisition cost of 1,075 tonnes of uranium from the general stockpile was \$44.2 million; its net revenue from the sale was \$81.6 million, resulting in a net profit for the Crown of \$37.4 million.

2. As administrators of the Government's general stockpile UCAN sold 769 tonnes of uranium to Japanese purchasers and realized net revenues exceeding the original \$10.5 million acquisition price by \$13.2 million.