

Eldorado Nuclear Limited

question about nuclear dumps, and I would like the Hon. Member to comment on that aspect of it.

• (1700)

Mr. Riis: Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to respond to that thoughtful comment and to the question that followed it. What is the responsibility of the federal Government? It is clear that it is not responsible for the Government to simply wipe its hands and walk away from this.

If there is one thing common to Canadians, it is that they have more questions than answers when it comes to the nuclear industry. There are whole sets of questions that have yet to be answered satisfactorily. I suspect the most obvious such question is how to guarantee the safety of a nuclear installation.

We are all still haunted to this day by the Chernobyl incident, and we are still finding around the world the results of that particular disaster. Other disasters come to mind as well, but I believe that was the most graphic one which indicated that when something goes wrong in one of those installations, the implications are anything but minor, they are horrendous, and that the final impact may perhaps be unimaginable.

As well, there is the whole question of waste material. I referred briefly in my comments to the dumps at Port Hope and the hundreds of thousands of tonnes of waste material that has not been adequately dealt with there. It cannot be dealt with adequately because we do not know how to get rid of nuclear wastes in a safe and satisfactory way. Until we do, I think it is folly to continue on as we have and particularly as Canada has been doing.

I feel that we have made a gross error in judgment with the whole matter of food irradiation. We are developing irradiated food technology in an effort to market it in the developing countries. Quite frankly, that is frightening, and of course the responsibility of the federal Government ought to be to proceed with caution. The only way to proceed with caution in this instance is not to proceed at all.

The Hon. Member has raised the appropriate question, which is what is the Government's responsibility. The Government's responsibility is vast and that responsibility is not present in Bill C-121. It seems to me that the Government is simply wiping its hands of the opportunities it would have if this legislation were not to be passed.

Mr. Hawkes: Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the Hon. Member on Monday when he indicated in the closing part of his speech that it is time we send this matter to committee for closer examination. I do agree with him that the matter is complex and that the committee, where we may hear from witnesses, is the proper place to get on to the public table his concerns, some of which I share.

I was encouraged to hear the Hon. Member say that it should go to committee soon. I simply wanted to comment that I concur with him. I think it should go to committee soon.

Mr. Riis: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that the Parliamentary Secretary is anxious to get on with dealing with the various witnesses and the clause-by-clause examination of the Bill. However, we were interrupted today to deal with Bill C-125 which we have just completed through all stages. That Bill, of course, was the Bill to enable the Northern Canada Power Commission to issue shares.

It is unheard of for opposition Parties to volunteer to set aside the traditions of the House in order to facilitate the movement of certain legislation. We were convinced that it was in the nation's business to do just that, and I am pleased to say that we were more than pleased to co-operate with the Government and to approach the matter in a business-like and thoughtful way. We did our homework, and consulted all the parties involved and worked expeditiously. The Parliamentary Secretary has indicated that he was pleased with that and we were pleased to co-operate.

In the closing moments of the day, we are continuing the debate on Eldorado Nuclear. We have already debated the matter for a few hours. Considering the extreme importance of a debate about the nuclear industry and the federal Government's role in it, the Government is taking quite a significant step.

As I say, we are pleased to participate in this debate, and of course it is not our intention to prolong it, but let us have all the appropriate views presented. I know that my colleague from Broadview—Greenwood wishes to make some comments regarding the environmental impact of this legislation and some of the environmental issues on which it touches. Knowing how interested the Parliamentary Secretary is in environmental issues, I know that he will be anxious to hear her comments. With that, I will wrap up my comments by saying that we look forward to proceeding expeditiously with this Bill but not particularly to rushing legislation of such profound importance to the country.

Mr. Skelly: Madam Speaker, I have a question for my colleague from Kamloops—Shuswap. When this Government came to power, the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), recognizing how seriously Canadians feel about the entire nuclear question, had, in my recollection, promised an inquiry into the nuclear industry and nuclear energy in Canada. Would it not be appropriate for the Prime Minister to come clean on his election promise before we sell off an operation like Eldorado Nuclear? Would it not be more appropriate for the Prime Minister and the Conservative Government to live up to their election commitments to launch an inquiry into the concerns of Canadians over this industry before they sell off this corporation?