

[English]

Mr. Caccia: Mr. Speaker, we can only judge people by their performance—

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Caccia:—and it is pretty pathetic to hear that.

ROLE OF NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, I must turn to the Minister of Science and Technology. Will he restore the cuts he allowed to the programs at the National Research Council that had to do with health, PCBs, and the long-term effects on human health, programs that were sponsored by his Department before the cuts were announced last November?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, any and all research relating to the health hazards and potential health hazards of toxic substances in which the NRC has been engaged will be continued.

The only cut to which the Hon. Member referred if he were to be fair, was the decision to eliminate the environmental secretariat, which was not doing research but merely compiling data. My hon. colleague has indicated that that type of work will continue in her Department.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

GREEN PAPER—UNITED STATES STRATEGIC DEFENCE INITIATIVE

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

Mr. Crosbie: You got creamed yesterday. Do you want to have it happen again?

Mr. Broadbent: The Government's position on the timing of the decision on star wars and the role of the proposed committee looking into a possible review of foreign policy remains unclear, some might say confused.

Yesterday the Minister said outside the House that the Government is prepared to wait three or four months before making a decision on star wars. If this is the case, why does the Government not request the proposed committee to make an interim report on the star wars portion of its mandate before the Government makes a decision itself on star wars?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the position of the Government of Canada is, as it has been, that we expect to take a decision on the limited question of the American initiation to participate in research into the Strategic Defence Initiative sometime in the next three to four months. We would greatly value the advice of individual Canadians and interested Canadians on

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the strategic Defence Initiative question prior to that time. That is one of the reasons why we want to have the joint committee sitting to allow the public to speak.

I have a question for the Leader of the New Democratic Party. Will the New Democratic Party stop boycotting the joint committee? Will Members of the NDP stop opposing the right of Canadians to be heard on the Strategic Defence Initiative?

Mr. Rodriguez: You are supposed to answer the question.

Mr. Crosbie: You answer that one.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, I will be happy to answer the Minister of Justice as well as the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Our position is clear. We will participate in a committee that really intends to listen to people in the context of having input in the decision. We will not support a sham process. That is our position.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Yes or no?

PROPOSED COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): I have a question for the Minister who is responsible, not the one who is talking over there, but the Secretary of State for External Affairs. I think he is responsible. If he really does want the committee to perform a useful function, he knew when he was on this side of the House, and when he was Prime Minister and showed some respect, and I emphasize that, for committees, that if you want respect you have to listen to what a committee recommends. Therefore, if the committee has input on the star wars decision it must make a recommendation. Why won't the Government request the committee to make an interim report on the star wars position?

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Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I respect committees of this House. That is why I want to establish one, so that the people of Canada can be heard on this question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): I also respect the traditions of the House which indicate that when committees are established they function most effectively when they are not severely limited by detailed instructions from the Government.

If the NDP and the Liberal Party will stop opposing the idea of public hearings, the committee can establish its own agenda. I have made the Government's own view clear. The Government's own view is that we would not oppose—indeed we would encourage it—discussion of the Strategic Defence Initiative and of other questions on which the Government has to take decisions urgently. That is the committee's business, and I ask the opposition Parties to let the committee do its