

Oral Questions

exactly that which we are seeking, and exactly that which is the purpose of the representations we are making.

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ATOMIC ENERGY OF CANADA LIMITED**ANNOUNCED LAY-OFFS—REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE**

Mr. G. M. Gurbin (Bruce-Grey): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy. I think that is his right elbow behind the curtain. He was just here.

Mr. Clark: Here he comes.

Mr. Gurbin: Port Hawkesbury and Glace Bay both stand to lose 900 heavy water nuclear jobs. The AECL in Toronto has indicated its intentions to release 600 engineers from its facility there. Indeed, 36,000 direct jobs which are related to the nuclear industry in Canada are in desperate condition. Does the Minister and Cabinet have any possible action in mind which may assist these nuclear workers?

● (1500)

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, of course it is all related to the Candu program and the possibility of selling more Candu reactors which will need heavy water and the engineering which will provide work. At this time the prospects for sales of new Candu reactors are very limited indeed, and that is why AECL was obliged to let go some 600 or 700 people last week in Toronto.

As far as the question of heavy water production in the two plants in Cape Breton is concerned, at this time there is some discussion about the level of activity there but no decision has been made by Cabinet as yet.

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NUCLEAR ENERGY**QUERY RESPECTING GOVERNMENT POLICY**

Mr. G. M. Gurbin (Bruce-Grey): Madam Speaker, after years of mismanagement the Government is now letting the Canadian nuclear industry go bit by bit, engineer by engineer, and technician by technician. We in this party have been asking for the last year if the Liberal Government has a nuclear energy policy. Will the Minister tell us if the Government has a nuclear energy policy?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I think Atomic Energy of Canada has developed a technology which has been very useful up until now. As I said, because of the change in energy needs around the world, it is more difficult at this time to sell Candu reactors. Of course, if you are not selling in a business you have to make some cuts. That is why AECL was obliged to let some people go in Toronto last week. I do not know if the Hon.

Member is arguing at this time that, if we do not sell, we should keep the people on the payroll. I do not think that is a good management policy.

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PRIVILEGE**MR. FRIESEN—PRODUCTION OF PAPERS ALLEGED INCOMPLETE**

Madam Speaker: I am prepared to rule today on the question of privilege raised by the Hon. Member for Surrey-White Rock-North Delta (Mr. Friesen). This question of privilege arose from an order of the House adopted on April 1, 1982 which called for all documents relating to an Emergency Planning Order in Council to be laid before the House.

I just want to remind Hon. Members that, of course, there is no doubt in my mind that deliberate disobedience of an order of the House is contempt of the House, provided, of course, the order is made within the limits of the House's competence and jurisdiction. Criteria have been laid down stating the general principles governing notices of motions for the production of papers which have been followed since 1973, although not formally approved by the House. Those principles are to be found in Citation 390 on pages 138 and 139 of Beauchesne's Fifth Edition.

The Hon. Member cited a number of precedents when raising this issue in the House. He cited, for example, a decision rendered on July 16, 1955 in which the Chair declined to rule that a prima facie case of privilege had been established in respect of non-compliance with an order of the House to produce a certain document. The Speaker pointed out on that occasion that if the Member wished to pursue his complaint, the proper course would be to move another motion. In another ruling alluded to by the Hon. Member of March 20, 1962, the Chair offered similar advice to a Member who complained that an order of the House to produce documents had not been sufficiently complied with.

The Hon. Member also referred to a decision of February 21, 1979, in relation to which he said, I believe—paraphrasing the Speaker:

The Speaker clearly indicates that if the Hon. Member had actually said he had made application pursuant to motions for the production of documents and that the Minister subsequently refused to produce them, then it could have been brought forward within the ambit of privilege.

I have studied this particular ruling and should like to quote the two paragraphs from which the Hon. Member drew this implication:

If I were to grant that that matter were to become a question of privilege because the minister was refusing on some grounds to produce that document to a member, I think that I would be stretching the limit of the definition of privilege beyond recognition. If I were to decide that a prima facie refusal by a minister to produce a document became privilege, I would be altering the law or privilege considerably.

The Hon. Member does not actually say that he has made an application pursuant to motions for the production of documents and that the minister subsequently has refused to produce them. He does say in his argument that the minister has refused his other request for information, but he does not identify this particular one.