

Nuclear Power

contribute substantially to a well-informed public discussion of all aspects of nuclear energy generations.

There are many important reasons to believe that nuclear power has an important role to play in Canada's future. This is not the time to restrict or limit our energy options.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but his allotted time has expired.

Mr. Dave Nickerson (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak this afternoon in the few remaining minutes on the proposed moratorium, the proposed public inquiry, and the proposed referendum put forward by the hon. member for Winnipeg-Birds Hill (Mr. Blaikie).

I think Mr. Speaker will find some of my comments rather repetitive of those of the parliamentary secretary. It is not very often I agree with the hon. gentleman, but I think the force of his logic this afternoon has me convinced of the argument put forward by the government.

The views of the hon. member for Winnipeg-Birds Hill are demonstrative of what one might call the red flag mentality of the NDP. In the early part of this century when automobiles were first seen on the roads, it was prescribed that somebody should walk in front of automobiles with a red flag to warn people of what was coming. Automobiles were deemed to be very dangerous; in fact they are. Nobody would say they are not, but society has learned to live with them and with the new developments in transportation, as they will surely learn to live with new developments in the energy field. I would submit that the mentality displayed by my colleague to the left in respect of the energy field is just as outdated and belongs just as much to the horse and buggy days as the rest of his party's political philosophy.

● (1640)

Let us examine the Canadian nuclear industry. I think it is something we can be proud of in Canada. In this country we have all aspects of that industry, starting with the prospector looking for uranium in the field to the mining industry which started at the Port Radium mine in the constituency I am so proud to represent. We now have uranium mines in Ontario, in the Blind River area. There are new mines in Saskatchewan. This is a very healthy segment of the Canadian minerals industry. There is processing and upgrading in Canada, for example the Port Hope Uranium refinery. We have technical expertise in that particular field. Of course, we also have the construction field. Of course, we also have the construction and operation of nuclear power plants. I understand a trip has been arranged to visit the Chalk River plant on Monday next, to which I am sure the hon. member for Winnipeg-Birds Hill has been invited.

Mr. Kempling: He will not go.

Mr. Nickerson: I do not think he will go I do not think he wants to know what the facts of the case are. Many of us who are interested in determining the facts and finding them out for ourselves will be availing ourselves of the opportunity to go

and see these plants which have been safely in operation for many years.

Mr. Blaikie: I have been through Pinawa, Pickering, through them all.

Mr. Nickerson: We also have expertise in the area of non-energy use of uranium in Canada. For instance, I understand that a good deal of our uranium is used in the aviation industry. Several hundred pounds of uranium is used as counterweight in large jets. Uranium is also used for shielding against radio-activity. This is another field in which we have developed technology in Canada.

Certain areas of this country, Ontario in particular, has bet its energy future on uranium and the nuclear generation of electricity. In provinces like Ontario, where there is limited coal, and even less oil and gas, where most of the hydro potential has been utilized, the uranium alternative must be used for a reasonably priced source of electricity. There are other places in the world, such as Scotland, which immediately comes to mind, where at the present time some 25 to 30 per cent of their electricity is generated by nuclear means.

The parliamentary secretary stressed the importance of the nuclear industry to Canada's exports. We can be proud of the Candu reactor which we market all over the world. In exporting that reactor and in guaranteeing sources of natural uranium for it, we are doing not only ourselves a benefit but the countries which buy from us this particular plant and the fuel needed to operate it.

Having said that, again in many ways I am reiterating what was said by the parliamentary secretary, there are obvious areas of research which should be undertaken and, in fact, are being undertaken. Mining techniques is one of those areas. How do we make the mining of uranium as safe as possible? There are dangers associated with the emission of radon daughters in uranium mines and we want to, if not eliminate it completely, since mining will always be a hazardous occupation, at least reduce it as much as possible. In all probability we need more studies into the disposal of radioactive mine tailings.

As I understand the situation, the raw ore contains impurities which are more highly radioactive than the uranium mineral itself. When these are extracted they can be a source of trouble. We need to look into this problem more closely. This is being done. Most of the mining companies in the field take their responsibilities seriously. We need to look more efficient generation techniques and safer designs of nuclear reactors. Candu is a heavy water cooled plant which uses natural uranium. It seems to be one of the best plants available now. It is continuously being modified and upgraded. But the time will come when we might have to go to another system. Many years in the future the type of Candu reactor we have now might become completely obsolete and we will have to go to nuclear fusion techniques. I hope research into that field of endeavour is being undertaken in Canada as it is being undertaken in other countries in the world.