

Oral Questions

would illuminate the particular aspect of the question raised by the hon. member, except that there were discussions at that time which involved representatives other than those in the Department of External Affairs, including representatives, I believe, from the Prime Minister's office. However, this particular aspect is not covered.

Mr. McCleave: Mr. Speaker, I think that probably this is the field in which we in this parliament really have to make a final decision. However, with regard to the propriety of it, would it not have been better if the then Secretary of State for External Affairs had approached the Minister of Justice rather than leaving it to the principal secretary of the Prime Minister?

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, that is a matter of opinion upon which the hon. member is as equipped as I to form a judgment.

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INQUIRY OF THE MINISTRY

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. As the minister described the Prime Minister's speech in Quebec last Friday as a combination of kibitzing and jocular remarks, will he give the House a few examples of this good, boyish fun which evidently had the delegates rolling in the aisles for the best part of 90 minutes because this House is overdue a little humour and a few laughs to alleviate the jaundiced picture of ministers trying to influence the judiciary?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**INDIA—REQUEST FOR OUTLINE OF SAFEGUARDS CONNECTED WITH RESUMPTION OF NUCLEAR AID**

Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. My question refers to the understandings on nuclear aid to India which the minister stated had been reached by the negotiating team which recently visited India. Now that the Prime Minister's political advisor, Ivan Head, has stated publicly "The key to agreement as far as we were concerned was that India accept longlasting international safeguards on the use of nuclear reactors. We were successful in this", is the Secretary of State for External Affairs now in a position to tell the House what these long-lasting international safeguards are and whether they have received cabinet approval?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the negotiating team was acting under instructions. Its terms of reference were established by me. I have not yet received a detailed report nor indeed a copy of the understandings reached at the discussions at New Delhi. I would underline that these

[Mr. MacEachen.]

have not been approved. They will be examined by myself and, if found appropriate, sent on to cabinet for consideration. None of these steps have been taken or completed at the present time.

INDIA—SUGGESTED DEBATE PRIOR TO SIGNING AGREEMENT FOR RESUMPTION OF NUCLEAR AID

Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, the Secretary of State for External Affairs might have some discussion with the Prime Minister's principal advisor to find out on what his statements are based. In view of the implications for world security of Canada's nuclear export policy, will the minister, and I put this question to him because I believe he is a more considerate and compassionate man than the Prime Minister—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Miss MacDonald: It is obvious from the replies we receive that he is more considerate. Will the minister seek to have the government reverse its decision of not having the pending agreements with India debated in the House but rather bring full information as to safeguards, accords, length of time of agreements into this chamber for debate and discussion before we take any final step in ratifying the accord? I ask this question because the Canadian people have much more interest in this information than the Prime Minister appears to have.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, on the occasion of the tabling of the nuclear co-operation agreements with the Republic of South Korea and Argentina, I tabled a very extensive background paper on the whole question of nuclear safeguards in an effort to provide the greatest possible amount of available information on this subject. As the hon. lady recalls, there was a rather extensive question and answer period at that time on the significance of these agreements. It has never been the practice in Canada to submit such agreements to the House of Commons prior to approval, and that is the traditional practice that is being followed in this case. However, I have no objection to having this subject matter debated at any time that the opposition decides to bring it forward, or indeed to co-operating with any effort that might be made on a bilateral basis to have the subject ventilated in the House.

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● (1450)

INQUIRY OF THE MINISTRY

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, I am afraid my question is going to be anti-climactic. I just want to ask my hon. friend the Secretary of State for External Affairs, who received a communication from the Minister of National Health and Welfare who did not seem to like his response very much to the question asked by my colleague from Halifax-East Hants, if it is not a breach of privilege, whether he would disclose the contents of the note handed him by the minister?