

stimulated Deputy Prime Minister. On May 8 during this session the Secretary of State for External Affairs indicated in the House that the Kroeger inquiry was to go to Washington simply to look into the technical and economic details of the American invitation to join the SDI research program.

Last night in the Committee on External Affairs and National Defence senior officials of the Department admitted that the Kroeger inquiry is in fact looking into the broad range of domestic, international, strategic, and political questions related to SDI. They further admitted that the Defence White Paper, which we will not see for several months, is also going to take the same considerations into account.

How can the Government make a decision based upon the Kroeger Inquiry when the Minister has only spoken to American officials and has not consulted with any Canadians on the broad strategic defence requirements? How can a decision on defence matters be made when we have not seen a Defence White Paper? In other words, how does the Minister resolve this confusing and contradictory way of making vital decisions in the interest of the country?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I may be over-stimulated, but I am not under-brained. As many times as the Member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry hears the answer, he chooses not to listen. The discussion that will be stimulated by the Green Paper on External Affairs should be welcomed by him. I can see that he has the same lock-brained attitude as his colleague, the critic for External Affairs.

If the Member wants to make a positive contribution as a Member of Parliament in the Official Opposition, he will join in the efforts of the special committee which has been set up to examine the foreign policies of the country.

● (1425)

UNITED STATES INVITATION—REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT
POSTPONE DECISION

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg-Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I might say that I would never, in the House, question the intelligence of the Deputy Prime Minister, although he has given no evidence so far to show that he has much.

Mr. Broadbent: Good shot.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Axworthy: On April 18 the Prime Minister, again in response to questions on SDI, said, as reported at page 3859 of Hansard:

We will consider these matters within our own time frame and not with regard to any limitations of time imposed by anyone else.

Last night at that committee senior officials stated that while the Kroeger Inquiry will report in June, the Minister will not necessarily make a decision.

Taking these statements into account, will the Minister commit himself and his Government not to take any decisions on SDI involvement, or research involvement in SDI, until a

committee of this Parliament has had a full opportunity to discuss the SDI program, based upon the Green Paper? Will he make a commitment that there will be no commitment until that examination takes place?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, logic would compel one to the conclusion that one cannot have a discussion until one is seized of the facts. That is the purpose, even though the Member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry refuses to hear that.

Once we have those facts before us, then we are in a position to make value judgments as a Government.

Mr. Axworthy: Will you consult us?

Mr. Nielsen: With respect to the level of intellect that the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry draws, I would ask him to apply the same logic that I have applied in my response to his question, by comparing our relative positions in the House.

GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION

Ms. Pauline Jewett (New Westminster-Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for External Affairs, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. Does he believe in consultation with the Canadian public on an issue like star wars? Their views have not yet been heard.

He indicated in an earlier answer that he does believe in consultation. If so, why is the Government planning to make a decision about whether or not Canada will participate in star wars before he has heard the views of the Canadian public? If the Deputy Prime Minister wishes to hear the Canadian public, will he commit the Government not to proceed with a star wars decision until the parliamentary committee has heard the Canadian public, listened to their concerns, and reported to Parliament?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, here is a surprising question, coming from the foreign affairs critic of a Party that has already made up its mind not to participate in the special committee.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nielsen: Here is a Member who complained most vociferously in the House about my failure to appear before the Standing Committee on Defence—

Mr. Hovdebo: Answer the question.

Mr. Nielsen: —to answer the kind of questions she is putting now. When I did appear—who was absent at the time to put those questions?