

Oral Questions

AECL including the chairman, Ross Campbell, no longer informs him or his deputy on the continuing basis on which Mr. Gray had supplied this information formerly, whether at luncheon meetings or at any other kind of meetings?

Mr. Gillespie: No, Mr. Speaker, I have had the odd lunch with the director. I have had the odd lunch with Mr. Campbell and Mr. Foster, but I can tell the hon. lady that I have had many, many more formal meetings than luncheon meetings to discuss the affairs of the corporation. I do not just wait for formal meetings. I use the telephone a great deal. There is a good deal of discussion back and forth.

SALE OF REACTOR TO ARGENTINA—PERSON INFORMING
MINISTER OF LOSS LEADER POLICY

Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): A final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister say who told him, and when, that it was the policy of AECL to sell a reactor as a loss leader to Argentina. Did Mr. Campbell convey that information to him?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. lady is referring to a comment made by the chairman of the corporation when he said the corporation had sharpened its pencils, taken a major effort to secure a contract in the face of competition from foreign corporations and, in sharpening its pencils in order to get the business, might well have acknowledged it would not make a normal rate of return and that, indeed, there could be a small loss.

Miss MacDonald: Do you call a loss of \$130 million small?

Mr. Gillespie: That is the interpretation I placed on Mr. Campbell's comment.

Mr. Paproski: Is \$130 million one of your smaller losses?

● (1430)

LA PRADE HEAVY WATER PROJECT—REQUEST FOR ESTIMATE
OF TOTAL COST—AMOUNT OF DEBIT ON FOREIGN SALES OF
HEAVY WATER

Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources relating to AECL. I have given him written notice in the hope that I will get some specific answers from him. The AECL at the moment is building a heavy water plant known as La Prade, near Gently, Quebec. The annual report tabled by the minister a week ago last Thursday, which strangely enough had not been distributed to the public or the press, indicates that the 1974 total project authorization of \$453 million is presently under review. Having had notice of my question, can the minister now tell me the current estimated total capital cost of the La Prade heavy water project in Quebec?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I have asked the corporation for the

figures so that I might be able to provide an answer to the hon. member. It is quite true that he provided notice to my office with respect to this question. I think it important that he get a detailed answer. The corporation has indicated to me that they are not yet in a position to provide the kinds of figures he is seeking. I can give him an undertaking that as soon as they become available to me, I will transmit them to him.

Mr. Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, that is totally unacceptable to me and to every other member of this House. The question was asked not only to elicit information but also to get it on the record so that in case there is some type of coverup later in this House, the minister will be on the record. Certainly, information has reached some of us that the amount will be abhorrent. Can the minister tell us how much the Canadian debit is at the moment with respect to the sale of heavy water overseas? I understand that for this year alone there is a reserve amount of \$30 million for a loss with regard to the overseas sale of heavy water. Having tabled the annual report, I am sure the minister will have these figures at his fingertips. Can the minister advise, and eventually I would like the answer in the House, the total loss on the overseas sale of heavy water?

Mr. Gillespie: Going back to the first part of the first question, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member must recognize there has been a very specific escalation in capital costs over the past three years in this country.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Gillespie: If the hon. member is familiar with the situation, he will know about the escalation in the costs of steel, refinery costs—

An hon. Member: Syncrude.

Mr. Gillespie: Even the Syncrude plant. It is for those reasons I want to get as accurate a figure as I can before providing the hon. member with that information.

As to the question about the obligations or the exposure of the corporation with respect of overseas sales of heavy water, if the hon. member will look at the annual report which has been tabled, he will see that \$30 million has been provided for future losses of the corporation.

Mr. Lawrence: This year.

Mr. Gillespie: No, Mr. Speaker. The important point is that these are not losses that are being incurred this year. It is provision for future losses, which might take place over a period of five or more years.

Mr. Lawrence: I wonder if we could have assurance from the minister on two grounds. First, will the loss on the La Prade project be greater or lesser than the Argentinian project? Second, if it is greater, who will he have left to fire in AECL for that?

Mr. Gillespie: Mr. Speaker, there is no evidence at the moment that there will be a loss with respect to the La Prade