

Motions

The Minister said that 13 European countries and Japan would participate with Canada in the space program. Of the 13 European countries and Japan who have given their undertaking, how many of those would have the space station in the capital of the country, and how many have their space agency headquarters outside the national capital of the country?

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Speaker, I can give the Hon. Member the answer right now. The 13 European countries that are participating with the space agency enterprise are members of the European Space Agency. That agency has its headquarters in Paris, which I just visited recently. It is not the capital of Europe.

Not all the 13 countries have a space agency. Therefore, it is not very helpful to use Europe as an example. It is not helpful to listen to the Liberals because they are in both camps, and the New Democratic Party has not stated any position at all. I guess it is up to me and my colleagues to eventually decide the best situation for Canada.

Mr. Rompkey: Mr. Speaker, during the course of his remarks the Minister said that we have a commitment from the Americans that there will be no military use of the space station. He went on to say that if there ever was a military use, we will get our money back. I suggest that it is something like telling the Trojans that we will help them build their horse as long as they make a commitment not to use it for military purposes, and if they do, we want our money back. The point is that it will be too late to get the money back. The money back guarantee at that point is certainly not very effective.

How can the Minister have a commitment not to participate in military use of the space station and at the same time have a money back guarantee if they do? Does that not reflect equivocation, doubt and uncertainty? When is a decision going to be made one way or the other; yes it is going to be military or, no, it is not? When is there going to be a clear and unequivocal position on that?

• (1230)

With respect to the space agency, is it not true that NRC is going to be the headquarters of the space agency? Does it not have it now and is it not going to keep it? Has not the decision in fact already been made? And is the game that is going on now not verbal pyrotechnics, but no more than that?

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is very imaginative and generous in interpreting what I said. I did not say that we will walk away and get our money back, "if". I share this information with the Hon. Member. The fact is I was in Washington last week to look at the text which had been negotiated and to remove a couple of minor irritants that had to be discussed at a higher level. The military aspect has not changed from the time the President and our Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) agreed to co-operate with this enterprise. Yes, some concern has been expressed by the

defense department in the United States, something which was all very public, that a large expenditure such as that should produce some benefits for the military. Our European partners have raised some concerns, as did we. How do we interpret this concept of international law?

The problem we are facing right now, and I share it with the Hon. Member, is that we will provide a mission critical element to the enterprise because we will be the first on site. Our equipment will literally assemble the station and then service the various elements of the station. So the contribution the Europeans and Japanese are making are different from ours. It is, therefore, necessary, if we are to keep to the timetable of the launch of 1994, that we make our commitment at this particular time to move into Phase C and Phase D of the enterprise. So we now want to go into a phase where we actually go into design and manufacture of the various components. The Americans insisted, "We cannot wait for the Europeans. They have more time than you have.

We have to have a decision now". What I think the Cabinet will be considering will be a participation in line with the invitation. It will be a civilian peaceful exercise. We have built into this concept of a dispute mechanism, which has been bandied around and which is now part of the free trade deal, and we have built certain safeguards into the MOU, which I will be recommending to Cabinet, that would permit us in the event—never mind militarization, which would be one aspect—that we do not like the management regime agreed to by the Europeans and Japanese, if we do not like any aspects of this thing later on, to perhaps sell our assets to the other partners. It may well be a situation where we get this thing up there and the cost becomes so horrendous we can no longer participate. At that point we would like to be in a position to say, "Look, this is our contribution. Here are the drawings. Would you kindly compensate us? We can no longer participate in the enterprise". I think it is a major accomplishment to have these safeguards built in because our main objective was to safeguard and protect all the elements on which our comprehensive space program is based and, in the main, our Canadian interest. I think the recommendations I will be making to Cabinet will do all of that.

Mr. Mike Cassidy (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, I have been asked to participate in this debate as a former science critic for my Party. I left that position prior to the creation of the Standing Committee on Research, Science and Technology, although I supported its creation. I think, in the context of parliamentary reform, it is very useful to see that the committee is taking its responsibilities seriously and has come up with a report which has a good deal of substance and demonstrates why we should have had such a committee a very long time ago.

Unfortunately, our science critics are absent because they did not anticipate that this debate would take place today. I would have to say to my colleagues in the Chamber that in a week when we were meant to be debating free trade, I find this