

Oral Questions

NUCLEAR ARMAMENTS

LAUNCHING OF INFORMATION PROGRAM ON CRUISE MISSILE TESTING

Mr. Terry Sargeant (Selkirk-Interlake): Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of National Defence and the Prime Minister, I will direct my question to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

• (1125)

Yesterday we learned that the Department of National Defence has decided to mount an information program headed by an official from NATO headquarters in Brussels, which will include a 40 minute slide show and a resource kit for speakers, that is designed to convince Canadians of the Government's wisdom in testing the air launched Cruise missile in Canada, a program that the Minister admitted yesterday in committee would be biased. Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence tell the House on what basis the Government decided that such a program would be necessary, and can he give us an idea of what this program would cost?

Mr. Stanley Hudecki (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): Madam Speaker, I might answer the Hon. Member in this way. The subject of nuclear warfare is a very complex one, and using nuclear weapons as a deterrent requires a very profound knowledge of situations leading to the present conditions. I believe that this kind of information has not been adequately presented to the Canadian public. If anything, it has been biased on the side of those who feel that this deterrent mounted by NATO is proliferating the arms race and is, in a way, contributing to the insecurity of the country. It is therefore, very important in order to achieve a balance that the Department of National Defence place the complexities of the issue on the table and allow the public to make a decision. I feel that what we have been seeing in the press has been biased toward downplaying the goal of the Department of National Defence, which is to create peace on the basis of using deterrence. As far as the—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

USE OF TAXPAYERS' MONEY FOR PROGRAM

Mr. Terry Sargeant (Selkirk-Interlake): Madam Speaker, I direct my supplementary question to the same Parliamentary Secretary. I find it surprising that the Government can commit money to a program that it has admitted it has not agreed to as yet. I would also like to point out that the umbrella agreement clearly states that the United States shall bear all costs and expenditures incurred in the Test and Evaluation program. Will the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence tell us whether that commitment applies to the information program? Specifically, will he assure us that no Canadian taxpayers' money will be spent on this program that is designed to sell an American weapons system?

Mr. Stanley Hudecki (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): Madam Speaker, I think that there are two components to that question. One is that undoubtedly the costs that will be incurred in maintaining and carrying out the test will certainly be the responsibility of the American Government. The cost of informing the public as to the complexities and problems associated with nuclear warfare will be borne by the budget of the Department of National Defence. I might inform the Hon. Member that no advertising company has been hired and no extra facilities are being used. The cost of spreading this information that will create a balance in the country will be borne completely within the budget of the Department of National Defence.

* * *

PETRO-CANADA

EXPLORATION FOR CHINESE OFFSHORE OIL RESOURCES

Mr. Jack Shields (Athabasca): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. The other day, Bill Hopper, the President of Petro-Canada, our state-owned oil company, stated that one of the reasons Petro-Canada was involved in spending Canadian taxpayer dollars developing offshore oil resources off mainland China was that Petro-Canada hoped to access oil that it may find off mainland China to Canada because Canada is still importing oil. Is it the mandate of Petro-Canada to reach oil self-sufficiency in Canada by developing China's offshore oil reserves?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, as I explained the other day, Petro-Canada has been invited, along with 45 other companies from around the world, to bid on the prospect lands off the coast of China. It would be a good commercial proposition for Petro-Canada. One of the possible benefits would be that it would be possible, if they find oil and if we in Canada need oil, to import that oil into Canada.

Happily, we are at this time self-sufficient in Canada because we produce as much oil as we consume, but we must be prudent about the future. Because we were invited by China to participate, and because of the commercial relations that specifically western Canada has with China, it was important for us to accept the offer of the Government of China. If a Canadian corporation is in a position to export Canadian technology and improve the commercial relations that Canada has with China, every Member of this House, especially those from western Canada, should be happy about that.

• (1130)

Mr. Shields: Madam Speaker, it is good to see that Petro-Canada is going to make China oil self-sufficient with Canadian taxpayers' dollars.