

Supply

Frankly, I think a lot of this has been studied to death. I think there is far more hysteria than genuine scientific concern. We are dealing with the problem in an acceptably scientific way. If we were going to do something about it publicly through the hearing process, then we would have to do it in a way to help the public understand the whole process—the necessity for energy sources, the necessity for alternates to hydrocarbons and the necessity of providing energy sources to our neighbour to the south. We will be threatened far more by a crisis down there than by anything else. As Chairman, I would be in favour of the committee dealing with these things, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault): We are now 11 minutes into the question and comment period so I will recognize at another time the Hon. Member who is rising. The Hon. Member for Calgary West.

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to enter this debate today. The Member who spoke previously dealt with the issue of public hysteria, and I think he is correct in saying that there is a great deal of misinformed public concern about the impact of this industry. That is why I feel strongly that a public inquiry has a role in Canadian society for many reasons, one of them being its capacity to inform the public on an issue. A public inquiry conducted by elected people tends to be covered by the media, and this contributes to public understanding. The resulting reduction of hysteria could be immense.

I was glad to see the NDP motion on the Order Paper today. The Canadian public will have to judge whether this is the most important issue that we could be addressing in Canada on this Monday in January, 1984. I think a case could be made that there might be more important issues, but this certainly is one important issue.

I am always bothered about the discrepancy between what political Parties say they stand for and how they act. Today I expected to see Members of the Liberal Party stand and support, in whole or part, the thrust of this motion. I have not been disappointed. I think I correctly used the words "in whole or in part".

I looked through *Hansard* for recent comments by a Member on the Government side in another context in February, 1983. At that time the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Chrétien) said that he agreed that the subject of nuclear energy should be discussed in greater depth. He said that with a great deal of feeling, but then he tagged on the words "on another occasion". That has been the contribution of the Liberal Party of Canada almost without exception, since 1946, 38 years ago. With the knowledge we possessed at that time we put an Act in place that related to the nuclear industry. Some minor modifications have been made to it since, and at one time a Bill was even brought before the House. To all intents and purposes, we are dealing with a piece of legislation put in place 38 years ago, and for most of that 38 years the Liberal Party of Canada has been the Government.

Looking back in *Hansard* I discovered that the last time a Government took action on this subject was in October, 1979 when the Conservatives formed the Government. I will not read the motion in its entirety, Mr. Speaker, but I think it is important to put on record that a brand-new government, as one of its early initiatives, proposed as follows:

That a special joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons be appointed to inquire into the economic, social, environmental, health and international considerations bearing upon the role of the Government of Canada in the development, use, regulation and export of nuclear energy, including but not limited to:

(a) Energy and economic policy considerations:

- (i) the costs, risks and benefits of nuclear electric generation in comparison with practical alternatives;
- (ii) the role of fission power in the national energy economy;
- (iii) the allocation of federal research and development funds for nuclear energy matters, including the potential for a Canadian role in the development of fusion technology;
- (iv) the relation of Canadian nuclear science and technology to industrial strategy and quality of employment objectives;

(b) Social and environmental policy considerations:

- (i) the basis for and adequacy of national nuclear, health, safety and environmental standards and of compliance monitoring;
- (ii) the responsibility for and adequacy of radioactive waste management, both high and low level;
- (iii) public rights of access to information in nuclear matters;

(c) Federal-provincial considerations:

- (i) an examination of federal instruments, structures and responsibilities for the development and regulation of nuclear equipment, technology, materials and facilities;
- (ii) the role of federal agencies and the adequacy of federal legislation in the event of a nuclear accident and in the prevention of harm to man and the natural environment;
- (iii) the evolution of intergovernmental arrangements for, and views of the provinces on, the financing of nuclear energy;

● (1730)

Another section, Mr. Speaker, is headed "International Considerations". It reads:

—an examination of Canada's nuclear export policy.

We have a policy. It is central to the trade policy. It has never been fully examined by the Canadian public. It goes on:

—an examination of Canada's safeguards requirements for the export of materials, nuclear materials, equipment and information in the context of the development of an effective international non-proliferation system.

That is the last time, Mr. Speaker, on October 24, 1979, that the Government, the Cabinet of the country, took action on this issue. That was over four years ago and that was a Conservative Government, Mr. Speaker, which had been out of power for years and years. Yet this Conservative Government brought forward to this House of Commons an action step. At that time, Mr. Speaker, responsible people on behalf of the Liberal Party of Canada told us it was a good initiative which was long overdue. The New Democratic Party of Canada told us it was long overdue. But that committee was not formed because it was blocked, Mr. Speaker. It was blocked by Hon. Members of the New Democratic Party. It was blocked by Hon. Members of the Liberal Party of Canada. That concrete action step was blocked.