

Nuclear Control and Administration

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order. Before putting the question for second reading of Bill C-270, an Act respecting Nuclear control and administration, the Chair would like to express reservations as to the procedural acceptability of this Bill which seems to infringe upon the financial initiative of the Crown as far as the power of imposing charges upon the Consolidated Revenue Fund is concerned. For instance, Clause 6 of the Bill seeks to increase the number of members of the Nuclear Control Board to be appointed by the Governor in Council, and Clause 9 provides for the appointment of substitute members on the said Board. For its part, Clause 8 makes provision for payment of a salary to members of the board.

However, having entered this caveat, the Chair will allow the debate to take place on the motion for second reading of Bill C-270. Should the debate come to an end, the Chair will have to rule on the procedural acceptability of this Bill.

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NUCLEAR CONTROL AND ADMINISTRATION ACT

MEASURE TO ESTABLISH

Mr. Tom McMillan (Hillsborough) moved that Bill C-270, respecting nuclear control and administration, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Public Works.

He said: Mr. Speaker, before proceeding with my planned remarks may I comment briefly on your caveat. That caveat was taken into account when my colleagues and I redrafted the Bill. In fact, it had been brought to our attention by the Table officers that the problem to which you made reference had arisen and the Bill was redrafted taking into account their advice, I understand that the Bill as it now stands meets the normal standards of parliamentary practice in that respect. While Clause 6, I think it is, does contemplate an increase in the number of members on the board, the total cost to the Treasury might not necessarily be increased, but I leave that question to your good judgment at a later point in the debate.

Sir, I am pleased to be the sponsor of the Private Members' Bill now before the House for debate. The subject, as you have pointed out, is Bill C-270, an Act respecting nuclear control and administration which received first reading on May 2, 1980. As Members who participated in the debate then will know, my Bill is virtually identical to a Private Members' Bill debated at second reading on December 17, 1982. The other Bill was sponsored by my friend and colleague, the Hon. Member for Bruce-Grey (Mr. Gurbin). His Bill was thoroughly debated on the occasion; indeed, all Parties in the House were represented in the debate. So I think it is unnecessary for me or for any other Member to address my Bill at any great length. My purpose in rising is to identify myself with the Bill now before us, to remind Members of the main provisions, and to urge all Hon. Members to allow it to go before the Standing Committee on Natural Resources by not talking it out.

In his speech on the Bill of the Hon. Member for Bruce-Grey, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy,

Mines and Resources (Mr. Dingwall), whom I see in the House this afternoon, agreed that the subject of nuclear energy was of such importance that it should be discussed in greater depth on another occasion, possibly in committee. I believe the best forum for further discussion would be at the relevant standing committee where each clause could be discussed and perhaps improved upon or supplemented in the thorough fashion that only a standing committee makes possible. The fact is, Sir, a wide-ranging, in-depth investigation by Parliament of the subject of nuclear energy is long overdue. The subject has virtually been ignored by both the Parliament of Canada and the general public alike, except for keenly concerned special-interest groups such as, for example, HOPE, in my own Province of Prince Edward Island. Bill C-270 would give us an excellent opportunity, an excellent point of reference, if you will, for the kind of standing committee investigation we require.

The nuclear industry has grown at a rapid rate since the end of the Second World War when the country began to focus on the development of a nuclear reactor. Yet the country has never had a full inquiry into whether such an energy or export option is in the best interests of the country or, if so, whether we have been following the safest, most cost-effective course in embracing that option. We have developed enormous technical expertise and skill in the nuclear field, to the point where we are currently a world leader. But, as so often happens, our technical capacity has outpaced both our capacity and our resolve to address certain moral, health and environmental questions surrounding the use of nuclear power for either peaceful or defence purposes.

Let me make it crystal clear, Mr. Speaker, that I am not condemning the nuclear option on this occasion. In my opinion, now is not the occasion to address the issue at that level of debate. I am merely trying to make the point that Canada has adopted the nuclear option and pursued it vigorously, albeit in a scatterbrained way, without devoting enough thought to attendant environmental and moral issues. On a more mundane plane, we have not even set in place adequate laws and mechanisms to ensure that the nuclear option is managed with maximum benefits to the public it is intended to serve. Certainly the general public has been all but excluded from a role in the relevant decisions. Meanwhile, nuclear power has emerged as a key part of the country's over-all energy mission.

The size of the industry, the magnitude and scope of it, Mr. Speaker, is mind-boggling. There are currently 18 nuclear reactors in operation or under construction in the country, one of the most recently completed projects being Pickering II in Ontario which consists of four reactors in all. Electricity makes up 30 per cent of the total energy produced in Canada, and 10 per cent of that total is generated by nuclear power. In other words, 3 per cent of all energy is derived from nuclear sources in this country. In Ontario nuclear power stations account for a staggering 35 per cent, or 38 billion kilowatt hours, of all electrical generation in the Province. In my own