

● (1520)

[English]

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, might I ask the Honourable Senator Flynn if he would answer one or two questions about a particular item in his comments?

Senator Flynn: Yes.

Senator MacEachen: I noted in the reading of the conclusions of the report on the Strategic Defense Initiative the committee said that it was unable to be more definite because of the lack of information, and it referred to particular documents. As I listened to Senator Flynn speak today and heard him reiterate that point, I wondered whether the committee had specific documents in mind that would have helped it, or was it a general reference to documents that may be secret? If it was a general reference to documents that may be secret, I think it would be helpful to know that, or did the committee have a specific list of documents that it could not get?

My second point is related to Mr. Kroeger's report. Can Senator Flynn tell us whether Mr. Kroeger completed his report after the joint committee completed its report, or whether the reason the committee did not have access to his report was because he was advising the government and the government alone?

Senator Flynn: I do not know when Mr. Kroeger's report became available and, therefore, whether or not it was made before or after the committee made its interim report. However, one thing is certain, and that is that we did not have access to that report. We were told that we could not have it. I think that this was a reasonable position for reasons I mentioned earlier. We cannot force someone who has the mandate of advising the government on a decision to be taken to appear before a committee and tell us what his recommendations will be, would be or have been. I would say that such reports should be regarded as privileged documents.

With regard to the other documents that the committee did not have, we did not receive a formal invitation, so exactly what it implied we could not say. What part were we invited to play in this research? We did not know. What amount of money would Canada be obliged to contribute? We did not know that either. We had a vague idea as to the exact scientific nature of the research. Some experts told us something about it. But exactly how this initiative was to operate, we had to rely on hearsay information. We did not have access to the advisers to the Government of the United States. Honourable senators will remember the speech made by Senator Gigantès in which he described how, according to *Time* magazine, there was no totally safe system, that if one nuclear bomb out of a 100 were to pierce the shield it could destroy 50 U.S. cities. I do not blame him for believing it. My point is that we could not really assess the efficacy of the system on that basis.

On the other hand, I for one think that research in this area has to be done one way or the other. It is difficult to say that there should not be any such research. That is why I agreed

with the government when it said that it would not participate on a government-to-government basis but that it would let Canadian enterprise participate. I think that research is something that you cannot and should not stop. Whether the government should be involved is an entirely different question. However, I am sure that honourable senators can understand that in the time allotted the committee, we could not obtain all the required information. We were authorized to travel only in Canada. We were not authorized to go, for instance, to Washington to meet with government experts there. Possibly, if we had had the time and the authorization, we could have gone there and obtained more information. Certainly the government, with the advice of Mr. Kroeger and keeping in mind all the other elements that are secret and which could not be divulged before we formulated our report, was in a better position to make a final decision.

Senator MacEachen: I thank Senator Flynn for answering the questions that I raised. I also thank him for making the effort to explain to us this afternoon the work of the committee and the significance that should be attached to the various recommendations both on the Strategic Defense Initiative and on the big question of enhancing trade or free trade with the United States. These are very important questions. They will be before the country, certainly, for some considerable time and I think it is useful to have the opportunity in this body to debate these questions.

I would like to make some extended comments on the report. I read it on the weekend and found it useful since it contained some very good analyses of certain aspects of the Strategic Defense Initiative. Also, it raised further questions that I am sure many of us want to have answered, and I would like to make comments along those lines. Perhaps I might have its consent to postpone my comments until later.

On motion of Senator MacEachen, debate adjourned.

THE CABINET

ACCESS TO INFORMATION—ORDER STANDS

On the Order:

Resuming the debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Davey calling the attention of the Senate to the Government's preoccupation with secrecy.—(*Honourable Senator Stollery*).

● (1530)

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, Senator Stollery has advised me that he has decided he does not wish to speak on this matter. However, I have been asked to have this matter adjourned in the name of the sponsor of this motion, Senator Davey, who wishes to speak again. This is an inquiry and, therefore, his speaking again will close the debate. He has asked me to advise honourable senators that he will not speak on this matter until next week and if anyone wishes to speak to it in the meantime, he will yield. I will stand the order in his name.

Order stands.