

Nuclear Proliferation

lous to have any kind of weapons to try to compete with them.

I hope I can be excused for digressing a little bit but I happen to think I should emphasize the fact that we could radically alter our position by cutting down on defence expenditures, and this might even prove very successful in curbing inflation. Now, to come back to what I was saying, I would say that the government is definitely to blame for providing nuclear assistance and we must change our policy. We must give the example and not take advantage of opportunities to encourage the proliferation of nuclear arms. Is it not particularly illogical, Mr. Speaker, for us to provide such assistance to a country where almost one third of the people is undernourished and where thousands and thousands starve to death every day?

When we hear the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) declare over and over again that we have food surpluses, in particular milk and powdered milk, but cannot systematize our food assistance to starving countries while we find ways to help them out in a useless and dangerous area like this one, which could lead to its destruction. I submit, Mr. Speaker, that this flagrant contradiction must be denounced with the utmost vehemence. There is no getting away from the fact that mankind is now living under constant threat.

And newspapers were again reporting last week how it could even be possible that the Guatemala earthquake had been caused by American nuclear tests in Nevada. Mr. Speaker, I am not saying that such is the case, but there are hypotheses leaning in that direction.

There is no doubt that our role is certainly not to act in such a way as to encourage anyone along those lines. That is why, Mr. Speaker, we fully support the motion. We hope the government will recognize the necessity of changing its policy in that field so that Canada can keep its role and its reputation as a pacifying country and not as a country capable of contributing, even indirectly, to practices that simply can generate conflicts throughout the world.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the government will bear in mind the remarks we are making, and I hope this House will vote as it should to show clearly that Canada is a peaceful country which does not want human life to be destroyed.

● (1600)

[English]

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity provided by the motion to comment on Canadian policy with respect to nuclear sales abroad and to underline the dedication and interest of the Canadian government in the cause of non-proliferation. As hon. members have said, nuclear proliferation is a danger in the world. It is a broad, political problem which arises from the transfer of one state's nuclear technology to another and also from the vertical proliferation in the arsenals of the superpowers of the world. It seems to me hon. members took a limited view of Canada's role in coping with the problem, particularly of the reasons for Canada's transferring nuclear technology in certain cases to other countries of the world in discharge of treaty obligations.

[Mr. Matte.]

The subject is extensive. I should like to deal with it under the following headings: first, why are we in the business of transferring nuclear technology, nuclear material and nuclear equipment; second, what effect would the moratorium which has been advocated by all previous speakers have internationally and domestically; third, there is the safeguard system, what it can do and what it cannot do; fourth, what is Canada's role in the London club and what were the recent conclusions of the suppliers' group which the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas) mentioned; and, finally, there is the special case of India.

As a country and as a signatory to the non-proliferation treaty we have undertaken to transfer technology to other countries for peaceful purposes. We all know that at present throughout the world nuclear power is the major alternative to hydro resources and fossil fuels. We also know that a number of developing countries and developed countries require nuclear power to further their economic and social development. So far in this debate not one speaker has mentioned the cry of the world's developing countries for access to nuclear technology. Most developing countries have adhered to the non-proliferation treaty. They say, "We have undertaken these obligations but developed, industrialized countries of the world are failing in their responsibilities to make available to us nuclear technology." That technology is urgently needed in certain developing countries as a source of power. It is not urgently needed in all of them, though it is in some.

When the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands recited our association with countries such as India, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, and Argentina, he failed to underline that each of those countries is a developing country urgently in need of additional power resources in order to maintain their development and inch forward a bit in humanity's struggle for an improved standard of living. About this aspect not one word was said. Every spokesman on the other side ignored it totally. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) put the matter clearly when he said in his speech to the Nuclear Association, in Ottawa on June 17, 1975:

It would be unconscionable under any circumstances to deny to the developing countries the most modern of technologies as assistance in their quest for higher living standards. But, in a world increasingly concerned about depleting reserves of fossil fuels, about food shortages, and about the need to reduce illness, it would be irresponsible as well to withhold the advantages of the nuclear age—of power reactors, agricultural isotopes, cobalt beam-therapy units.

In Canada we have developed this high technology. It is one of the show pieces of Canadian industry and has application throughout the world. This afternoon hon. gentlemen are saying, "Sit on it. Look inward. Keep this technology in Canada because we do not want to be as other countries and take risks". We take some risks, admittedly. They say, "We prefer to withdraw than to confront the dilemma proposed by our policy, namely, how can we share this technology with the rest of the world and at the same time avoid the proliferation of nuclear weapons?" That is the dilemma.

The hon. member said it was a moral issue, but he ignored the moral question which we, as a rich, developed country would face if we did as he proposed and refused to take risks which other developed countries take—and