

Adjournment Debate

I am happy to see the Parliamentary Secretary will be responding to the questions I have raised, but it would have been nice had the Minister been here because this is a question confronting Canadians and Americans on both sides of the border of the Great Lakes. We have seven million Canadians living in the vicinity of the Great Lakes water table who will be affected by this particular measure.

Indeed, it is a matter of some gravity that our chief trade negotiator in Washington, Simon Reisman, is making public statements about a project on which he at one time held a directorship. We know his personal interests. We know his private interests in the particular company and the project in question. He has to state categorically for the record that our water is not for sale, that the diversion project will not be carried forward. Indeed, he should give some reassurance to Canadians, to those on both sides of the Great Lakes borders as well as those who are affected by any waters coming from the Arctic table, that they will not be adversely affected by this project which, at the moment, has been given the Good Housekeeping seal of approval by the Government since it decided to go through the back door and provide \$30,000 seed funding through its office of the National Research Council in Newfoundland.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Guy Hudon (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for External Relations): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to respond to the question raised by my hon. colleague from Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) concerning potential water sales to the United States. I am particularly happy to have this opportunity since I have had my answer ready since March 18 when this question should normally have been raised in the House.

Mr. Speaker, it is not a matter of the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) not responding to the question. He simply has no desire to raise a point that from the outset may seem absurd.

Mr. Speaker, there are three very important aspects to this matter.

First of all, the trade negotiations will be just that. We certainly have no intention of giving up any rights to our natural resources, and I must say, I do agree with my hon. colleague when she says that water is one of our natural resources. So Canada does not intend to give up any control whatsoever over its natural resources.

Second, I would like to say that the National Research Council and the Newfoundland Regional Office have every right, within reasonable limits, to enter into agreements with other parties. Now, if it is supposed to be Government policy to maintain control over every single contract for which authority has been delegated to the regions, that is another situation altogether, but it is not our policy, Mr. Speaker.

Third, just because the National Research Council has decided to enter into an agreement does not mean that Canada's foreign policy is automatically involved. That may have been the case under the Liberal Government when contracts by the National Research Council involved a commitment and even influenced Canada's external relations or external trade, but this Government, Mr. Speaker, does not work that way.

A National Research Council contract is not going to shape our country's external policies. That is more or less the point I want to make. Now I suppose I could conclude by saying that if the Hon. Member opposite, and I agree that water is part of our natural resources, if the Hon. Member opposite doesn't want this country to sell water abroad, she can avail herself of the rights she has as a Member and have a Private Member's Bill passed in the House, prohibiting Canada from selling anything at all to the United States during the next couple of hundred years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Therefore this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 3(1).

The House adjourned at 6.20 p.m.