

Mr. Hal Herbert (Vaudreuil): Mr. Speaker, in my opening remarks I must express my pleasure that the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald) spoke this afternoon because it gives me the opportunity to underline the reason for the motion. I will begin by reading the relevant remark as it appears at page 2050 of *Hansard*. I said it appeared to me that a minister of the Crown at that time was interfering with the operation of a Crown corporation which should have been independent of government interference.

It is quite apparent from the remarks that were made on June 12 by the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mr. Waddell) that he thought I was trying to promote the sale of Candu reactors. I tried to make it clear that I was not expressing an opinion either for or against; I was simply saying that the expressed intent of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited was to make export sales and I was objecting to an apparent interference by an important minister of the Crown in the operation of a Crown corporation which was intended to be independent of government interference.

I raise this issue because it will come up later and in the future. If I could put my personal opinion on the record, though, I think there should be a lot more government interference in Crown corporations. Nevertheless, if they were set up to be independent they should remain independent.

There are two means of interference. One of them is, of course, by stopping communications between interested parties, which effectively puts an end to negotiations for a sale. If the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands feels any better about it, I may say I have good reason to believe that action of this kind was going on prior to the change of government by which the hon. lady became a member of the cabinet.

I have objected to the double standard. I want to see our standards clearly established and put on the record. I want to see us abide by our own standards, and I want those clearly established.

● (1750)

Miss MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order just so I have clarification from the hon. member for Vaudreuil (Mr. Herbert). He mentioned stopping. I think the words he used were "stopping of communications". I stand to be corrected, but it seemed to me that he was implying that I had stopped communications. It that is so, I would like him to spell out the exact details of what I was supposed to have done, because he is making a charge of which I know nothing.

Mr. Herbert: Mr. Speaker, I spoke of the stopping of communications between AECL and the representatives of another country who were interested in purchasing a Candu reactor. I make that very clear.

Miss MacDonald: By whom? Who stopped them?

Mr. Herbert: If it is the policy and the intention of this government, the past government or any other government, to sell Candu reactors or not to sell Candu reactors, I accept that decision. I was objecting strongly to any personal intervention

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which imposes the ideas of an individual on a supposedly independent Crown corporation.

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am sure the hon. member would not want to mislead the House on this question of the interruption of communications. I was the minister who went down to Argentina on this particular point, and I want to make it absolutely clear that the then secretary of state for external affairs did not in any way try to stop communications. In fact the point at issue was that there was no communication between the previous government and Argentina.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. The hon. member for Vaudreuil (Mr. Herbert).

Mr. Herbert: Mr. Speaker, I am well aware of the work which was done by the hon. member who has just spoken. In fact that was the only bright light on the whole picture at that time.

We have sold a reactor to Argentina. That is a fact. I do not want to get into whether that was a good deal or not. That is another issue entirely. We could have concluded another sale to that country. However, as with any export business, aggressive salesmanship is necessary.

I am well aware that when I placed this motion on the order paper I was asking for the production of some documents which would not be made available to me, and it should be apparent that I do not have sufficient information to be able to ask for the specific communications to which I referred in my remarks in this House on June 12. Without going any further, then, I request that the motion be withdrawn.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): In accordance with Standing Order 50 the motion can be withdrawn only with the unanimous consent of the House. Does the House give its unanimous consent for the withdrawal of the motion?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion withdrawn.

Miss MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, I would like to serve notice that I want to reserve, for the period of time following question period next week, the right to raise a question of privilege regarding the charge laid against me in the House this afternoon by the hon. member for Vaudreuil (Mr. Herbert) that I personally interfered by stopping communications between AECL and government officials of Argentina, and to demand that the hon. member produce evidence to that effect.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): The remarks of the hon. member will be brought to the attention of Madam Speaker.

The hour provided for the consideration of private members' business having expired, I do now leave the chair until 8 p.m.

At 5.54 p.m. the House took recess.