

Mr. Stanfield: I suspect that my time is getting short. I did not really rise to preach to the minister. However, before I sit down I should like to say to him that in this desperately important area of trying to control nuclear proliferation, we are seeking the same kind of international fumbling and bumbling which we have seen in the past and which has led to international disaster. This time, the government of Canada cannot shrug its shoulders and say that this kind of international bumbling is something undertaken by the great powers, over which we have no control or with whom we have nothing to do. This is not a mess being imposed upon us by others; this is a mess in which Canada and its government are participating. I warn the minister that this is what is going on. It is not a matter of Canada not having any part to play, because the members of this government are right in there pitching—and “pitching” is a pretty good word to use, because the sales pitch is obviously a very important part of their thinking.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1710)

[Translation]

Mr. Maurice Dupras (Labelle): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of his comments, the mover of the motion, the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence), indicated to the House that there was no opportunity to launch a debate on the role of the Canadian government in the sale of nuclear equipment and that it was as a result of an allotted day that he could question the minister on the matter. I would like to point out to the mover of the motion, Mr. Speaker, that he had some opportunities and that he took advantage of them. He had two opportunities on March 6 or 7, 1975 and on March 13, 1975. He had another opportunity on May 22, 1975 and his last opportunities were on December 2 and 12 last when indeed he directed some questions to the minister about Canadian policy.

Mr. Speaker, I wish first of all to commend the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacEachen) for his excellent speech and the clarity with which he delivered it and I hope that this time all opposition members have understood what is the Canadian policy governing the sale of nuclear material to countries which signed the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Speaker, within the next 15 minutes that are allotted to me, I would like to refer in particular to that part of the motion which deals with the sale of nuclear material to India. I wish to refer as well to the nuclear explosion that many of us—and I see that the mover has made the same mistake—consider as an atom bomb explosion. There is a huge difference, Mr. Speaker, between exploding an atomic bomb and a nuclear explosion.

What happened in Ragasthan in 1974, Mr. Speaker—and it was told to me by Indians and not by Canadians—is that first of all this explosion was not a bomb and second, the Indian people could have used their expertise, their ability to detonate a nuclear bomb well before 1974.

What I am trying to say, Mr. Speaker, is that people from India are telling us that they had no need whatsoever for our expertise or our equipment for the 1974 explosion.

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They could even have released that bomb before the Chinese, that is to say almost ten years ago.

Therefore I wonder what prompted this hysterical crisis which caused huge problems to the Indians, particularly if you recall the co-operation program we have been pursuing with India for almost 20 years, since they got their independence, and especially for the past few years.

And if one considers the importance, the amount Canada contributed for these unfortunate people and the importance they attach to the Canadian contribution, one will easily understand that they may wonder about the future of our cooperation program and about the way India is using the nuclear material Canada sold her. Surely it is not to fulfill the ambition to produce atomic bombs and use them. The Indians were a pacific people. They have been much more often under occupation or attack than they were either occupants or attackers. These people need the assistance of Canada, it is not endowed with natural resources as we are in Canada. As everyone knows, industrialized countries helped them by building a system of irrigation channels contributing to make the unproductive land a little more fertile, but there are still other needs. Energy is one of the great needs the Indian economy is faced with, and this is why, Mr. Speaker, we insist so much on the participation of Canada for the maintenance of this co-operation program in which we have been involved for such a long time.

There is not a single Indian I met who believes for one minute that his country has any ambition to develop and produce an atomic bomb or even to deliver it. I do not know this simply from speaking to from the man on the street, Mr. Speaker. Like other delegates in India last November, including some from the motion sponsor's party, I had the opportunity to meet India's Secretary for External Affairs of India Kamas Singh who assured us, Mr. Speaker, that in no way were there any ambition to develop atomic bombs and spend fabulous amounts in that area. Quite the contrary, it is that expertise, that knowledge they want to develop, mainly to foster economic development in a country which has such a need for it. They also wish to help generate rather cheap power. They are not the only ones to do so, because in the last few months this has become the less costly, the most economical way to produce power. Already at the end of 1974, there were no fewer than 170 reactors in 19 countries around the world. Those 170 reactors were producing at least 73,000 megawatts of electricity, and it is estimated that by 1980 some 28 countries may produce 185,000 megawatts.

Should we Canadians deprive a developing country, a country in dire need, should we deprive Indians of the right to use that economical form of energy, capable of being installed anywhere in their vast country? Clearly, India's intention is not produce the atom bomb. As I said, there are assurances from the major part of the people, from those who are in places of responsibility.

I believe some of my colleagues who were acting as delegates in India November last were exposed to comments by the leaders, by the Indian parliamentarians who entertained us. Of course they convinced some of us of the urgency for Canada to continue its negotiations as fast as possible so that India may continue to benefit from the Canadian assistance program.