

that I intended no such insinuation; and, second, I congratulate him for his great speed on his feet.

MR. ROSE—PROPOSED U.S. NUCLEAR POWER PLANT—ANSWER OF SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Mark Rose (Mission-Port Moody): Mr. Speaker, I rise under Standing Order 17(2) concerning what I regard—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have notice of the question of privilege of the hon. member. He indicated in the terms of it that his question of privilege relates to an incorrect statement made in the House a few days ago which, within its terms, puts him in some difficulty. The hon. member will know that questions of privilege have to be raised at the first available opportunity. It is difficult to open the practice of members raising questions of privilege several days after they have occurred, unless of course the hon. member has some special reason for doing so.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Speaker, the matter just came to my attention, and the minister to which I wish to address my question of privilege was absent from the House. So I beg Your Honour's indulgence that I might be permitted to proceed on this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise because of an inadvertent, misleading statement made in the House a few days ago. Before I begin, I should like to thank the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Miss MacDonald) for a letter which was delivered to my desk a few moments ago indicating that the government has at least gone part way toward the request I made last Wednesday.

My question related to a nuclear power plant close to the Canadian border at Sedro Woolley, Washington. Even before the accident at Three Mile Island, the people in my part of the country were extremely worried about this prospect.

I should like to address myself now to the question. My question last Wednesday, as reported at page 802 of *Hansard*, reads as follows:

—In view of the fact that a huge nuclear power plant is proposed for Sedro Woolley, in Washington's Skagit Valley, and since the site chosen is only 35 miles from population centres in British Columbia totalling almost one million people and should an accident ever take place massive environmental and evacuation problems would likely be encountered, what is the government's attitude toward the building of this nuclear power plant so close to our border? Is it one of official approval, disapproval, or indifference?

The reply I received from the Secretary of State for External Affairs reads as follows:

Mr. Speaker, this is a concern that has been expressed to me by many members on this side of the House as well as members in the opposition parties. While it is impossible for Canada to determine where the United States, or interests in the United States, will locate their nuclear power plants, nevertheless we have raised this subject with officials of the U.S. State Department.

I regard this as a reassuring reply. I and other members were left with the distinct impression that the phrase "we have raised this subject with officials of the U.S. State Department" meant that Canada had opposed the site at Sedro. That is precisely what the minister's answer implied, although perhaps unintentionally. One could hardly be blamed for assuming,

Privilege—Mr. Rose

because members on both sides of the House had expressed concern, that the minister was concerned too, that Canada had done more than merely raise the subject with the United States but in fact had declared its opposition to the location.

However, I have received a diplomatic letter, an aide memoire, which indicates precisely the opposite. Referring to page 3 of the aide memoire dated August 29 this year, it reads as follows:

Therefore, although the Government of Canada is not opposed in principle to the construction of a nuclear power station near the border, it wishes to be kept informed of project developments, particularly with respect to questions of public safety and environmental risk.

Regardless of what was said to me and other members of the House, the official policy of Canada is not to disapprove of new plants near our border. On the contrary, it is one of approval, or at the very least one of non-opposition.

In conclusion, when the minister rises to respond I hope she will report that Canada has now reversed its policy and will advise President Carter when he visits on Friday of this new change of heart.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I think the hon. member explained the basis for his question of privilege. Now he is making a representation to the minister which goes a little beyond the bounds.

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I should like to suggest to the hon. member that in his opening comments, in response to Your Honour's admonition that one should raise a question of privilege as soon after statements have been made in the House as possible, he left the inference that the subject had not been raised because I was not in the House. This subject first came up on Wednesday, October 31. I was in the House for question period on both Thursday and Friday of last week. The only day I was absent was yesterday when I was in New York speaking at the General Assembly. I would like to have that on the record so that he does not infer that I was not present here during question period.

● (1510)

In the second place, Mr. Speaker, I would like to assure the hon. member that in no way did I mislead the House or try to mislead the House. The words I used when addressing his question in the House of Commons are, indeed, quite clear. He had asked about the Sedro Woolley proposed nuclear plant in Washington state. I had said in reply that nevertheless we had raised this subject with officials of the United States State Department. I went no further than that. I had said we had raised this subject.

However, he will know, having looked at the aide memoire to which he made reference—that is the aide memoire of August 29, and my letter to him of today following his letter to me of November 1—that we had told the United States government that we wanted to be fully informed about all aspects of this proposal which is very much in a preliminary state at the present time. We indicated that we want to be