

ELDORADO NUCLEAR LIMITED

EFFORTS TO SETTLE STRIKE—EFFECT OF STRIKE ON STOCKS OF URANIUM OXIDE AND DEVELOPMENT OF MARKET FOR URANIUM HEXAFLUORIDE

Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham): Mr. Speaker, Eldorado Nuclear Limited, a Crown corporation, has the monopoly in this country for production of nuclear fuel and its employees are on strike. It reports to the House through the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources so my three part question to him is this. First, what specifically is the minister doing to end this unfortunate work stoppage? Second, in view of the recurring rumours floating around that reserve stocks of UO₂, which is uranium oxide, is at a very dangerously low ebb, would he mind telling the House today what these reserve stocks are composed of? Third, how will a long strike affect the government's plans to break into the uranium hexafluoride market?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, on the first point I am told that officers of the company and the union met for many hours into the very early hours of this morning trying to reach an agreement. So far no agreement has been reached but I think there is some reason to believe that the parties wish to reach an agreement and there will be a further meeting in the very near future.

As to the question concerning dangerously low levels of uranium oxide, I have not got that information but I have been assured that even with a fairly prolonged strike there is sufficient uranium oxide to look after existing requirements.

On the third question respecting uranium hexafluoride, I do not have a specific answer. I think this has to be seen rather as a temporary setback, but I do not think it will in any way affect the progress that Eldorado is making in its sales promotion efforts.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

DISCUSSIONS WITH FRANCE CONCERNING SALE OF NUCLEAR REPROCESSING PLANT TO PAKISTAN

Mr. James Gillies (Don Valley): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Secretary of State for External Affairs which follows along the questions asked yesterday by the hon. member for St. Hyacinthe regarding the conversations that the minister had in France on nuclear expansion. Can the minister tell the House whether he had any specific discussions with the French government about the possibility of the government of France selling to Pakistan a device for reclaiming plutonium fuel from the Canadian nuclear reactor.

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I will do my best to be as informative as I can while respecting to some degree the confidentiality of the discussion with the foreign minister.

Oral Questions

First of all, the question of sales to Pakistan did arise. I inquired as to whether the new policy as outlined about three weeks ago by France now precludes the sale. The answer I was given was it did not, and France felt that it had an obligation and a contractual commitment to sell the reprocessing plant to Pakistan. Whether that sale will go through, of course, I have no way of knowing.

● (1450)

In so far as Canada is concerned I think the hon. member knows we are in the process now of negotiating with Pakistan in relation to continuing co-operation with regard to the reactor which is presently in place there and the supply of fuel. So far, we have not come to any satisfactory solution through these negotiations but they are continuing and I hope that something positive will come out of it within the next little while.

Mr. Gillies: Mr. Speaker, did the Secretary of State for External Affairs communicate to the government of France that if the government of France sold a reprocessing plant to Pakistan that Canada would not go ahead with the supply of a nuclear reactor and nuclear fuel to Pakistan?

Mr. Jamieson: Yes, Mr. Speaker; I think I can say that. I did not couch it in precisely those words but the meaning was perfectly clear. I indicated we were much opposed to the idea of Pakistan acquiring a reprocessing plant and that our continued co-operation with Pakistan would be affected and affected very adversely if in fact they acquired the reprocessing plant. I was not unequivocal to the nth degree because of the negotiations which are now going on to see if safeguards and the like can be negotiated with Pakistan, but as at the moment I report to the House that no such agreement has been reached.

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CONSUMER AFFAIRS

APPLICATION OF BELL CANADA FOR RATE INCREASE— POSSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Mr. Heward Grafftey (Brome-Missisquoi): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. I am sure the minister has received the material from Bell Canada backing up its proposed application for a rate increase, as have all other members of parliament. I would put the question to the minister as spokesman in this House for consumer interests, will the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs be supporting such an application for a rate increase now that he has had time to study their precise application?

Hon. A. C. Abbott (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Well, Mr. Speaker, like the hon. member I have received the material from Bell Canada but unlike the hon. member I have not had time to read it.