

Candu Reactor Sales

AECL had to go back and renegotiate the agreement twice because it was not carried out properly. It was not written properly in the first place. Now they are trying a third renegotiation. I hope the hon. member will be honourable enough at least to ask for the whole story.

Mr. Bob Ogle (Saskatoon East): Mr. Speaker, I wish to take a few minutes this afternoon to discuss the motion before the House and give my approval to what it asks for and bring a particular aspect to the whole question of information about the nuclear industry and what is taking place in that part of our present day world.

• (1740)

I bring to this debate a specific piece of information provided only recently in the course of the hearings on the subject of uranium refineries which were held in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. A large number of people appeared at these hearings and spoke with deep personal concern about the fact that they had in the past been, in a sense, whitewashed by the uranium industry—that they had not been told the truth about what had taken place. I have here a little booklet called “Why People say No”. In it, Saskatchewan people, as well as people from all over Canada, express their concern about the fact that they have not been given up to date information about what is happening in the nuclear industry, and I should like to put a couple of short passages on record to indicate the broad spectrum of information which the people wanted but which did not appear to be found acceptable by the commission at that time. For instance, a student I know personally spoke of the inquiry—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. gentleman but, according to Standing Order 48(2), after one hour and 30 minutes of debate, we have to end the debate and put the question. However, under the same order the mover of the motion is entitled to an additional five minutes if he wishes.

Mr. Roy MacLaren (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, we had an interesting discussion on the last occasion when this subject was under consideration, and again this afternoon. The debate has brought out the role nuclear energy can play in meeting the energy needs of Canada in the years ahead. We have heard reference, also, to the role it can play in providing developing countries with a cheap and dependable source of energy. There has been some discussion of waste disposal, an area of concern, an area of interest to many both in Canada and abroad, but one in which significant progress has been made in meeting the challenges which that particular aspect of energy involves. The role which nuclear energy can play in assisting the developing countries in particular, the question of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons technology and ensuring it is not abused has also been discussed, most recently here this afternoon.

Canada's desire to share her peaceful nuclear technology with other countries which can put it to good use must be balanced by a perception of its potential danger. The Canadian

people would not countenance the diversion of our nuclear exports for destructive purposes.

Proliferation is essentially a political problem among nations, rather than technical. Safeguards on civilian nuclear technology are only one aspect of the political problem. Countries wishing to obtain nuclear weapons can do so without recourse to civilian nuclear power technology. In any case, most would prefer to avoid complicating a weapons program by linking it to facilities intended for energy supply.

Policies which emphasize restriction of technology, without taking into account the legitimate energy needs of other countries, may push them toward self-sufficiency using unsafe-guarded national facilities. The denial of technology can exacerbate the problem of achieving international consensus on a non-proliferation regime. At the same time importing countries must respect international concern about the risks of proliferation. The non-proliferation regime must devise ways of maintaining the technical and institutional barriers between civilian and military applications of nuclear energy.

The recent international nuclear fuel cycle evaluation (INFCE) in which Canada participated fully, has been useful in developing a common understanding of the technical base for future nuclear developments. INFCE concluded that there was no technical “fix” to the problem of proliferation. Basically, it requires political solutions. INFCE indicated that a number of countries will be proceeding with plans to reprocess their irradiated fuel and to recycle plutonium. From this arises the need for better institutional and technical arrangements to deal with the safeguards aspects of enrichment, reprocessing plants, and with advanced fuel cycles generally.

The basic policy issue in the post INFCE period is how to reconcile the needs of countries with nuclear programs for assurances of supply of technology and fuel with the need for a stable, effective non-proliferation regime. What is needed now are acceptable international agreements, which may help to do away with the need for extensive case by case bilateral negotiations. In particular, one difficult question which Canada must address is how it will exercise its right of prior consent over reprocessing. In international discussions which Canada hopes will take place in the near future, the government expects that its concerns over the proliferation risks associated with reprocessing can be reconciled with its nuclear partners regarding assured supply and use of uranium of Canadian origin.

The international nuclear market will continue to present difficulties in both the economic and political domains, but we are working to overcome them. The government is reviewing its policies with a view to deciding how the national interest can best be served in a way consistent with our responsibilities to the international community. We must now again work with others in directing our energies to the evolution of a sensible international non-proliferation regime. The most effective contribution we can make to that effort will be one which gives equal weight to the two sides of the nuclear dilemma—the quest for energy security and the quest for control over the spread of nuclear weapons.