

Export Credits Insurance Act

Mr. Hees: Mr. Chairman, once again I shall try to explain to the hon. member what I have been attempting to explain for approximately a day, but it is very difficult to get people to understand if they do not wish to understand.

I will say once again that the NATO countries, our allies, including the United States, have decided, after a great deal of consideration, what in their opinion are strategic goods. I have explained to the Leader of the Opposition that our export control list includes the strategic list I have just mentioned plus other items which for one reason or another—and the previous government also did this—we consider should not be sent to certain countries in various parts of the world, and in addition items which because of their being in short supply in Canada makes it not a sensible course to have them exported.

As I have said—and I shall say it once again—we do not permit and have not permitted the shipment to Cuba of goods which have been considered strategic by all of the NATO countries including the United States. That is the position we have always taken and that is our position today. We do not believe in shipping to Cuba any goods which our allies and ourselves consider to be strategic. Other items on the export control list are there because for one reason or another we do not think they should be shipped to certain parts of the world. The goods we do not think should be shipped to Cuba are those on the agreed strategic list. I hope I have made myself clear.

I say again that hon. members of the opposition are making it very obvious that they are doing everything in their power by their many virulent, misleading speeches, to create the greatest possible misunderstanding between Canada and the United States. I think you will agree, Mr. Chairman, that that is a very high price to pay for a headline. It represents a course of conduct of which hon. gentlemen opposite should be thoroughly ashamed.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Chairman, the minister has come back to his old and slanderous charge that because we are trying to elicit the facts in this matter we are exacerbating differences between Canada and the United States.

Mr. Hees: That is exactly what you are trying to do in order to achieve a headline.

Mr. Pearson: The minister must have a very guilty conscience in this respect.

Mr. Hees: I am just a little fed up with the tactics of hon. gentlemen opposite in trying to create difficulties between Canada and the United States.

[Mr. Martin (Essex East).]

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Chairman, the most extravagant headlines about this matter which have been seen in the press in recent years have been headlines provoked by the minister's own statements about relations with Cuba—

Mr. Hees: That is utter nonsense.

Mr. Benidickson: They are wonderful people.

Mr. Pearson: Also, Mr. Chairman, the headlines that have been provoked recently have been provoked by the government's policy in regard to this matter. The minister throws up the old smokescreen about the NATO COCOM list. He said that we sent nothing on that list to Cuba. We accept that statement. He told us that last night. But the minister also will not tell us about other items on a list which is designated by the government itself in the legislation covering this matter, as strategic; and I will repeat it again, articles of a strategic nature. This is not a NATO definition; this is a Canadian government definition. The minister will not say whether this government will or will not continue to supply goods under that list category to Cuba.

As a matter of fact, the minister has said—and I hope I am quoting him correctly—that unless an item is on the COCOM list, it will go to Cuba. He has done that. They have given permits for such goods and those goods have included radioactive materials, helicopters, aircraft and indeed dynamite. The minister takes the responsibility for the decision in respect of certain goods of this character sent to this particular country at this time. In view of the situation in that country and in view of relations between that country and its neighbours, including the United States, the minister takes the position that it is perfectly all right and that if you apply for a permit for goods of that kind, you will get it. That is the position the minister is taking.

He has also said that in respect to these items, they may be strategic or they may not be strategic, in accordance with the use to which they are put in Cuba. I ask the minister who decides that question. Who decides what use dynamite is going to be put to in Cuba? Who decides what use an aeroplane is going to be put to in Cuba?

Mr. Hees: I will tell you that.

Mr. Pearson: I take it the minister said "We will decide".

Mr. Hees: I said that I will tell you. The hon. member is asking the question and I shall be very glad to tell him the answer.

Mr. Pearson: Who decides?