

Private Members' Business

fissionable and can be used in the production of nuclear weapons.

Even if plutonium 239 is the isotope preferred by arms manufacturers, other plutonium isotopes are also fissionable and can be used to manufacture bombs. Knowing that Atomic Energy of Canada, the body responsible for promoting nuclear energy in Canada, is trying to sell CANDU reactors by any means possible, which is, after all, why they are building them all over the world, we must look into this very closely. Despite the many multilateral and bilateral treaties on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons between Canada and the rest of the world, we must be realistic: there will be a real risk of nuclear technology being used for military purposes as long as the nuclear industry is developing in the world.

The second facet of Canada's nuclear industry is government financing. I have already mentioned the astronomical costs of storing radioactive waste. Maintenance at Atomic Energy of Canada Limited is subsidized by the public purse, and has been for the past six years, to the tune of \$1.2 billion. The cost of building a reactor is \$1.5 billion, an investment on which even a long term return is not guaranteed. We are justified in questioning the investment of public funds in this industry.

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During the Prime Minister's trip to China last fall, according to representatives of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited who were interviewed in Peking, Atomic Energy made a proposal to build two reactors on Chinese territory under a turnkey proposal without requiring a large investment by China. The representatives said that acquiring these reactors, valued at \$3 billion, would be extremely advantageous for the Chinese, who would not have to tie up foreign currency holdings for a long period. In other words, we are selling CANDUs, but we are financing them entirely.

What about the people of Canada who pay the major part of the construction costs of such reactors? Is the present evolution of Chinese society collateral enough for Canadian investments? These are legitimate questions we should ask ourselves.

The present Canadian policy in the area of nuclear development is costly and dangerous, in terms of both public finance and the human environment. This is why, considering that Canada is trying to reduce its deficit, we believe that Bill C-285, which seeks to eliminate financial support for nuclear reactor design and construction in Canada and abroad, is a worthwhile initiative.

[English]

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the millennium has arrived. We have

just had an NDP member suggesting that we cut off subsidies to a major crown corporation. I thought I would never see the day. Actually what he is in effect proposing in the practical sense is the privatization of AECL.

If he wants to make the same proposal with respect to the CBC, the National Film Board and what is left of the government's stake in Petro-Canada, I will move over one seat and let him join us. We will make him a Reformer, an honorary Reformer.

Mr. Riis: Thanks but no thanks.

Mr. Morrison: It is a good idea to talk about privatizing AECL but it is not simple. We cannot do that in one quick step.

We must remember that more than 80 per cent of the nuclear industry in Canada is already private. The only parts that are still under government supervision and are still being subsidized by the government are the parts that do not make money, the research facilities primarily. Everything else is being operated by the private sector. There are 150 companies out there that compete with suppliers in client countries. They are efficient and they make money.

The Koreans have been so delighted with what we have done with the private end of the industry, the building of the reactors, that they have ordered three more. I would have to take issue with the hon. member who spoke for the Liberals. Wolsong 1 is probably a better reactor even than Point Lepreau. It has been up and running since 1982. They love it and they want more of them.

Let us get back to AECL specifically. Among the major crown corporations it is the only one that is seriously cutting costs. This formerly bloated entity has cut its staff from 4,500 to 3,700. Even more commendable is that it has reduced its Ottawa head office staff from 160 to 54, a two-thirds reduction.

I was out at Chalk River a couple of months ago to look the place over and what I found was quite a tight ship. There was none of the opulence that we have come to associate with government. It was nothing like the Department of National Defence, for example, or the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. This is an outfit that knows what money is for.

Let us take a look at the specifics of the bill. Clause 3(b) speaks of research, investigation, design, testing, construction, manufacture, operation, use, application or licensing of any thing or property of any nature that will be used in or for a nuclear reactor. If the world were only that simple. We cannot pigeon hole or categorize scientific research like that. Much of what is being done at Chalk River at the moment is pure scientific research which may or may not be applicable to reactor design.