

● (1500)

I know that the Right Honourable the Prime Minister is deeply concerned about the selection of the first permanent site for low-level radioactive waste, and rightly so. I saw a letter which he wrote on August 21, 1984, with reference to the Port Hope area in which he said that Mr. Lawrence, the MP for the area, had stated that Eldorado Nuclear Ltd. waste should be removed from major population areas and kept well away from any major water resources such as Lake Ontario.

At present Eldorado Nuclear Ltd. is presenting one site in the agricultural area of Tyrone near the main source of drinking water for the town of Bowmanville, which is located on the edge of Lake Ontario. This site is 15 miles away from Eldorado's other waste sites which are suffering seepage problems.

This one site proposed by Eldorado will involve the Atomic Energy Review process set up by this government, and an intensive series of hearings will be held before a panel of eminent experts. These hearings will also involve time, expertise and financial costs not only for Eldorado but also for the municipal government, the federal government and for community representatives.

My question to the Leader of the Government is: Because this selection will involve the first permanent site in Canada for low-level radioactive waste, and because of the costs in time, expertise and money involved in the lengthy hearings, would the government consider directing Eldorado, which appears to have confined its search to a 15-mile radius, to present more than one site for this selection process?

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): At the outset, honourable senators, I wish to thank the distinguished senator for his kind words and express the pleasure that all of us feel in seeing him here after his having been laid up for some time.

He has made representations to the government and, particularly, to the Ministry of the Environment regarding Eldorado. I shall undertake to see that that minister is made aware of those representations and that he replies in due course.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

FORM OF PROPOSED NATIONAL FORUM—"EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY"

Hon. Joyce Fairbairn: Honourable senators, I should like to address a question to the Leader of the Government in the Senate and note, in passing, that he is also the Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations.

One paragraph that struck me in the Throne Speech yesterday was the one which touched on the government's strong commitment to post-secondary education. Could the Leader of the Government indicate to me what form the national forum proposed for next year, as mentioned in the Throne Speech, will take? Will it be a federal-provincial forum or will it

[Senator Thompson.]

encompass other groups? Will it be a one-shot deal or will it be seen as an ongoing instrument?

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): Honourable senators, I am glad to have this opportunity to say a word about that proposal in the Throne Speech.

If there is any concern on anyone's part, let me reiterate that we respect scrupulously the exclusive provincial jurisdiction in the field of education. Nevertheless, the federal government constantly receives representations from all parties whom we assist financially or otherwise with this or that aspect of post-secondary education.

The Secretary of State has been invited to meet with the Council of Ministers of Education. We receive representations from the Canadian Association of University Teachers, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, and the Social Science Federation of Canada in regard to the matching-grant policy of the federal government and its impact on the humanities, and so on.

It occurred to the government that it would be useful, indeed, if all the players, not just the federal government and the provinces but the post-secondary institutions, the other interested groups and citizens could be brought together in a forum to discuss the issues. This would not be a federal-provincial conference and it need not be held under our auspices. We would be very pleased if it were to be held under the auspices of, let us say, the Council of the Ministers of Education or, indeed, some non-governmental body. It is a proposal that the Secretary of State will be discussing with his various interlocutors in the provinces and in the post-secondary education field in the weeks to come.

Senator Fairbairn: I have a supplementary question for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. I appreciate the constitutional considerations on this issue. However, I would also hope that with this strong commitment on the part of the government goes a willingness to take a leadership role in dealing with this issue with the provinces.

The one phrase which struck me in the Throne Speech was the phrase, "equality of opportunity." I would like to know whether the government is using that phrase to express its commitment not just to the equality of opportunity of students in Canada to get a post-secondary education in a financial sense but also in the sense of students being able to opt into educational systems across the provinces in an equal fashion.

Senator Murray: The government shares the preoccupation of my honourable friend, which has featured in a number of reports, as she will know, from various parliamentary committees in recent years.

Senator Fairbairn: I should like to follow directly upon that and ask the Leader of the Government the following question: In addition to the idea of a national forum, would the government, through him, not consider the recommendation in the Senate Youth Committee Report which recommended a national task force on the co-ordination of educational opportunities in this country? We envisaged in that report the provinces