

Candu Reactor Sales

The last available report of AECL was transmitted to the then minister of energy, mines and resources on June 28 of last year, so presumably we will soon be getting the more current report. In his opening remarks, the president of AECL makes reference to Canada's clear intentions to make the affairs of AECL more commercially oriented.

If one looks through the last report of AECL one sees some most interesting photographs of reactors in Argentina, of people from China looking at the Ontario Hydro facility at Pickering, of an exhibition which was organized in Switzerland where Canada is attempting to sell its technology, of visiting personages from Romania, and of the construction of a Candu nuclear generating station in Korea for the Korean Electric Company. I mention these just to illustrate that obviously we have been intent on making export sales and have been at least communicating with persons in the countries mentioned.

It appeared from the information available to us in the second half of last year that a deliberate attempt was being made to hinder any negotiations. It appeared to me that an important minister of the Crown at that time was interfering with the operations of a Crown corporation which should have been independent of government interference, to ensure that by refusing to communicate they were effectively stopping negotiations for a sale.

Let me be very clear, Mr. Speaker. In this motion I am not arguing for or against the merits of selling Candu reactors abroad. Whether we should or should not do so is for the government to decide, but I am tired at this stage of double standards. I honestly believe that we should make up our mind whether or not we are going to be in this market. I honestly believe that we have one of the best reactors that is available. I honestly believe that if we do not sell our reactors, France, West Germany or another country will sell theirs.

Although I am not making the argument in this motion for the sale of our reactors, I do believe we should have a very clear statement of what our policy will be, and we should not find ourselves in a position where a minister of the Crown appears at least to have interfered with the operations of an independent corporation to ensure that negotiations do not proceed.

Just this week, and by coincidence, representatives from Argentina were in this capital city of Ottawa. I did not meet them but they made plain to other hon. members their disenchantment with the actions of our government in making it impossible for the government of Argentina to communicate with us and do business. What I am suggesting, of course, is that we should make up our minds precisely what we want or do not want. I do not like the suggestion that a minister of the Crown can make a personal decision about the countries with which we should be doing business.

• (1710)

To make a point, I have made reference in the report to representatives from China, which would make it at least appear as if we are prepared to do business with China. That is fine by me personally, but I also ask why we have put every

single impediment in the way of doing business with Taiwan. I know we have heard two motions in the House in the last two or three days concerning the conduct of people in Taiwan, but will anyone suggest that what is happening there is any better or worse than what is happening in other countries with which we are doing business? My point is that I am very upset that we can have this double standard where we or individuals decide with what countries we shall or shall not be doing business and the basis on which that business shall be done. If we want to be holier than thou and we do not want to do business with governments of countries that do not act in the way we believe they should act, then I will accept that as policy, but it must be across the board, for all countries. I think it is unjust and unfair that we have this double standard.

It seems to me that the action last year, in appearing to stop a sale to Argentina by closing off negotiations or making it impossible for the parties to get together, is not the way in which we should be proceeding. I understand the sensitivities of the Department of External Affairs and its foreign relationships with other countries, but I think if there is one thing we in Canada can do, it is to establish a clear basis upon which we do business.

I have heard comments in the last few days about South Africa, for example. Certainly I am not here pleading any case for South Africa, but will anyone suggest that what is happening there is worse than what is happening in other countries? We do not like to talk about it because there is too much at stake either in business or in the relations between our country and that particular country.

My motion was put on the order paper not in the expectation of receiving any documents. When I put it on in the last Parliament, it was directed against the last government. I did not expect to receive the documents. Frankly I did not expect to receive them from this government either, and I understand the reasons why.

An hon. Member: Why?

Mr. Herbert: Simply because probably among those documents there are documents which are of a confidential and private nature. I am prepared to accept that explanation. However, I must direct my motion at all the documents. I have no way of putting my finger on any one direct communication. That is why I make my motion in this form.

My objection is to an apparent action of a minister of the Crown in communicating with an independent Crown corporation to ensure there will be a closing off of communications between private Canadian companies and AECL, so as to ensure that discussions dealing with the sale of equipment related to nuclear devices—and not necessarily Candu reactors themselves—should not proceed and the basis for the intervention apparently to stop the sale, in this case to Argentina. I will make it plain again. I am not pleading for the sale of Candu reactors to Argentina or to any other country, but I am pleading with the government to establish a policy which is the same for all countries and not to set up a double standard that