

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, October 27, 1971

The House met at 2 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

TABLING OF CANADIAN WILDLIFE SERVICE REPORTS ON ECOLOGICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL VALUES, SUFFIELD MILITARY RESERVE

Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 41(2) I wish to table two reports prepared by the Canadian Wildlife Service on the ecological and archaeological values of national interest in the Suffield Military Reserve in Alberta.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

DECISION BY UNITED STATES TO PROCEED WITH AMCHITKA NUCLEAR TEST

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, members of the House will be aware that the United States has just announced President Nixon's decision that the underground nuclear test at Amchitka will take place on or shortly after November 3.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Sharp: The government deeply regrets this decision and shares the widespread concern of the people of Canada as expressed in the resolution of this House of October 15.

I need not remind the House that the government has both publicly and privately made clear to the United States Canada's firm and consistent opposition to the continuation and escalation of nuclear weapons testing, and our specific concern about the threat the Amchitka test poses to the North Pacific environment that we share with them, with the Russians and the Japanese.

Our ambassador in Washington was notified of the President's decision this morning shortly before it was made public. I at once took steps to contact Mr. Rogers, the American Secretary of State, and have conveyed to him that this action on their part can only result in a deep sense of disquiet among Canadians.

The hard fact is that in the end the United States government has the legal right to carry out this test. Presumably it is doing so in accordance with what it perceives to be the national interest of the United States. We have also never suggested that this test involves a high element of risk, but no one denies that risks exist.

Canada and other nations threatened will necessarily hold the United States responsible for any short or long-term effects of this test.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the House that our specific objections to this test are wholly consistent with Canada's opposition to nuclear weapons testing of all kinds and by all nuclear powers.

• (2:10 p.m.)

Mr. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that in view of what the Secretary of State for External Affairs has just said the House will be pleased to give unanimous consent to a motion I intend to propose under Standing Order 43, if unanimous consent is granted, relative to a matter of urgent and pressing necessity, namely, today's announcement by the Atomic Energy Commission in Washington that the United States will proceed with the Amchitka nuclear test on November 3.

I move, seconded by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin):

That this House do direct the Prime Minister to undertake a personal and direct contact with the American President to express the opposition of the Parliament and the people of Canada to the Amchitka nuclear test and further—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I apologize to the Leader of the Opposition but it seems we are proceeding somewhat irregularly now. My understanding was that after the statement on motions had been made by the Secretary of State for External Affairs spokesmen for the opposition would be given the opportunity, as provided under the Standing Orders, to comment if they wished on behalf of their parties. It was my impression that the Leader of the Opposition would be doing this subject to his right of course, after these comments had been heard from the different parties, to make the motion which he is proposing. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition would take that into consideration.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I simply felt I was co-operating, as I always wish to co-operate, with the members of the government—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): We can take a joke.

Mr. Stanfield: —in presenting this motion at this time, and I hope it will receive the unanimous consent of the House.

Mr. Speaker: Before the motion can be put we have to proceed in accordance with the Standing Orders which require that representatives of the opposition parties be given an opportunity to comment on the statement made by the minister. The Chair will now recognize the hon. member for York South.