

Limiting of Foreign Ownership

all of us know the government now has control over the export of uranium to an extent that it does not have over other industries. In many ways a better case could have been made for Canadian ownership of other industries rather than uranium.

I hope that if unanimous consent could be obtained for him to do so, the minister would fill in some of the details tonight since he has raised the question tonight. There are many questions in everyone's mind concerning why he has taken this extraordinary step. The only reason that comes to mind is that this measure would be a way to escape the extra-territorial conditions which might be imposed upon our industry if United States investors who would be subject to United States law came in at a time when the government might have in mind exporting uranium to a country of which the United States might disapprove. This is the only reason I can see for such a measure.

There does not seem to be any sense in it on the ground that the government does not have any control: the government obviously has control. I do not know what type of approach should be taken in this regard, but I should like the minister to be given an opportunity to answer tonight some of the questions which arise out of his statement, because it does not deal adequately with the problem.

I am disappointed that the minister did not see fit to provide us with a copy of his statement in advance. The members of the press gallery have copies of his statement, but Members of Parliament do not. This is a most serious matter and one in which the opposition is vitally concerned. We think the minister ought to take this House into his confidence and say something further. Although this probably is an unusual procedure, I believe it to be necessary. I think he should indicate the reason the government feels it should take such an extraordinary step. I hope there will be unanimous consent of the House to the minister being granted the right tonight to explain the situation.

● (8:20 p.m.)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I was greatly astonished to hear this unexpected though important statement.

As the previous speakers, I was shocked that copies of this statement had been released to the press while opposition mem-

[Mr. Saltsman.]

bers were forgotten as usual. Tomorrow we will be able to read the minister's statement not in *Hansard*, since we will only receive it after the first sitting, but in the newspapers.

However, it would have been preferable to discuss briefly this government decision. I gather that the minister wanted to make this statement after the closing of the stock exchanges, so as to prevent speculation. But he might have trusted the opposition members and given them a copy of it.

The proposed measure designed to regulate uranium mines or production under foreign control does not seem to me to be a step in the right direction.

However, I was led to believe that the minister had left several doors open by allowing foreign interests to circumvent whatever regulations the minister or government wishes to apply.

I think we will have the opportunity of studying and analyzing that decision more thoroughly. We should therefore have the possibility of discussing this matter more fully with the minister in the very near future, perhaps before the House adjourns for the Easter recess.

[English]

Mr. Saltsman: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether you would ask the House for unanimous consent to allow the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Greene) to elaborate on the statement.

Mr. Baldwin: We would be perfectly willing to agree to that, Mr. Speaker. I suggest, however, that we are now engaged in a debate and that this would be the proper forum for the minister to speak. If the minister wants to reply, that is fine. I would be willing to allow him the time which normally would be allotted to another member of his party, if he wants to speak. However, far be it from me to urge a minister of the Crown to speak.

An hon. Member: No reaction.

Another hon. Member: He is speechless.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am prepared to recognize the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis) if the hon. lady wishes to speak now.