

Adjournment Debate

We are operating here under an act that was written in 1946. That act has not been looked at, and no one here is talking about revising that antiquated act.

The minister states further that a full investigation has been carried out, that all reports regarding the spill indicate no problem, and that extensive water samples have shown that the level of contaminants in the lake and the stream leading to the lake did not exceed limits specified in drinking water standards. The local community has some real questions about how those tests were done. They live there. They know what the ice and flow patterns are. This was done in tricky ice conditions. The people do not think it was done properly and would like to see it done again, and what would be involved in that kind of sampling.

• (1805)

Then it said:

I know that Board members met with you in Ottawa to discuss the situation. The Board recognizes that there were weaknesses—

They are going to correct them. And then they said that:

— the Board will be holding a meeting in your community to follow up on developments and to deal with other concerns.

Essentially all the board did was listen politely and announce that the mine was going to reopen with no discussion with the community at all. The community had no input into that decision that it felt had any kind of meaning whatsoever.

Then he said:

In 1978 the Bayda Commission released the results of an in-depth report of the environmental, health, safety, social and economic effects of the Cluff Lake mine and cleared the way for expansion of the uranium industry in Saskatchewan.

If I could quote from Chief Benoanie's reply to the minister, he said:

The Bayda Commission and the Key Lake Board of Inquiry did not even look at aboriginal rights, and they did not involve my people, nor deal with the already operating Rabbit Lake mine. The 300-plus page Bayda Commission report has only half a page dealing with aboriginal and treaty rights: in fact, it recommends that another inquiry deal with these issues.

Then the minister goes on to talk about an AECB inquiry. That, in fact, did not do an original research, but just pulled together a few existing facts and figures.

The minister then tries to make people feel better, and he says that if there is any future developments, and there are some being talked about, then we can have some EARP hearings.

I think the credibility of EARP hearings is well known to the people. I ask the parliamentary secretary to please reply to how these questions are going to be dealt with.

Mr. John A. MacDougall (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, since this issue was first raised in the House last February, a number of developments have occurred. I would like to review just a few of them, but I would like to table an update from more or less the first part of November 1989 through today's recent communique.

For the record, I would like to make a few points. In his letter of September 6, 1990, the minister outlined the facts surrounding the spill. He also stated that he saw no need for a public inquiry into uranium mining in northern Canada since there had already been several public inquiries on this matter, and there would be future opportunities for assessment of the new mining projects. For example, in 1978, the Bayda commission released the results of an in-depth report of the environmental, health, safety, social and economic effects of the Cluff Lake Mine.

The minister stated that the conclusions from past in-depth inquiries into uranium mining, combined with the upcoming opportunities for public input during the EARP process related to potential new uranium mining ventures, and the commitment of the AECB to open lines of communication suggest that, at this time, a further inquiry into uranium mining in northern Canada is not necessary.

On October 4, 1990, the Atomic Energy Control Board held its meeting in Wollaston Post. Three major concerns of the native population were raised: more hiring of natives by the company, implementation of a financial scheme for profit sharing with the native population, and an inquiry into uranium mining. The AECB replied that these topics were out of the scope of their mandate.