

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 24, 1955

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

THE ROYAL ASSENT

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to inform the house that I have received the following communication:

Government House,
Ottawa, 23rd March, 1955.

Sir:

I have the honour to inform you that the Honourable Patrick Kerwin, Chief Justice of Canada, acting as Deputy of His Excellency the Governor General, will proceed to the Senate chamber on Thursday, the 24th March, at 5.45 p.m., for the purpose of giving the royal assent to certain bills.

I have the honour to be,
sir,

Your obedient servant,

J. F. Delaute,
Secretary to the Governor General
(Administrative)

ATOMIC ENERGY

ANNOUNCEMENT OF PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION OF DEMONSTRATION POWER REACTOR

Right Hon. C. D. Howe (Minister of Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, on February 17, 1953, in the course of a brief report which I gave the house on the atomic energy program, I stated that the time had come to undertake the development of atomic power in this country. I stated further that since the production of power is the concern of the various commissions and power companies which distribute power in Canada, it seemed desirable that arrangements should be made whereby the power producers might participate in the future development work.

Shortly after this announcement the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario indicated its interest in participating in the program, and discussions began as to how this might be carried out most effectively. These discussions resulted in a decision to undertake a feasibility study which would have as its objective the determination of an outline specification for a power reactor.

The arrangement, which was announced on November 12, 1953, provided that Atomic Energy of Canada Limited would make available technical information and experimental facilities, and that Ontario hydro would supply the personnel for the study. Ontario hydro

also stated its intention to expend on the study up to \$100,000 a year over a two-year period. Subsequently several other utilities contributed personnel to the study group.

During the debate on the amendments to the Atomic Energy Control Act last June I advised the house that it had been decided to set up an advisory committee on atomic power, consisting of representatives of all the power commissions and power companies in Canada. The purpose of the committee was to provide a medium whereby power producers in all parts of Canada might be kept fully informed of developments in the atomic power field. The first meeting of the committee was held at Chalk River in July, at which time the power reactor program was described in detail. It was agreed that the committee would meet annually, and more frequently should the members of the committee desire.

Late in 1954 the feasibility study had advanced to the point where it was possible to consider the next step, the design, engineering and construction of a demonstration power reactor. Atomic Energy of Canada Limited has now recommended that such a reactor should be built, and the government has accepted this recommendation. The reactor will be designed to produce 20,000 kilowatts electric. Its nuclear specifications will be based, in the main, on the heavy water technology which has been developed at Chalk River in connection with the operation of the NRX reactor. While the reactor is not expected to produce power at costs competitive with hydro plants or large thermal stations, it will provide the kind of operating and cost experience which will make possible a scale-up to a large and economic power reactor.

Bearing in mind that atomic power will be used by the utilities, and that the manufacturing industry will be responsible for producing the equipment and components for power reactors, it seemed desirable that arrangements should be made for the participation in the project of a utility and further, that the detailed design, engineering and construction of the reactor should be contracted to a manufacturer.

Two utilities, the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario and the Nova Scotia Light and Power Company Limited, have made specific proposals for participation in