

Oral Questions

Hon. Ron Basford (Acting Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, may I take notice of the question. The minister met this morning with the Saskatchewan federation. I will see that the question is answered in detail tomorrow.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE—RESULTS OF DISCUSSION
WITH MR. EVENSEN OF NORWAY

Mr. Walter C. Carter (St. John's West): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs and concerns the visit to Canada of the hon. Mr. Evensen, minister without portfolio in the government of Norway, special advisor to the Law of the Sea Conference and chairman of the prestigious Evensen group which has played an important part in the discussions at the Law of the Sea Conference. Can the minister tell the House if he has met Mr. Evensen and, if so, what was the nature of his discussions with him?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, yes, I met this morning with Mr. Evensen and we discussed the progress made so far at the Law of the Sea Conference and what further progress or steps might be taken to achieve the objectives both of Norway and of Canada, each country having worked so closely with the other at the conference itself.

Mr. Carter: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister tell us if the question of Norway's intention to take unilateral action to protect its marine resources was discussed, if the Norwegian minister requested Canada's support for Norway in the event that that country takes this action and if, in turn, that minister would commit the Norwegian government to supporting Canada if and when we see fit to take unilateral action?

Mr. MacEachen: No, Mr. Speaker, there was no common search for steps in the way of hypothetical unilateral actions by either country. The discussion was broader than the question of unilateral action.

POSSIBILITY OF SOUTH KOREA AND ARGENTINA PROCURING
PLUTONIUM SEPARATION PLANTS—REQUEST FOR TABLING
OF SAFEGUARD AGREEMENT

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, may I direct my question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs? It has to do with reports to the effect that South Korea and Pakistan have been negotiating secretly with France for the purchase of plutonium separation plants, and even more serious reports saying that Argentina already has such a plant. In view of the fact that the only purpose of having a separation plant is to produce an explosive device, I want to ask the minister this question. Will he undertake to ascertain whether South Korea and Argentina have or are procuring plutonium separation plants? If their answer is in the affirmative, will he assure the House that Canadian nuclear reactors will not be sold to those two countries?

● (1430)

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the first part of the question in connection with France, we have no information respecting such transfers. However, the attitude of the French government has been frequently stated to the effect that all its transfer facilities will be properly safeguarded. On the second part of the question, I will have to make inquiries to see whether these reports have any basis in fact.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct my supplementary question to the Prime Minister. It is with regard to the speech he made yesterday to the Canadian Nuclear Association. I wish it had been the speech that was made by the Minister of the Environment. I want to ask the Prime Minister about his statement to the effect that Canada's safeguards are the toughest in the world. I therefore ask if he would be prepared to let the House and the country judge the accuracy of that statement by undertaking to table in the House a copy of the agreement, when it is completed and before Canada becomes a signatory to it.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has not indicated to which agreement he is referring. However, on the matter of safeguards, the unilateral upgrading of them has been mentioned in the House on several occasions. I believe the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has indicated in some detail what the new strengthened safeguards will be. The hon. member just has to compare them with safeguards of other countries and he will see that they are indeed stronger in Canada than elsewhere. He referred to the Minister of the Environment and expressed the hope that that minister had made a speech to the assembly along the lines, presumably, I did. I can assure him that the Minister of the Environment did make a speech yesterday, a very excellent speech.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): In view of the fact that all we have had to date have been vague and conflicting statements from various ministers as to what is going to go into the bilateral agreement which Canada proposes to enter into with countries to which it sells the CANDU reactor, and since the House has no way of judging whether these safeguards are adequate, is the government prepared to let us see a copy of the agreement prior to it being signed? The Secretary of State for External Affairs said we can see it after it is signed. That is totally unacceptable when we are dealing with something as critical as nuclear power.

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I have heard the argument made before that something was totally unacceptable, but that has been the procedure that previous governments and this government have generally followed, namely that the executive power is used in dealing with foreign governments. Of course, we are always subject to the judgment of the House that we have acted unwisely or differently. That is why the minister has my support in saying that after the agreement has been reached, we will gladly submit it to the opposition to see if it can be improved.