

Oral Questions

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

SALE OF CANDU REACTOR TO ARGENTINA—REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION OF STATEMENTS CONCERNING PROVISION IN CONTRACT FOR SUBSEQUENT NEGOTIATION OF SAFEGUARDS

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, in view of the information given the House yesterday by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, I would ask the government House leader whether he stands behind the answer he gave me on June 27? At that time I asked the minister:

Is it the position of the government that the contract for the Cordoba nuclear generating plant . . . made provision for subsequent negotiation of safeguards—

In reply the minister said:

—the answer to the first part of the question is yes, the contract is subject to a bilateral agreement on safeguards.

Later on the minister said:

I am informed there is no doubt about the fact that the fulfilment of the contract itself depends upon a bilateral agreement on adequate safeguards.

Does the minister stand behind that?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (President of the Privy Council): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I think both statements are true. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources said the contract itself had provision for safeguards. In addition, in December, 1974, the government upgraded its safeguards and the fulfilment of that contract is now subject to further negotiation of a bilateral agreement.

Mr. Baldwin: It is time you upgraded the government.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Was there any provision in that contract negotiated with Argentina in 1973 requiring subsequent negotiation of safeguards, other than the agreement to be negotiated with IAEA, to which the minister referred yesterday?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): No, Sir, that contract was just according to the then general safeguard policy of Canada, namely, the international standard. As my colleague has indicated, the additional standards for the completion of the Argentine contract have been, if you like, unilaterally imposed by Canada at a subsequent date.

Mr. Stanfield: That is right. In other words, the answer the government House leader gave me on June 27, in which he persisted today, was wrong and misleading?

Mr. Baldwin: That's not new; that is average.

Mr. Sharp: No, you are misleading the House.

[Mr. Speaker.]

SALE OF CANDU REACTOR TO ARGENTINA—DATE OF NOTIFICATION OF NEGOTIATION OF ADDITIONAL SAFEGUARDS

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): It is now very clear that the only provision relating to the contract negotiated in 1973 for the subsequent provision of safeguards was the provision in relation to negotiation with the international agency. It is very clear there was no provision for subsequent negotiation of safeguards in a bilateral agreement with Canada. I should like to ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs approximately when it was that Canada notified Argentina it was not satisfied with the safeguards negotiated in the 1973 agreement, or the provision for safeguards in that agreement, and when did Canada notify Argentina of its desire to reopen the question? Was it a few weeks ago?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): I cannot give the information from memory, Mr. Speaker, but I will check into it. I know it has been in play for sometime, certainly since the announcement made by my colleague on December 20, 1974. Subsequent to that date, we have been pursuing with the authorities of Argentina a bilateral safeguards agreement which has not yet been concluded. We hope negotiations are in their final stages.

SALE OF CANDU REACTOR TO ARGENTINA—REQUEST FOR TABLING OF NOTES EXCHANGED

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): While I am on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I might tell the Leader of the Official Opposition, with reference to the question he asked recently about the exchanges of notes between the government of Canada and the government of Argentina, that in the tabling of those notes all the notes were included, including the one I said would be tabled later.

Mr. Stanfield: And they don't amount to much.

Mr. MacEachen: It was included in the tabling at that time.

SALE OF CANDU REACTOR TO ARGENTINA—REQUEST FOR DETAILS OF SAFEGUARDS

Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham): Mr. Speaker, in view of this government's sorry record in respect of safeguards in this extremely important matter, I should like to get back to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. This seems like a very weird procedure whereby you sign a firm agreement and worry about the safeguards later. In spite of the fact that these safeguards are still under negotiation, according to the minister's colleague just now, surely we in this House and the Canadian public in general are entitled to know at this stage just what safeguards the Canadian government is seeking in respect of this Argentina project?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether I could just confirm to the hon. gentleman again that the contract entered into in 1973 was in accord with the existing safe-