

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

The words, "the study was pursued as far as we could within government circles" could mean, on the one extreme, that which the hon. member has taken from them; on the other extreme they could mean that we are doing everything possible to deal with this important subject. Undoubtedly, since the Prime Minister, according to everybody's understanding, was answering a question which should have been directed to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen), since it was that office that had been responsible for the study, the Prime Minister's answer was brief. I think we must look at it in that light.

I think we must put this construction on the answer: The Prime Minister was trying to convey the meaning that everything had been done that could be done and that everything was being done that could be done in continuing the study of this important question and that, indeed, the conflict of interest with respect to all elected representatives is an important subject, it has been treated in that way and we will continue treating it in that way.

There are immense difficulties, of course, in reducing to comprehensive legislation the rules that can eliminate all the fields of conflict of interest that can be contemplated without at the same time restricting too greatly the opportunity for all people to enter fairly into the legislative field as elected representatives. However, as difficult as that may be, I assure the hon. member that it is the desire of this government to do everything possible in that way.

In case the hon. member took from the Prime Minister's answer the impression that the work had stopped, or that the government was satisfied with the study up to that point and was not going to do anything more, I specifically want to assure him that is not the case and not the meaning the Prime Minister intended to convey. In fact, the work is continuing in a very serious vein and at a very serious level at the present time. We hope the study, research and reporting aspect will be completed fairly soon. Of course, depending on the nature of the report the government will carry on to recommend and draft legislation in line with the recommendations that will come forward. It is too early to say at this stage because the study has not yet been completed.

I again wish to assure the hon. member that the study is continuing and that the government is very much concerned about the results of the study. It has gone on at a very high level of government and on the political side as well. In conclusion, we hope the study will soon be completed and if possible, if the study so indicates, legislation will be drafted in due course.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): That is a great deal better.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS—CANADIAN-SOVIET COMMUNIQUE—EFFECT OF EXCHANGE OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL INFORMATION ON DEFENCE-SHARING ARRANGEMENTS WITH UNITED STATES

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): Mr. Speaker, I am a little curious about who is to respond. I had hoped for the minister's presence or at least the presence of his parliamentary secretary. My question arises out of the most recent agreements of exchange with

the U.S.S.R. If I can set the premise which brings me here this evening, I can do this best by repeating the question that I asked in the House the other day. In the absence of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) I directed the question to the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Macdonald). It related to the Canadian-Soviet communiqué released the other day in which there were at least six, and possibly seven different references to an increase in the level of exchange of scientific and technological information with our allies. The specific question was as follows:

Is the minister satisfied that such an extended level of exchange of this type of information will not impair our capacity to remain within the defence-sharing arrangement with the United States?

The minister replied:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am satisfied that it has not been impaired in any way.

I asked a supplementary based on the same levels of exchange of information as outlined in the protocol with the Soviets. I asked whether this would hold true with respect to the level at which we exchange particular scientific and military information with our allies in the United States. The minister replied:

Mr. Speaker, it is a little difficult to measure that exactly, although the level of exchange at the moment is very high.

My concern is with the defence production arrangement with the United States which now provides Canadians with in excess of 110,000 jobs. This is meaningful. There is a very apparent sentiment in Canada today which leads many Canadians to believe that this government has deliberately extended, lengthened or plotted the pipelines of exchange of information with the United States to the point where these two points are in jeopardy: first, the willingness of the United States to remain in the defence production-sharing arrangement with the people of Canada; second, and even put hypothetically, their preparedness to remain in this program with us that will result in a downgrading of the level at which they permit an exchange of scientific and technological information with us.

• (11:10 p.m.)

To illustrate the seriousness of this question I cite one or two other points. First, it is interesting to note that Canadian military and scientific people have received no direct output from such scientific sectors or "think tanks" as the Rand Corporation, for example. I mention this because it is startling and specific and because it highlights the degree to which those involved in science and technology of defence production and defence planning feel that relations between Canada and the United States have deteriorated in recent years.

The question must be faced by the government in light of related economic difficulties. I would welcome from the parliamentary secretary an answer which is a little more frank and forthright than the response given by the minister which indicated that the level at which we exchange technical and scientific information remains very high. I think this is nonsense. The minister was probably carried away by the events of that week, having just returned to the House after seeing Mr. Kosygin off to Cuba. Possibly he was not fully cognizant of the response he gave to the question. To back up this assertion, and in