

Eldorado Nuclear Limited

Mr. Riis: Madam Speaker, this is getting exciting. I am hearing many thoughtful questions about why the Government has not lived up to its commitment.

I think it is appropriate to say that the Government has failed in living up to this particular commitment. It has not conducted an inquiry into the nuclear fuel cycle. That was a promise made by the Prime Minister, the present Minister of Transport (Mr. Bouchard) and my friend from Mission—Port Moody on a number of occasions. However, because of the Government's unwillingness to proceed at this point, we have had to conduct our own inquiry.

Once again, the New Democrats felt that someone had to do this inquiry. We do not have the resources the Government has, but it is too important to set aside so, with limited resources, we held our own inquiry. We held public hearings across Canada. We talked to the experts and the people interested in the issue. If my memory serves me correctly, within a few weeks the reporting process will be completed and I hope we will have a chance on an opposition day to present our views, our findings and our recommendations to the Government on the future policy direction for the nuclear industry of Canada.

Mr. Skelly: Madam Speaker, I have a further small question for my colleague from Kamloops—Shuswap. It is my understanding that when the Conservative Government sold Teleglobe Canada, there were some very serious concerns about the way that particular government operation was sold. I wonder if the inquiry launched by Consumer and Corporate Affairs into the propriety of the sale of Teleglobe Canada should not be issued to the public and to the House before we launch into another divestiture of a Crown corporation. In this way, some of the problems that occurred in that divestiture that I am sure would be brought to light if the report were to be released could be avoided when dealing with this one. I wonder if my colleague has any comments about the Government releasing that report before the House goes ahead with this venture.

Mr. Riis: Madam Speaker, I think it would be appropriate for a whole set of reasons. Without going into those reasons, I would simply refer to the fact that one of the major players in the uranium business has been Denison Mines. Mr. Paul McKay, in a very special report in *The Globe and Mail* of April 9, 1988, had this to say:

Medical records and royal commissions have shown that a pathetic army of the miners Mr. Roman employed at his uranium mines in Elliot Lake, Ont., have gone to their own early graves because their lungs were needlessly poisoned with radioactivity and mine dusts.

The late Mr. Roman used to head up Denison Mines. The article goes on but because of the time, I will not have a chance to comment on pages and pages of these reports indicating the very serious dangers those people involved in the mining industry face. For that reason if for no other, more effort should be made to inquire into the propriety of turning this company over to private interests now.

• (1710)

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview—Greenwood): Madam Speaker, I cannot say I am pleased to be rising to speak on Bill C-121. Certainly we do not want to see this Bill before the House at all. I guess I am more pleased to be speaking on the proposal to suspend a decision on this Bill for six months in order to look at the whole question more thoroughly.

While we have to look at the question of privatization, we have first of all to look at what kind of industry this is. After all, Eldorado is not producing popcorn. It mines and processes uranium. That, of course, is a very dangerous product for which we have as yet no safe means of disposal. That alone is reason enough not to proceed with this industry. The question of whether it should be a public or private industry should be addressed if we are going to have such an industry at all. However, I suggest the more fundamental question is why should we be pursuing this means of energy production when there are so many better and safer forms, forms which would create more jobs and not pollute the environment. We should be exploring those options and not the question of whether we want our uranium in private or public hands.

Frankly, if I thought we would be able to get rid of this harmful industry by privatizing it, if I thought the terrific liability entailed in uranium mining and processing, and in nuclear facilities, would be ended, I would be happy to see it privatized. We are only beginning to count the cost of the harm this industry has caused because it is of course a very complex matter. How do we develop the figures on the mortality rates, the diseases that normally take a very long time to develop? We are talking about leukemia and other forms of cancer. We are talking about birth defects which are the result of exposure to radiation, including low level radiation. All we have are estimates.

When we have instances of sudden death from a product, whether it is some kind of toxic poisoning or some accident, we have very firm figures. The House is quick to act when that happens. I am thinking of the mollusc poisonings when a couple of Canadians died. There was a terrific outcry, as of course was only proper. When a couple of people are killed by toxic poisonings of this sort there should be an outcry. However, why is there not more of an outcry when thousands of people are harmed, sickened or who die prematurely after exposure to low level radiation from the various stages of uranium mining, processing and the use of nuclear facilities?

The Standing Committee on the Environment and Forestry conducted a study of the disposal of high level radioactive wastes. As a result, the committee recommended there be a moratorium on nuclear facilities until a safe means of disposal became available. Some members of the committee thought a safe means of disposal was almost around the corner or would be discovered in time. They were more optimistic than I am that we are going to find a safe means of disposal for high level radioactive wastes. However, it was nonetheless unanimous