

Nuclear Liability

liability in the event of an accident in these reactors that is not due to gross negligence or wilful default of a senior officer of the operator. The one operating reactor not owned by AECL is a research reactor at McMaster University. Under an existing arrangement, it is indemnified by AECL against liability for claims in excess of \$500,000 for which amount the university is required to carry insurance. This arrangement would be superseded by the application of this legislation. It is anticipated that the cost to the university would, if anything, be lower under this bill.

The bill provides that it shall not affect the operation of such things as employees' compensation, health and other insurance, and pension plans. Since the bill was introduced and received first reading in November last, it has been widely circulated among scientists, utilities and others concerned. To date, comments have indicated that the general principles of the bill are acceptable.

Mr. Speaker, as we move the bill to the Committee on National Resources and Public Works the committee will have an opportunity to examine some of the technicalities—basically I would say that the bill is a technical bill—and to provide assurances to the Canadian public that in the unlikely event of a catastrophe in the field of nuclear science there would be protection for the people of this country.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I should like to pay tribute to the chairman of the Atomic Energy Control Board, Dr. Lawrence, and the former and still active legal adviser, Mr. Jarvis. Both gentlemen have been involved in the business of controlling and policing atomic energy uses in Canada. They have made a great contribution and I believe that we, as a Parliament, should recognize their contribution to our country.

Mr. Louis-Roland Comeau (South Western Nova): Mankind stands on the threshold of a new era. He is harnessing the greatest power known to man and beginning to turn it to his peaceful purposes. The potential peaceful purposes of nuclear power are immense. Indeed, the ultimate potential probably lies beyond man's limited imagination. Certainly, the most important of the present prospects is the generation of electricity.

The second half of the 1960's marks the time when the use of nuclear energy for the generation of electricity became a commercial reality after more than 20 years of research and development. In this achievement, Canada has been one of the pioneers. We owe a great

debt to our scientists, researchers and nuclear administrators. Our dependence on nuclear energy for our supply of electricity is bound to increase. A recent study by the National Energy Board projected our energy demands to 1990. That demand will grow by over 6 per cent annually and it is forecast that nuclear installations will soon be providing about one-third of that requirement.

This harnessing of nuclear power is a double boon for mankind. The western world has suddenly awakened with a dreadful start to the pollution and corruption of its environment. Nuclear power will represent a positive step toward the control of air pollution since, unlike power stations using fossil fuels, they emit no fumes into the atmosphere. In fact, most industrial applications of nuclear energy cause little or no contamination of the environment. We will have to become very careful of what is being called thermal pollution. This is a general problem with thermal power stations but there appears to be a bigger threat from nuclear stations because of the greater heat discharge. When water drawn from adjacent rivers or lakes for cooling purposes is returned, it may disrupt the total ecology of aquatic life. We will have progressed very little, Mr. Speaker, if we simply stop killing our fish with phosphates to start killing them with heat.

However, mankind should be thankful that the advent of the peaceful use of nuclear energy is giving man another chance to come to a peaceful reconciliation with his environment. It is an opportunity we cannot afford to miss.

Nuclear power can be a great benefit to Canadians. Our first nuclear power station began producing in 1962 at Chalk River. Expansion has continued since then: Douglas Point on Lake Huron, Pickering, the Bruce plant at Douglas Point, Gentilly—these are the names of Canada's nuclear record. We have met numerable technological problems. Basic decisions have to be made with regard to the future orientation of our peaceful nuclear energy program. But today is not a time to dwell on these matters, however important they may be. The use of nuclear energy is spreading rapidly in our industries and universities. Transportation is another area of potential nuclear development.

● (2:20 p.m.)

The bill before us today, which I am sure will receive support from all parts of this House, relates to an important matter which I

[Mr. Orange.]