

Oral Questions

[Translation]

NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL**REPRESENTATIONS CONCERNING ALLEGED INJUSTICE TOWARD RESEARCH WORKERS**

Mr. Léonel Beaudoin (Richmond): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the minister in charge of science and technology.

Today's *Le Devoir* reports statements made by Mr. Brian Gregory who spoke on behalf of the National Institute for Scientific Research in the University of Quebec. The newspaper article denounces discrimination against Quebec research workers who do not receive their fair share of research funding. For example if one considers priority fields such as energy, Quebec research workers have received only 12 per cent of the grants, yet they represent 48 per cent of all Canadian research workers in that field. So I would like to ask the minister whether he has received representations about this injustice which is reported in today's *Le Devoir*.

[English]

Hon. Judd Buchanan (Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I have not received such representation. However, I will be happy to look into the figures drawn to my attention by the hon. member and report back to him.

[Translation]

Mr. Beaudoin: Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a supplementary question.

Mr. Gregory stated that Ontario was generously rewarded with research grants but several other provinces that had applied for grants had not been successful. Will the minister inquire about this matter so that the provinces which have research staff in their universities may get their fair share?

[English]

Mr. Buchanan: Mr. Speaker, these grants, basically, are made through universities. There is an evaluation process which they go through. We do not, in fact, do it within the department; it is done by a group primarily made up of academics who assess the various projects which are proposed. As I said earlier, I will be happy to look into the representations.

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SMALL BUSINESSES**MEASURES TO PREVENT FAILURES**

Mr. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State (Small Business). In view of the fact that figures which were compiled by Dun and Bradstreet of Canada show that business failures in 1977 increased by over 38 per cent compared with the figure for the year before—an increase of 1,155—can the

[Mr. Horner.]

minister confirm to the House that the vast preponderance of business failures taking place in Canada today are taking place in the small business section? Also, can he tell the House whether he and his colleagues are prepared to put before parliament a comprehensive program which would give small businessmen the break they need if they are to survive in Canada today?

● (1432)

Hon. A. C. Abbott (Minister of State (Small Business)): Mr. Speaker, in partial answer to the hon. member's question, since the vast preponderance of businesses in Canada are small, necessarily the highest proportion of failures will occur in that sector. We have a number of programs that are very helpful to small business, and more are in the planning stage. There is our tax system and the various other programs.

I would point out that the same organization, Dun and Bradstreet, indicates that the principal cause of 90 per cent of the business failures is management problems. Therefore, we have very strong belief in the CASE program which is offered by the FDBD, employing some 2,000 consultants to help small businessmen, at low cost.

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, that is typical of this government. Just as they would blame the unemployed for unemployment, they blame Canada's small businessmen for the failures of the government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Beatty: I want to know from this complacent minister whether he and his officials have attempted to compile figures for the first quarter of this year. Can he confirm reports published in the press which indicate that the failure among businesses in Canada has actually accelerated in the first quarter of this year over last year?

Mr. Abbott: Mr. Speaker, I am not blaming small business. Since there are one million small businesses, some 400,000 incorporated small businesses, if there is a substantial number of business failures they obviously have to be drawn largely from that sector. The point I am making is that we recognize 1977 and 1978 have been difficult years. We are distressed by the number of business failures. We do have figures compiled. I would not differ with the figures the hon. member has cited, but I would like to examine them.

Mr. Beatty: The minister is attempting to pass the buck. When will this government be placing before parliament new proposals which will give a break to the small business sector? The minister acknowledges that the trend accelerated in the first quarter of 1978. When will the minister be prepared to take action and place a program before parliament?

Mr. Abbott: Mr. Speaker, we have a number of programs and I am hopeful we will be producing more.