

The Address—Mr. Aiken

The house and the country must have a statement immediately on the future of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited. There is a feeling that the decision to cancel ING marks the end of our lead in pure research in the atomic energy field. There is the feeling among scientists, particularly in Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, that this project was one of those things which would maintain our impetus in the world of science and which would keep Atomic Energy of Canada Limited going forward.

There is the feeling that cancellation of this project has marked the beginning of the end for the effective work that Atomic Energy of Canada Limited has been doing for so many years. There is this feeling, and I think the minister ought to immediately take the opportunity of assuring us and them that the government has other projects of a higher priority within the scientific field to take their place.

The decision to cancel the ING project seems to have been irrevocable. It is a decision requiring Atomic Energy of Canada Limited to discontinue its work on this project. The government should let the house and the country know what its policy is with regard to the satellite communications system. The caucus committee on energy, mines and resources of the Progressive Conservative party made a trip to Chalk River in March just before the house adjourned. The members of that committee went there to have a look at this ING project to see what its possibilities were, to find out as laymen at least what benefit it would be to the country and what the alternatives were.

We understood there were several projects in the wind and that the government intended shortly to make a decision with regard to the priorities involved. We also understood that the satellite communications program might take a priority over this ING project, but that it would not be abandoned.

We have heard nothing from the minister today or over the week end concerning the future of the other project. Is the government going ahead with the satellite communications program which seemed to be an alternative to Atomic Energy's ING project? I cannot emphasize too strongly the gravity of the situation. The feeling must not be allowed to catch on that the government regards scientific projects as scapegoats for overspending in other areas. To date, we have seen nothing

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but a negative attitude. We have the cancellation of programs already begun and no indication of what new projects are to be started.

I believe that the government is taking too lightly the corrosive effect of the decision on the scientific and university community, because there is this feeling—and once it starts to develop it will be difficult to stop—that the country is no longer interested in maintaining the advances it has held in the scientific field since the end of the second war.

Above all, the government must act at once with a clear statement of policy that will reassure the scientific community, the universities and industry, that scientific progress does indeed have the priority it deserves in the policy planning of the government. Surely, the minister and the government do not need to be convinced of the importance of such a statement.

I should like to refer the minister to the fifth annual review of the Economic Council of Canada under the title "Strengthening the Country's Indigenous Effort":

Canada cannot rely entirely on imported technology; there must be a strengthening of the country's own capabilities. Without a strong and indigenous effort, a country cannot attract and hold the scientific and technical manpower which permits it to adapt and exploit technologies originating abroad, or which it needs to train its future supply of scientists and engineers.

Again, I quote:

Canada must maintain a high potential for technological change by ensuring that there is an adequate supply of scientific and technical manpower to serve as a basic source of invention and innovation.

What all this means is that if the government and the parliament of Canada appear to be taking an indifferent attitude toward science, scientific research and progress in this country, we will lose our scientists and research will be retarded. We will jeopardize any hope for the development of a true Canadian technology.

Mr. Speaker, I see it is six o'clock. May I call it six o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: It being six o'clock, I will now leave the chair until eight o'clock this evening.

At six o'clock the house took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The house resumed at 8 p.m.

Mr. Aiken: Mr. Speaker, at six o'clock I was berating the government for the secrecy