

fact that it is still being challenged deserves more than a brief mention. This concluding chapter of the Committee's critical review of Canadian science policy is therefore devoted to an examination of these two minority views. In it we endeavour to show that they are incomplete and incapable of leading to a balanced national R&D effort.

THE REPUBLIC OF SCIENCE

Some scientists are still proposing that they should be left completely free to determine their activities and their projects. They want more public support, and to that limited extent they accept the idea of a policy for science, but they reject the attempt to mobilize science as a tool for policy.

In his article on "The Republic of Science" published in the first issue of *Minerva*, Michael Polanyi has developed the most articulate arguments in favour of leaving science free to operate as a self-regulating system. He argues that science should be left to whatever co-ordination scientists may choose to impose on their activities. His central thesis is summarized in this comment:

So long as each scientist keeps making the best contribution of which he is capable, and on which no one can improve, we may affirm that the pursuit of science by independent self-co-ordinated initiatives assure the most efficient possible organization of scientific progress. And we may add, again, that any authority which would undertake to direct the work of the scientist centrally would bring the progress of science virtually to a standstill. . . . I appreciate the generous sentiments which actuate the aspiration of guiding the progress of science into socially beneficent channels, but I hold its aim to be impossible and nonsensical. . . . Any attempt at guiding scientific research towards a purpose other than its own is an attempt to deflect it from the advancement of science.²

In its purest and most elaborate form, this approach suggests that the scientist should be free to select his research projects and should receive the funds to carry them out, provided that they have been found by his peers to have scientific merit. In other words, this doctrine holds that the scientific community—or, in the economist's language, the suppliers of research—should determine the level and distribution of scientific activities, thus applying to science a classical law of markets, that supply creates its own demand.³

In Canada, the Republic of Science is as old as the first attempt to build a science policy. Its ideal had obviously been reached when Dr. E. W. R. Steacie, then president of the National Research Council, could say (as he