

Oral Questions

Hon. William C. Winegard (Minister for Science): Mr. Speaker, I think my hon. colleague makes the same mistake that many others do: if you cannot build it up in an government institution, then it does not count. There are many things that NRC does that could be done equally as well outside NRC. There are many things that NRC has been doing over the past 30 years that can best be done some place else. That is exactly what they are looking at.

I am amazed that the opposition does not want to see the National Research Council look at its future in terms of the reality of the present, but then it has never been one to face reality.

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the minister's problem is that we understand and all of Canada understands what is going on in terms of science policy in this government. In fact, what he sees in the future is a past which is a good deal lesser in terms of expenditures and resources provided to NRC.

The new five-year plan proposes "—a limited amount of basic research at NRC". We already know that basic research funding in the universities has been suffering significantly. Where is it going to transfer it to? To save money at NRC—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. minister.

Hon. William C. Winegard (Minister for Science): Again, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member does not realize that the funding for the granting councils has gone up this year. The funding for the university research granting councils was one of the things that went up as they were supposed to. They are up 8.6 per cent this coming year. They have gone up every year since the government came into power. They will continue to be treated well on the research front.

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[*Translation*]

MEECH LAKE ACCORD

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister, but in his absence, I shall direct it to the Deputy Prime Minister.

Last Friday, we saw the good will of the House to the Meech Lake Accord. The Prime Minister said last week that there was nothing more he could do to save the

Meech Lake Accord, and the Premier of Newfoundland, Clyde Wells, said that after consultations, he had discovered that there were no consultations, contrary to what the Deputy Prime Minister told us last Friday. I would therefore like to know whether the Prime Minister is doing something to save the Meech Lake Accord. If not, is he now prepared to enter into consultations and to schedule a meeting with all his fellow first ministers to try to save the Meech Lake Accord?

• (1430)

[*English*]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the House on Friday, the Prime Minister, Senator Murray and indeed federal officials are working very hard on this particular issue. There is serious work that is going on.

I indicated last Friday that until such time as there appeared to be some move toward greater consensus among the divergent views of the three opposing provinces it would seem rather untimely to bring all the ministers together under the auspices of a First Ministers' Conference. That has certainly not been ruled out. It was not ruled out on Friday, and it is not ruled out today.

We hope that during the course of the discussions which will be ongoing that progress will be made. If sufficient progress is made that would result in bringing about a greater degree of consensus, to the point that perhaps it would be useful to bring all the ministers together in a formalized way, that is certainly a matter that is being considered.

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, it seems that the Deputy Prime Minister is being contradicted by the Prime Minister himself, who said last week that he had done everything that he could and that there was nothing further that he could do. The Deputy Prime Minister is saying that there are consultations going on.

Can he assure us that in spite of what the Prime Minister said last week he is in fact leading these discussions and he is prepared to call his colleagues, the first ministers, together to try to save Lake Meech? To us it looks as if the Prime Minister is waiting to create a crisis or until a crisis emerges, and we do not want that to be the case.