

*Government Orders*

program of scholarships for promising young Canadian students.

What we have here is an attempt by this government to dismantle, in effect, the National Research Council. The work has been going on in an insidious and carefully manoeuvred way to make it appear that, in fact, nothing is changing. I suggest that it is changing, and all for the worst.

I want to turn to the Prime Minister's comments on this. He has made statements about the government's promises and his hopes for scientific research in Canada. I quote from a statement he made at the University of Waterloo, March 4, 1987: "We are determined that excellence and relevance are the guiding principles for managing our government laboratories. For some years, I have been speaking and writing about the urgent and pressing necessity of increasing our national commitment to R and D, not only in the amounts we spend, but in the way we spend, such as using procurement of our government labs and for greater national support for university research. We cannot be satisfied with what we have accomplished".

Those are his words. They are certainly true. He might have said that most Canadians are grossly dissatisfied with what this government has accomplished.

In support of that, let us take a look at the figures. In the 1984-1985 financial year, the last year the Liberals were in office and it is the year that my Conservative friends hark back to every time as the worst year imaginable. The National Research Council, according to the National Council of Canada, spent \$480 million. In this year's Estimates, the 1990-1991 Estimates, the total allowed to the National Research Council is \$433 million. That is not only a matter of reduction in the increase in rate, that is an absolute cut in the money available to the National Research Council over a five-year period, five years of cuts by this government in what can only be regarded as one of the jewels in Canada's scientific crown.

Let us look at some of the other things that have gone on in the council. In the good old days, a group of people were appointed to head the National Research Council, and it was made up of a relatively independent group of distinguished men and women, at least half of whom were generally academics, scientists and persons with scientific knowledge of considerable distinction and repute in Canada. Under this government there has

been a shift in the kinds of appointments made to the council. Sixty per cent of the current members are composed of businessmen. It reflects the government's obsession with the bottom line and its unwillingness to consider the importance of scientific research in and of itself and for its own value. I submit that the presence of this particular group on the council is influencing the tenor of scientific research in Canada. It is changing from being pure science to applied research, research which is of interest to a certain group but of no interest to other groups.

• (1400)

In support of that let us look at the recent letter from the president of the National Research Council, Dr. Perron. He said in this letter to the employees dated February 15 of this year:

However, I believe that, even with new resources, we would have an unavoidable obligation to review our activities with a critical eye to scientific merit, relevance to Canada's needs, and to whether NRC is the best place for these activities.

Let us look at those three things. First, a critical eye to scientific merit. Who is putting the critical eye on it? This new board of businessmen. Second, relevance to Canada's needs. From whose perspective? The businessman's perspective, not the scientist's. Third, whether NRC is the best place for these activities. Well, Mr. Speaker, if you had your own lab operating in your own plant and you could get government funding for the lab, would you not rather have the research done there? That is exactly the kind of question that is being faced by the council of the NRC. They have stacked the deck, I suggest, in a way that is unfair to the scientific community of this country.

My colleagues have mentioned the results of what has been going on because of these changes, and I suggest that it is not surprising, given the attitude of the National Research Council as exemplified in this letter. The president's letter continued:

Excellence is essential for all our programs, but excellence is not enough. Our research must also be relevant and mesh well with other NRC activities.

Having made those statements, the embarrassment of having them challenged by other members of the National Research Council, employees, and scientists who are working there was too much. So, an additional memo came out which tells the members of the National Research Council to keep quiet. They were not supposed to talk about it. On February 22, there was a memo to all