

mere supplier of funds, in the expectation and hope that scientists in universities in choosing their research projects will adjust their own objectives with what ought to be the national interest. I would like you to comment on this question if it is not too general.

Mr. Boucher: It certainly is not our intention to imply that this is a responsibility which lies exclusively with the research community. I think we wanted to say that the research community has to be involved in the elaboration of any such policy. When people talk about a science policy, it is very hard to know exactly what it is they have in mind or what a science policy is expected to deal with. To take the critical point of whether a science policy ought to set up a list of priority areas which would be privileged, I think that we would say in the Council that this cannot be arrived at in any effective way without involving the research community, because it is the test of a priority list that it can be enforced, and the test of whether it can be enforced is whether you can really rule out from support things that don't fall in the list. We know from long experience that when you have a first class application from an exceptional scholar funds will be found to support that application whether or not it comes within a defined list of priorities. Therefore, what purpose does a list of priorities serve? It serves to indicate areas of concerns. If it is to be established by governments, it is likely to reflect areas of social concern. But those are not necessarily areas of scientific concern. Governments may encourage research for different purposes; they may encourage research because they believe that scientists must be kept here at home, engaged in their most creative endeavour and supported in that activity; or they may think that what scientists do is useful to governments, or they may turn questions over to scientists. On the other hand governments may also support research in order to provide a process of public education; this has been largely the role of the B. & B. Commission. But it does happen also that governments support research in order to breathe before taking action. There is nothing really wrong with that but there may be areas which are of real social significance and may well be of no real scientific significance. Nobody has

really established that the problem of pollution requires a great deal more scientific investigation but it obviously requires a great deal of public education, and the decisions are difficult to take. But there may be a temptation on the part of governments to equate complicated social problems where political decisions are difficult with particularly promising areas of research.

These two things do not necessarily follow. This is not saying that scientists should not be engaged in assisting governments in sorting out priorities. What we are saying is that scientists themselves must be involved in this question ultimately. The more significant research will be the one that is scientifically meaningful rather than the one that is just socially meaningful. Therefore we are only urging that the social scientists themselves come together, that they start discussing what it is they are doing, that they compare notes and that they try to understand what they have achieved and where they have failed, if they have failed, both scientifically and socially. But they must be involved in this process and governments must watch this and they must intervene when it comes to setting up levels at which public funds are going to be disbursed. But I think if this exercise were really well conducted, the Government might well have little direction to give to a scientific community that would really be quite aware of its achievements and failures as it went along. I think that very largely scientists are capable of self coordinating their own work and that co-ordination from above, if it comes without having given the research community a chance to tackle this problem, might be highly resented and turn out to be ineffective.

The Chairman: I agree that if we want to have a global science policy, we need free research where the researcher chooses his own topic and gets assistance if, when making an application to the Canada Council, it is found that his project has merits and if there is sufficient money.

In addition, however, it seems to me that if we want to have an overall science policy in the field of the social sciences we must also have a sector where we would do oriented research, where specific areas would be defined beforehand and where assistance would be offered within that general framework.