

Science Council of Canada

Mr. A. B. Patterson (Fraser Valley): My hon. friend from Okanagan-Revelstoke was supposed to speak on this subject on behalf of the Social Credit party, but the Committee on Broadcasting, Films and Assistance to the Arts, is sitting at the present time and he is a member of that committee. It is therefore my responsibility to pinch hit for him tonight and make a few brief observations on this measure.

I do not consider myself qualified to make any profound contribution to the debate on this question but I venture to suggest that all members and possibly all Canadians are concerned with this matter of scientific research and development. The world is moving rapidly along this particular road and we must make sure that Canada maintains its place in the onward march.

It has been pointed out that Canada is losing a great many well qualified individuals who are moving to other parts of the world, particularly to the United States, because of the lack of adequate facilities, opportunities and remuneration here. This is a matter of real concern. We are constantly reading articles in magazines, newspapers and various periodicals drawing attention to the disastrous effect this process will ultimately have on Canada and its place in the world. Because of this we are happy to support the establishment of the Science Council as indicated in the measure before us.

However, I should like to refer to a difficulty to which attention has already been drawn—the proliferation of agencies and departments of government which are presently engaged in various pursuits which closely parallel the contemplated work of the Science Council. I believe the minister when introducing this measure said that in some way the work of the Council would parallel part of the work of the Economic Council. We hope, therefore, that in working out the programs which will result in the establishment of this agency steps will be taken to ensure that there will be no unnecessary overlapping of activity or work as between these two bodies or other bodies working in the research field.

We all recognize the valuable work which is being done in the field of research by our universities and by private industry. We look to this Science Council to become an agency which will not only promote projects and research studies but serve as a repository for information and data which are fed to it by other agencies working in this field.

• (9:10 p.m.)

I believe it essential that priorities be established for the work of the council. It will not do for it to start off in a haphazard manner and shoot off in every direction. Close attention will have to be given to the immediate, pressing needs of our nation and economy in order that they receive prior consideration.

In another context it has been pointed out that in meeting the social and economic needs of the people of Canada we must establish priorities, recognizing the fact that capital is somewhat limited and is not sufficient to meet the challenge in every field of activity and endeavour. I believe the same principle obtains in the area of science.

Just as an aside, Mr. Speaker, an hon. member, a friend of mine, made a suggestion a few minutes ago that in view of the fact development in the fields of science and research will cost so much money, one of the first projects to which the council should give attention is research into the science of finance. Even though he is not a member of the party to which I belong, he suggested it might be advisable and profitable to have research into the Social Credit financial philosophy and proposals. We believe that the adoption and implementation of our financial proposals would give the treasury of our country a certain amount of capital which could assist the development of a science program—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure the hon. member for Fraser Valley (Mr. Patterson) expects me to intervene to remind him that the house is considering the establishment of the Science Council of Canada and this has very little to do, so far as I can judge, with Social Credit science, as the hon. gentleman calls it. I would suggest he revert to the subject matter at hand.

Mr. Patterson: With all due deference and respect, Mr. Speaker, we are talking about how to finance scientific research and development programs. This is one of the problems with which the council will be faced. Therefore, with all respect and sincerity, I submit that what I have suggested would contribute to quite an extent to the meeting of that problem and provide the finance that is necessary to move forward in these fields. I appreciate your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, and with these few remarks will conclude my contribution to this debate.