

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Madam Speaker, this debate has been rather interesting until now. I do not know whether—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

An hon. member: Do your best, Howard.

Mr. McCurdy: It has been interesting in the absence of any new light being shed on the issue of research and development and technology and its importance to Canadians.

I do not know how we could have any significant difference of opinion on what is not trivial but certainly beginning to be trite. The motion states:

That this House recognize that Research and Development, the resulting innovation, are the lifeblood of a successful economy and country and that Canada must increase its level of Research and Development in order to ensure economic growth in an increasingly competitive and technologically literate global community.

My God, we all must have heard this a thousand times in a thousand speeches given by a thousand politicians right across the land, not one of whom contributed one thing to the advancement of research and development or science in the country, including the Prime Minister.

I was tremendously enthralled by the speech by my hon. colleague for Windsor West, the Leader of the Official Opposition. He quoted and elaborated upon the quote from the present Prime Minister. As you will recall, Madam Speaker, in questioning him I wondered why the hon. member did not reflect on other contents of the 1983 book entitled *Where I Stand*. The Prime Minister said the following, and I did not hear the Leader of the Official Opposition dispute this: "In 1968, when Pierre Elliott Trudeau became Prime Minister, we were spending 1.4 per cent of the Gross National Product in this vital job-productive area of research and development."

It turns out that in 1985, the first full year of this government's existence, it was 1.4 per cent as well. Subsequently, for a decade we spent only 0.9 per cent. That is 0.9 per cent of our Gross Domestic Product on research. In the last two years, we have spent 1.13 per cent.

I raise that because, until I came into this place, I was a scientist who struggled as other scientists in the country did to keep together our laboratories and to pursue

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research that could be by any measure considered significant or world class, at a time when we were constantly faced with the prospect that next year would mean there would be no funding. At no stage were we given the opportunity to know that five years down the pike we would still have money to fund the research in the universities. I understand that that is a restricted area. The fact is that we have had something like three decades of the most horrifically stupid absence of any kind of research and development science support policy in the country, on the part of the previous government as well as the present. But I am prepared to concede more to this government than to the previous government in terms of the directions it has chosen to enhance science and research and development in the country.

The Leader of the Official Opposition said: "We are not interested in all that history. We are interested in the here and now." One of the most significant problems in enhancing research and development and science in the country is that we have developed a culture which has not been improved by politicians. It says that science and research and development are not nearly as important as a whole lot of other things in our society and that somehow we are always going to manage to survive on the basis of exploitation of our resources and so on.

Maybe it would be useful, rather than reiterating the usual stuff, to begin by describing in just a little detail what it is we are talking about and what is at stake, not in terms of what may appear to be some kind of arcane debate on an arcane subject, but relating this to the ordinary people out there who are presumably listening to this debate.

The reality is that our economy must undergo a substantial change, a very significant change, and a historic change. This country has been proud of its forests, its fisheries, its minerals, and all of the resources which we have been able to sell, and sell at a good price. Through those sales we have sustained a good economy and a country in which social democracy and social justice have been funded by the earnings of that exchange of goods, based on resources.

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The reality now is that with respect to energy resources we are going to have to find some other alternatives besides those products, for example, that are