

*Space Agency*

[*Translation*]

Canada must realize how important engineering science and technology are if we want to be competitive on the world market.

[*English*]

The reality facing Canada today is that we cannot continue merely to rely on the exploitation of our natural resources if we are to maintain our standard of living. In a world in which sustainable development has become a global imperative, in which the continued burning of fossil fuels endangers our health and well-being, we must change our way of thinking and our understanding of economic development in the context of impending environmental crisis.

We have grown up believing that our natural resources are unlimited, that our wealth and standard of living is assured. This is simply not true. Our natural resources are limited in supply and the world demand for them is changing as more and more people consider a clean and healthy environment to be the most important natural resource of all.

The question we must now ask ourselves is: Are we prepared to invest in realizing the potential of Canada's most important resource, its people? The natural wealth that we have enjoyed has inhibited an appreciation of the necessity of investing in people, in education, and in skills in innovative technologies. All we need to do is look around us to understand the importance of science, engineering, technology, and advanced education, whether it be the now common use of a personal computer, the production of information technologies, or the fusing of two atoms to create energy.

Canada is being dragged, however reluctantly, into the 21st century. Whether or not we like it, we are engaged in a world-wide race for technological leadership, a race that is daily being intensified by international trading competitiveness characterized by the rapid and, in historic terms, relatively easy flow of goods and services between nations. With regard to the explosion of information technologies wealth is no longer simply a matter of control of durable goods. Just as brains over brawn has characterized human evolution, so will the innovative use of knowledge prevail over the mining of wealth and the production of goods over the next century.

The activities of transnational corporations, multinational trading companies, and international financial institutions, these corporate entities with the ability to move capital rapidly between nations, limit significantly the ability of nation states to control matters within their own jurisdictions.

As far as the involvement of national Governments in major technological enterprise is concerned, the United States through defence procurement has created the greatest industrial boondoggle in the history of the world. In Canada, we have the recent example of the proposed acquisition of Connaught Laboratories by Institut Merieux, a corporation controlled by the Government of France.

A comprehension of these phenomena is critical for Canada if we are going to be a nation that belongs to the 21st century.

As I review this Bill, I, as well as most Canadians, have come to the conclusion that the Government's strongest asset is its ability to recite rhetoric. As we all know, rhetoric does not imply a commitment to follow through. The Prime Minister has been a model student, perhaps even a teacher. After all, it was the Prime Minister who said:

The starting line for me is the technological dimension. Either we go into the game and become important players in this major league, or we become a nation that will, during its entire lifetime, play in the Junior B circuit.

Research and development and the resulting renovations are the lifeblood of a successful economy and country.

I also remind the House of the Prime Minister's stated goal for levels of research and development expenditures in Canada—2.5 per cent of Gross Domestic Product. Over the course of the mandate of this Government that level of spending has dropped. Federal government expenditures on research and development as a percentage of total research development have fallen from 37 per cent in 1984 to 30 per cent in 1988.

The National Research Council has been gutted and in that process the Government stopped the Black Brant rocket experimentation project in Manitoba. The Government shut down one of its observatories in Algonquin Park. As well, the energy division of the National Research Council was eliminated in 1984.