

Space Agency

this day and MSAT symbolizes the modern version of that kind of endeavour.

The space agency will have primary responsibility for our participation in the American space platforms through the construction of the mobile servicing centre. As well, it will have a role in the administration of the construction of RADARSAT. The RADARSAT project is very interesting and involves an example of the extraordinary expertise that this country has developed with respect to remote sensing. Its contribution to weather forecasting, to the environment and to the location of resources, its service therefore to the Department of Minerals, Mines and Resources has and will be signal. We regret that some portions of its functions have had to be cut back because of certain countries not signing in but nevertheless, even with the cut-backs, it is something that we are certainly proud to support.

Indeed, if one refers to the report of the former Standing Committee on Science, Research and Technology, it was the opinion of that committee that RADARSAT was so uniquely suited to the primary needs of this country, so much more likely to produce valuable spin-offs in this country, that it should be given priority over our participation in the American space platform.

With respect to our participation in the American project, of course that has been regarded as a particular kind of space mission. By its very nature, it attracts a great deal of attention. It has had a great deal of focus, but that focus can be described in terms of being a project particularly sexy. One of the things that has to be said about that is that it is part of an American mission and not a Canadian mission. I remind the House that when this project was announced, there were a number of us, including members of the board of the National Research Council and this Member, who warned that the projected expenditures of \$800 million for that project would unquestionably be exceeded. Since then, the projected expenditures between the beginning of the project and the year 2001 have now been increased to \$1.2 billion. We are warned that perhaps another \$200 million will be necessary to ensure the downstream benefits of this project, such as would be desirable given the high priority accorded the project in terms of industrial spin-off. What was said was if those expenditures very much exceeded the \$800 million original projection, there would be concern about that project

depriving other perhaps higher priorities within the space envelope of adequate funding. Of course, the committee warned about that and expressed concern about that. Indeed, it was in consideration of the relative merits in terms of spin-off and industrial benefit that led that committee to identify RADARSAT as a preferable project.

In addition, Mr. Speaker—and this is edifying—many scientists felt that it was really unlikely that the over-all level of government expenditures for science would increase, that inevitably these overruns, mis-estimates of the cost of the project, would lead to the deprivation not only of space-oriented science, but all science, of necessary funding. As well, it would perhaps, indeed most likely, deprive those kinds of research and development that are more likely to make a significant contribution and produce the benefits that we hoped we could look forward to.

One of the benefits already mentioned with respect to this and other projects is the amount of spin-off that would be produced, the kinds of technologies that would be produced by private enterprise and the kinds of technical jobs and other jobs that would be produced as a consequence of this. This is where the real merit of the space endeavour will be shown. It is important to understand the significance of procurement in that respect. This is one of the reasons why so many of us talk in terms of the need for a unique Canadian scientific mission. We re-iterate that this is not Canada's national mission. This is an American mission and has not been defined in terms of benefit but in participation with their project for obvious reasons.

This gives me an opportunity to say that if Canada is going to have a national mission, it should seek missions which are uniquely Canadian and seek the participation of others. RADARSAT in part meets that criterion but our mission need not be in space. We should begin to look for national missions in terms of scientific endeavours that are more oriented to the particular needs of Canada on the ground. My hon. colleague mentioned the priority of the environment. We have a special advisory council recommending a special Canadian mission in hydrogen technology. This is a very promising area and one that, with a lot less expenditure, would through the process of procurement and so on have led to a great deal more benefit for Canadians than this