

Science and Technology

We have to maintain this strength and it is the government's clear intention to do so. We must, however, accept the fact that our priorities change over the years. The drive toward basic science excellence has succeeded. This must now give way to other more pressing priorities though obviously the maintenance of basic science excellence remains within our objective. Today our main problem is the harnessing of the acquired potential to the development of a strong indigenous technology in our industry.

I agree that the question of support for university research needs review and that account should be taken of the effects of rising prices. As hon. members will be aware, we have increased the university grants budget of the NRC as well as those of MRC and Canada Council for 1975-76 by 17.8 per cent over the budget for 1974-75. This will not silence our critics, but I feel it demonstrates a realistic appreciation by the government of the realities of the situation.

I have been asked why the government wants to separate the granting of natural sciences function from the NRC and the granting of social sciences from the Canada Council. There is no mystery about this. We feel that in the evolution of both the NRC and the Canada Council the time has been reached at which their responsibilities in other areas demand their full attention.

The granting function which has been so successful in supporting the achievement of scientific excellence should, in our view, begin to take account of other factors such as the future demand for highly qualified manpower in Canada, the changing disciplines in particular, interdisciplinary efforts, and to the extent possible and practical, equitable distribution among the various regions of Canada.

Put simply, we want to achieve a balanced development of knowledge and research capability in all fields of science and technology. For this reason we propose introducing a more unified and co-ordinated granting structure. The change will not detract from the influence or prestige of either the NRC or the Canada Council. We look to the former to have a major influence in the development of our industrial technological base as well as research into problems which, because of the scale of facilities required or because of time frames, are inappropriate for non-governmental bodies. The Canada Council will continue its invaluable support of the performing arts.

The science ministry was born in the midst of a wide-ranging debate on the role of science in government and in the aftermath of several major studies of Canada's science organization.

Mr. Ellis: It wasn't born, it was hatched.

Mr. Drury: I suggest we continue the discussion in scientific terms that are scientifically, biologically correct ones.

The ministry does not have the traditional sources of authority in government but it will exert its influence through knowledge, persuasion, and advice. It is a low-profile organization whose influence will not be detected

[Mr. Drury.]

in individual issues so much as in the general trend of government policy and action in science.

I spoke earlier of the third type of science policy—science in policy. This is an area where I anticipate the ministry having increasing impact. The future holds many problems of a highly complex nature in areas such as food supply, energy, pollution, depletion of resources, and urban congestion. This government—or any other for that matter—will find itself increasingly dependent on a well organized and analyzed scientific input to long range strategy. I consider this to be an important role for MOSST.

There is no decline in Canada's scientific and technological effort. The emphasis is shifting, I hope, toward growth in the application of science rather than the acquisition of knowledge, but in total I feel that our science and technology are healthy and ready to aid us in meeting the future. If we have a problem in relation to science it is in deciding where to put our money. Scientists and engineers can tell us what the options are, but it is the cost of these options rather than the technological difficulty that gives us our biggest headache.

Mr. Max Saltsman (Waterloo-Cambridge): First, Mr. Speaker, I should like to express my appreciation to the hon. member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre) for having initiated this debate on science. As he says, it is not a thing which the press of the country seems to be most interested in, yet it is one of the most important things facing the country as far as its future is concerned.

The hon. member for Calgary Centre seemed to be concerned that the present minister is not a full-time minister. Perhaps he should be grateful for that—the damage might have been even more extensive than it is if he were a full-time minister. I might say I have a high personal regard for the honourable and gallant minister. However, he has an unfortunate history of going down and being called the great liquidator. It seems to me the government brings him in every time it is ready to liquidate a department, or has reached the conclusion that it does not want a department to do anything.

Although the hon. member for Calgary Centre may not recall it, the present minister was once the Minister of Industry. I believe he was the first when that department was set up, and I think he was also the last. It occurs to me we are in danger of seeing the same kind of tactic repeated with the Ministry of Science as we saw with the defunct Department of Industry. I am not going to say this is the fault of the present minister because I do not think it is; I will not impute the blame to him. That would be too easy. It is the fault of the government, and its complete failure to give any sense of direction as to the way in which industry and science should go.

You cannot make any decisions about science or have a science policy if you do not have a clear notion about the kind of industrial policy you should be following. It is the failure by the cabinet to adopt an industrial policy which has brought failure in the field of science policy. The government has never developed an industrial strategy. Whenever the government has been questioned on what its industrial strategy is, it replies, "There is no point in thinking about an industrial strategy; we have a whole