Mr. Speaker, I pointed out as well that industries and universities benefited from the lion's share of higher research and development expenditures. You know, before I came here in 1984 I was in the industrial sector in the riding of Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup which I represent in the House of Commons. I was one of the shareholders of three companies.

Mr. Speaker, you know that before 1984 the regions in eastern Quebec—as others far removed from major centres—had government programs in research and development or science and technology. When I was working for my company and acting as President of the Chamber of Commerce we always had recommendations to make to the central government: Listen, we said, tell us more about existing programs.

Being active in a small business I had to fight to get information on existing programs. Why? Because government representatives and federal employees did not bother to visit us to tell us about the opportunities that were available. I can say, and I say it to my colleague from Ottawa—Vanier, that I made it my duty, since 1984, as representative of the riding of Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup and former industrialist, to make people from my constituency aware that this federal government, through its Department of Industry, Science and Technology, has programs that can help them in the area of research and development and that allow them to go and see what is going on elsewhere in Canada or in the world.

I can tell you today, Mr. Speaker, and I say it also to my colleague from Ottawa—Vanier, whom I invite to come and visit eastern Quebec so I can prove what I am saying, that in the peat industry, for example, a primary industry in my area, a lot of research and development is done, but only since 1984. There was no R&D before that because people were not aware of government programs. The Liberals did not publicize them.

Today, that firm called Tourbière Premier or Tourbière Berger or whatever works with the universities, Laval University, the Centre de biomasse du Québec, the Quebec CRIQ. Thus, research and development is still done in that sector, as in the timber industry, in the private woodwork sector thanks to the programs that exist, Mr. Speaker.

[*English*]

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, I would like to explore the words of the hon. member a little further.

Is he seriously arguing that because he noticed there was some R and D going on in his area that is a reflection of the government's involvement and its investment in research and development? Isn't that a very small sample or a very tiny basis on which to make a generalization?

In any case, that is not the question I rose to ask. The member indicated, as did the Minister of Industry, Science and Technology, that government expenditures have gone from $4 billion when this government came to office to $5 billion now. I would ask this member whether he has thought about that at all.

That constitutes a 25 per cent increase. If we look at it most generously, let us say that is a 25 per cent increase over five years or closer to five and one-half years.

Would he work out the percentage change over that period of time, reflect on its significance in real dollars, and tell me whether he really thinks, given that the inflation rate for scientific equipment, just as an example, run at about 15 per cent per annum, that this is a great development in expenditures on research and development by this government? Or, would he agree with any rational observer and recognize that that amounts to bloody little change?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Plourde: Mr. Speaker, first of all, in answer to the question asked by the hon. member for Windsor—St-Clair, I would like to refer him to my speech, where I said: "—the Conference Board of Canada acknowledges that the financial support we provide for research and development through our tax system is one of the most generous in the world. And yet, misconceptions continue to spread around."

I appreciate the fact, Mr. Speaker, that in opposition you can make figures say anything. But in his speech this afternoon the hon. member for Ottawa-Vanier mentioned how awful the unemployment rate has been since 1984. He talked about the bankruptcy rates since 1984, the high interest rates since 1984, the high inflation rates since 1984, but never did he mention the inflation, interest, bankruptcy and unemployment rates we had