

Supply

Without wishing to be alarmist, I would like to point out that last year, 14 per cent of Canadian manufacturers complained about shortages of skilled workers. Whether for social or political reasons, the fact remains that many young people choose to go into law or business administration instead of considering a career in science and opting for research and development. Society, over the years, may have judged those professions to be more acceptable and more attractive, but it is not the kind of attitude that will encourage Canada's talented young people to opt for disciplines that are conducive to innovation, for instance.

What is needed, Madam Speaker, is a national science culture, despite the fact that education is a provincial responsibility. I agree it will not be easy, because we have a lot of catching up to do and we already have to go the extra mile to make Canadian industry both productive and competitive on international and domestic markets. The main thing is, however, that all parties concerned agree to discuss the problem and acknowledge that the need for training a labour force that can meet the scientific and technological challenges of the future requires a common strategy.

As was pointed out in the Grandpré report on manpower adjustment, the government showed an awareness of those challenges by providing adequate manpower training and adjustment program.

Considering our financial resources, the ball is now in the court of the industrial community. It is up to industry to do its share and help us on the road to prosperity.

Madam Speaker, so this is where a seemingly straightforward Liberal motion has brought us! I must admit this is not an exhaustive overview of achievements and challenges in the field of industry, science and technology.

These issues go well beyond the purview of today's debate. However, I hope I have convinced at least some of the members of this House that our government has for a number of years been committed to helping those concerned understand what is at stake. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

• (1710)

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre): In his remarks, Madam Speaker, the Minister mentioned the private

sector to which he had asked for more funding in research and development. I shall, therefore, ask the Hon. Member whether she agrees with the Minister, when the President of Northern Telecom made a statement to the effect that the Government should not ask the private sector to invest in research and development without showing some leadership. He said that the private sector needed a good economic environment. He explained that here, in Canada, to set up a company with assets of one billion dollar, one needed to borrow \$ 275 million. This amount is equivalent to nearly \$ 400 million when compared with the United States and \$ 675 million when compared with Japan, which implies that it would be much more easy to set up a company in Japan than here.

It is also easier to set up a company in the United States than in Canada. Therefore with much higher interest rates much higher here in Canada than they are in both the United States and Japan, the so-called level playing field just does not exist, for Japanese are in a much better position to invest in research and development than Americans and Canadians are. How could we ask the private sector to invest more when we, as the Government, are responsible for interest rates which increase every day? That is not the right environment for the private sector. I should like to ask the Hon. Member whether she agrees with the Minister when he says that the private sector should do all these things on its own without the assistance or leadership of the Federal Government.

Mrs. Suzanne Duplessis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Science and Technology)): Madam Speaker, the hon. member is asking me whether I agree with the minister when he says that the private sector should do more. Yes I do. He mentioned the benefits an industry might gain if it were to move to the United States and deal with Japan. He referred to interest rates and pointed out that they are lower in the United States. Our situation is different. Our country carries a heavy debt load and we have been trying very hard to check inflation to prevent Canadian products from losing most of their value. It is very difficult to trace all our woes back to rising interest rates. We are now attempting to introduce a goods and services tax which will be a big plus for all industries. At long last they will no longer have to cope with the famous 13.5 per cent hidden tax