

*Government Orders*

I would like at this juncture to briefly indicate some of the achievements in order for Canadians to know what the National Research Council has done. Dr. Luc Piché, a scientist at the NRC's Industrial Materials Research Institute, was chosen by the American magazine *Research and Development*, for an award for developing one of the 100 most significant technical developments of 1987. He developed a technique to measure the density of polyethylene using ultrasound technology. This technology provides a valuable tool for both quality and process control, giving the polyethylene manufacturing industry a competitive edge in the international market.

NRC scientists in Montreal developed a biosensor, as another example, which accurately measures the freshness of meat or fish. This product will have an important impact on the food processing industry because it reduces what was formerly an hours-long process to a mere five minutes.

The NRC's division of physics developed a fibre optic system that was used in the world's first open heart surgery to remove plaque from the coronary arteries. Further refinement of his technique, which uses an ultraviolet laser beam to cut away the plaque blocking the blood vessels of the heart, would "ultimately eliminate the need for major open heart surgery", the National Research Council reports.

The public security program of the NRC has developed a system that tracks patients quickly and easily through miniature transmitters inserted in their identification bracelets. This is very useful in keeping track of elderly patients in chronic care hospitals and nursing homes who tend to wander away. These are already being used in Canada and are now being marketed world-wide.

Also, Porter Dillon Ltd. of Nova Scotia has designed Canada's first full-scale biomass reactor for the treatment of municipal wastes. These reactors effectively treat waste and recover energy while offering minimal impact on the environment.

Today, industry in Canada is spread out across the country and the country needs an agent to bring research and development resources together; industry, universities, and government. The NRC is supposed to be this agent. It is ironic that the government expects the NRC

to play this vital role at a time when this government is ruthlessly and continuously cutting its budget.

In 1984, \$60 million was cut from the NRC budget. In 1986, an additional \$29 million and 250 jobs were lost. In the next fiscal year another \$30 million will be cut. Hence, programs and personnel will be cut, staff morale will be diminished and benefits to Canadians today and tomorrow will be lost. Many more programs are going to be phased out.

The government has dealt some fearsome blows to the NRC. Scientists wondered in the past, as they are wondering today, if the NRC will survive at all.

In the time remaining I would like to speak about basic research which is very important in the establishment of the NRC, which now has been shifting its focus to helping industry. It appears that basic research is being neglected by the government.

On Tuesday, March 13, *The Ottawa Citizen* and *Montreal Gazette* and other major newspapers carried the news of the cuts to NRC staffing and basic research. It required the courage of the NRC President, Mr. Pierre Perron, to release his letter of January 5 addressed to the Science Council of Canada. I quote: "NRC plans to limit its involvement in basic research—to that required to maintain a minimal insurance policy for the nation." The Research Council's next five-year plan "will propose a clear policy statement and a strategy on privatization and divestiture."

It appears that basic research is being neglected by this government and I challenge government not to do that. It is most crucial that we continue to encourage our creative scientists, provide them with the environment and milieu conducive for them to continue their work and, at the same time, continue to have a decent family life.

• (1300)

The Canadian Association of University Teachers appeared before the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology just yesterday. In its submission the association indicated to the committee its concerns about the plight of basic research in the country.

I ask the government to reconsider its plans and to strengthen rather than dismantle the NRC, if we are to ensure the continued scientific breakthroughs that I