

that is why we suggested the government should seek the collaboration of other nations. The Franco-Canadian financing of the telescope in Hawaii is a good case in point.

The other recommendation said:

At least during the 1970s the order of priority in government support for curiosity-oriented basic research should be, first, the social sciences and the humanities, and second, the life sciences, mainly those related to human health, provided of course that international standards of excellence can be developed and achieved in these areas.⁴¹

This proposal created a good deal of confusion and controversy. Many individual scientists and groups agreed with it. One brief from a large private firm stated:

We believe that this recommendation deserves vigorous support. While the desired shift in emphasis must, for practical reasons, be gradual we believe that emphasis on the social sciences, humanities and life sciences should be increased at as rapid a pace as is possible.⁴²

Others, however, strongly disagreed. One brief commented that the physical sciences are "presumably left low down on the scale of priorities and we wonder what type of research projects are to receive major financial support among the social sciences. It appears to our organization that the social well-being of Canadians depends so much on a sound economic foundation that the strong emphasis on supporting philosophical research may result in some deterioration in the Canadian standard of living."

The main concern was that the priority assigned to the social sciences and humanities would downgrade the physical sciences. The Committee wishes to emphasize that the physical sciences should not be weakened and that the public support allocated to genuine basic research in this area would increase if all our recommendations regarding R&D targets and strategies were implemented. We fully endorse the comment made by the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers:

We believe it is unwise to neglect present strengths in the natural sciences and would prefer to see increased emphasis and additional support to the social sciences and humanities and the life sciences without diminishing the attention given to the natural or physical sciences.⁴³

If the foundations concentrated on post-doctoral fellowships, on genuine basic research, and on quality rather than quantity, as we suggested, their constituency would be considerably reduced by comparison with the coverage they are presently attempting. They would then be in a position to encourage excellence in the three main discipline areas much more generously, even if their budgets were to remain unchanged. However, the Committee developed its priorities within the framework