

Oral Questions

The unemployed do not need a signal from the Government of Canada which tells them it wants to take away their last and only hope of survival. What the unemployed and the weak people need is assurances from the Government that it will come forth with a job strategy program which will provide opportunities for them.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL CUT-BACKS—GOVERNMENT POSITION**

Mr. David Berger (Laurier): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State for Science and Technology.

Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Government has gone overboard in its admiration for the Diefenbaker Government. It is now trying to repeat the Avro Arrow disaster.

The President of the National Research Council of Canada said yesterday that the latest cut-backs at the Council were regrettable, tragic and worse.

My question is as follows: How can the Minister justify cut-backs that according to the President of the Council are regrettable, tragic and a threat to Canada's economic future?

[English]

Hon. Frank Oberle (Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, perhaps it would help if I told the Hon. Member that in the Speech from the Throne there is an announcement of \$1 billion of new money going into university research. Hundreds of millions of dollars have gone into provincial subagreements to strengthen regional capabilities in the new industrial sector. There is \$800 million going into the space program which led the President of the NRC to say: "We are presently engaged in building up new programs for which the Government has provided new resources", one of these being biotechnology and one being a space program, 40 per cent of which will be allocated to the NRC. That is what—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Berger: Mr. Speaker, the Minister has a lot of nerve to say that, when the President of the National Research Council has called these cuts "tragic".

LABORATORY WORK

Mr. David Berger (Laurier): The internationally recognized member of the Order of Canada, Dr. Basinski, said yesterday when his position was slashed: "It is easy to wreck a lab. It is extremely difficult and takes decades to build one up again". If it takes a generation to repair the damage that the Minister is inflicting on the Council, why is he destroying these research teams? No more Avro Arrows!

Hon. Frank Oberle (Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, there is no destruction of any research teams.

Mr. Axworthy: You can say that with a straight face? Get serious. Shame on you.

Mr. Oberle: With respect to the specific person the Hon. Member mentioned, his information is once again false. We make no apologies. There are no cuts. There are reallocations and reassignments in line with new priorities. We are going into the 21st century; that is what we are doing.

An Hon. Member: You know that's not true.

MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. David Berger (Laurier): Mr. Speaker, if the Nobel Prize winner, Dr. John Polanyi, was starting his career today and turned up at the door of the NRC, it would be slammed in his face because the Minister would have closed the lab at the time he began his career. Why has the Minister slammed the door on future Canadian Nobel Prize winners?

An Hon. Member: Because he doesn't know any better.

Hon. Frank Oberle (Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the Hon. Member mentioned Professor Polanyi of whom we are all so proud. Professor Polanyi is a recipient of precisely the money I mentioned, the \$1 billion which is going into university research, because that is where he worked.

Mr. Axworthy: Oh, come on. Don't give us that nonsense.

Mr. Oberle: And he was the recipient of \$1.5 million.

Mr. Caccia: Sit down.

Mr. Oberle: That is what resulted in his Nobel Prize.

Mr. Axworthy: You are an embarrassment.

● (1420)

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMPETITIVENESS OF CANADIAN INDUSTRY

Mr. Dave Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State for Science and Technology. His own election promises of 1984, the policies of our trading partners and particularly the United States which spends double what we do on research and development, and the comments of the very distinguished President of the National Research Council have all indicated that Canada needs to do more and spend more on research and development. Why is the Minister jeopardizing the competitiveness of Canadian industry with his broken promises and the cut-backs that occurred yesterday?

Hon. Frank Oberle (Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, not only do I agree with the Hon.