

ourselves do not bring about the demise of the planet. That is a great challenge for Canada.

I appreciate the fact that the motion has been introduced. I believe we are taking steps in the right direction. Perhaps some think we should move more quickly. I doubt if anyone thinks we should move more slowly. The hon. Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Science and Technology has indicated direction. First, he responded immediately to recommendations placed before him; second, he established delivery systems which will ensure the involvement of all facets of the Canadian people; and third, he has shown a great recognition for the role our universities and research minds must play in any future which Canada wishes to lay any claim to at all.

Mr. Harvie Andre (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. MacFarlane) presented what amounts to a total condemnation of the government's performance in science and technology. I compliment him on his speech. As he indicated by reading the record of his former colleagues at McMaster University, their community is less than happy with the government. I found the hon. member's comments rather interesting.

In view of the hour, may I call it six o'clock?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed that we call it six o'clock?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It being six o'clock, I do now leave the chair until eight o'clock.

At six o'clock the House took recess.

● (2002)

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order. At six o'clock the hon. member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre) had the floor.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to participate in this debate. Since I have been here this is the fourth opportunity to discuss this subject on the floor of the House of Commons. Three of those opportunities were created by this party using one of our allotted days to indicate our concern and interest in this subject.

The recent history of the science policy in Canada can only be described as pathetic. By way of historic perspective it might be recalled that the first movement in this area occurred in 1919 when the Conservative government of Sir Robert Borden created the National Research Council. From that time until 1941 there was little concern or interest in a science policy. As a result of the interest created by the war, a Privy Council committee on science matters was created but in the period between 1950 and 1958 when the St. Laurent government was in office it did not meet even once.

Research and Development

In 1961, the Diefenbaker government introduced as a tax measure or 150 per cent write-off of incremental increases in research and development which had a very beneficial effect, but that measure was withdrawn by the Pearson government which, as a sop, created a science secretariat within the Privy Council.

In November of 1967, the other place created a special committee on science policy to look into such questions as recent trends in R and D in Canada; research and development carried out by the federal government; federal assistance to research and development; and the principles and structure of a science policy for Canada. This committee did an excellent job. I am not in the habit of praising the other place, but in this case I admit they did an excellent job.

I will not try to summarize the findings of that committee because they are rather extensive. Suffice it to say that they came out with three volumes, with a subsequent addendum, but their initial analysis was characterized by four rather profound and disturbing comparisons of Canada's performance. They concluded—this was in their first report in 1970—that Canada at that time invested a smaller percentage of its GNP in R and D than did most industrialized nations. They also concluded that of the tax money spent by the Canadian government, Canada spent a greater proportion on government labs than any other country of the western industrialized nation; that there was less spending on R and D in the private sector than in most industrialized nations; and that Canada spent a greater percentage of its R and D funds on basic research than did most industrialized nations.

That was the deplorable situation which existed in 1970. How has it changed in the last seven or eight years? Let us look at some figures. In 1967, Canada spent about 1.4 per cent of its GNP on R and D. The Lamontagne Committee recommended a goal for Canada of some 2.5 per cent as being appropriate. At the time the U.S. was spending 3.6 per cent, so they gave, as an appropriate target for Canada, something less than what the United States was spending. By 1971 the proportion of the GNP devoted to R and D in Canada had dropped to 1.2 per cent. By 1974 the figure had dropped to .85 per cent, and by 1976 this figure had dropped down to .8 per cent. In other words, a situation which was bad in 1967 became much worse seven or eight years later.

That performance can only be described as absolutely tragic for Canada, and there are a number of very good reasons why that is so. One of the foundations of a nation's future is its ability in the area of science and technology. Historians who like to pigeonhole epochs and areas describe this as the technological age. Obviously that is an accurate description.

● (2012)

How we use science and technology will clearly define both our standard of living and our quality of life. If governments feel they have a responsibility to the people and are concerned about our standard of living and quality of life—and I believe they are—surely they would give science policy a very high priority. Science and technology is vital to the performance of