

where we have control over the House business to discuss this important subject. That is because the Progressive Conservative party has a commitment to the long-term good of Canadians and not just to tomorrow's headlines or next year's political votes.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. C. M. Drury (Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, as a part-time minister, I listened with full-time interest to the remarks of the mover of the motion. While I can agree with a large part of what he has said in relation to the importance of science and technology, I would question a bit the basis on which he draws his conclusions regarding the motivation, both of the Ministry of Science and Technology and of the government itself.

In particular the hon. member cited as evidence of government non-support and non-encouragement of the development of high technology in Canada the single program of PAIT grants. Because these are about the same this year as last, he has reached the conclusion that all other programs have similarly suffered a decrease. On examination of the record, a record that I will be glad to provide to the hon. member later, I think he will find that the conclusions he has drawn are fallacious.

If there are any who have failed up to now to recognize the importance of science and technology in the life of Canada, as the mover has mentioned, the fact that we are debating them here today in opposition time should, I feel, remove any final doubts.

I cannot, in the short time available to me, attempt any worthwhile survey of all the important issues in science and technology that confront us. The scientific and technological ramifications of any one issue, energy production and use, for example, could scarcely be adequately covered within the total time available to us for this debate. Instead let me home in on one or two matters of general interest, matters which I know to be of concern to the scientific community and which, from the wording of today's motion, I take to be of concern to members on the other side of the House.

There are three questions that I hear rather regularly: When are we going to have a science policy? Why is the government decreasing its support of basic science? What is the science ministry doing? I have heard those questions repeated, perhaps in less clear terms, earlier this afternoon. These three questions are closely related and I hope that what I am going to say will help clear the air on all three of them.

The concept of a single all-embracing science policy has been current in government circles in the western world for at least two decades. Governments, our own included, have intuitively felt that if only they could articulate a single science policy, all sorts of science related problems such as pollution and energy shortage would become easier to resolve.

While this notion of a single grand plan for science may be aesthetically appealing, in practice it simply does not work. Science policy is a meaningful concept only if you are prepared to accept that it is in actual fact made up of three separate and distinct entities—first, policy for sup-

Science and Technology

port of science, that is to say, support for the acquisition of knowledge and the development of the capability for research and understanding; second, policy for the application of scientific and technological resources; that is to say, a policy for the wise, economic and co-ordinated use of our limited resources of knowledge, skilled manpower and scientific facilities; third, science in policy, a term we use to describe the scientific input to the development of public policy at the strategic level.

I feel that some of the confusion and disquiet that have surrounded the issue of support for basic science have been due to failure to differentiate between the first two types of policy, policy for support of science and policy for its application.

To the scientist engaged in pure research stemming from his own curiosity, knowledge—science itself—is the objective. To the user of science, be it government or the private sector, science is a tool that may be used in conjunction with other tools to achieve practical objectives. Science is not, in the latter case, an end in itself.

The federal government supports curiosity motivated basic research because such research is basic to the maintenance of our scientific capability and the strength of our academic system, second because it contributes to the world's store of knowledge, which we all share, and finally, because such activity, like the arts, enhances and enriches the cultural life of the nation.

Over the long term there will undoubtedly be a cause and effect relationship between such research and marketable goods and services. Such a connection is, however, seldom predictable in advance. It is hard to prove in specific terms that Canada's societal and economic future will depend on the support of pure science.

There have been representations from the academic community to the effect that the government is not supporting basic research in the universities as strongly as it used to and that, as a consequence, Canada's strength in basic science is being allowed to decay.

● (1540)

Some critics have pointed out that the NRC's budget for grants has not been growing as fast as it used to and that, with inflation forcing up the cost of research, the researcher is finding it hard to get the support he needs.

I recognize there are real problems but I think we should bear one or two points in mind.

During the sixties, federal contributions to university research increased at an annual rate of about 20 per cent, and there was also an increase in contributions from the provinces. To have maintained this growth rate would have created serious distortions in the academic as well as other sectors.

When NRC was established in 1916 the primary requirement was to develop a strong science base in Canada, primarily in the universities. This could well be said to have been Canada's science policy for the first half of this century. It was a most successful policy and we now have strong science facilities and graduate schools, excellent scientific laboratories and equipment, and an enviable reputation in international science circles.