

SCIENCE POLICY

CONSIDERATION OF VOLUME I OF REPORT OF SPECIAL COMMITTEE—DEBATE CONCLUDED

The Senate resumed from Thursday, March 25, the adjourned debate on the inquiry of Hon. Mr. Lamontagne, calling the attention of the Senate to Volume I of the Report of the Special Committee of the Senate on Science Policy.

Hon. Maurice Lamontagne: Honourable senators—

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, is it agreed that the honourable Senator Lamontagne should speak now instead of the honourable Senator McDonald?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Lamontagne: Honourable senators, at the very beginning of my remarks I must ask for your indulgence, because I shall have to impose on you another long speech. Unfortunately, I must make it today because I will have no other opportunity in the near future to participate in this debate on Volume I of the Report of the Special Committee of the Senate on Science Policy.

[Translation]

Honourable senators, by rising to participate in this debate on Volume I of the report of the Senate Committee on Science Policy, I would like to say first of all how pleased I am to be sitting here again after a lengthy absence due to illness and a convalescence longer than foreseen. Also I would like to most sincerely thank all the honourable senators who were kind enough to get in touch with me either verbally or in writing during my convalescence and who sent me their wishes for a speedy recovery. Finally, I wish to express again all my gratitude to my committee colleagues who, during a long inquiry, did their best to achieve a common objective, and I would like to congratulate particularly those who have made a contribution to this debate. I have, of course, taken due note of the congratulations extended to me but I have, above all, read most carefully the very appropriate remarks made about the nature and the contents of Volume I of our report.

I am sure that one of the first objectives of the Senate in launching this public inquiry into the Canadian science policy was precisely to bring about a debate on this subject and at least to attenuate the many solitudes which existed within our scientific community. I am now in a position to say that this objective has been reached and that, from several testimonies I have received from abroad, a number of countries envy us for having innovated at least in this field. This debate has forced several of our scientists and technologists to develop a political conscience which they did not have previously and a group of parliamentarians to seriously ponder over science, technology and innovation, those phenomena as mysterious as the human spirit and yet which will have a crucial importance on the evolution not only of this country but also of this planet.

[Hon. Mr. Desruijsseaux.]

[English]

Before the content of Volume I took a precise form, I had serious reservations about publishing it separately and without the committee's recommendations. I have now no hesitation in saying that it was a good idea. I was also afraid that a volume of this kind on such a complex topic and containing no concrete proposals would receive very little attention indeed by the public, whom we were seeking to involve in this collective exercise of reflection and reconstruction. Here again I was pleasantly surprised. I cannot claim, of course, that this volume has received as much publicity as the Senate report on the mass media. In this respect, at least, we were clearly not in the same league.

Our first volume, however, has been widely covered by the media and for this I wish to express the committee's gratitude, especially to Canadian science writers who have done a superb job of reporting and who have successfully met the challenge of a difficult assignment on very short notice. *Science Forum* has devoted almost its entire April issue to the discussion of our report.

The March-April issue of *Canadian Research and Development* has done the same job. ACFAS, the French Canadian association for the advancement of science—and several other learned societies, including those representing the Canadian economists and the Canadian humanists, will also be discussing our report at their annual meetings in May or June.

My colleagues and I have received several hundreds of oral and written communications from individuals and highly representative national organizations. Our scientific and technological community has already held numerous public meetings—and probably more private ones—to review our findings. Thus, the interval between the publication of our critical views on the past and present and the presentation of our recommendations will have served a most useful purpose and will set a more appropriate stage for the major job of reconstruction which still lies ahead.

On the whole, I am very pleased by the reaction caused by our critical findings up to now. I would say that about 90 per cent of that reaction was favourable and strongly supported the themes and the conclusions that we presented in Volume I. I will not bother you with a long series of quotations to illustrate this statement. I will use only one which, in my view, is typical of that overwhelming favourable reaction. It comes from Dr. Donald S. Scott who is professor of chemical engineering at the University of Waterloo, and it appeared in the April issue of *Science Forum*. Dr. Scott, speaking on behalf of his association, of which he is the vice-president, wrote:

The Canadian Society for Chemical Engineering considers that the first volume of the Senate Special Committee on Science Policy could be a milestone in the development of a rational approach by the Canadian Government to technological and economic planning. The analysis of the development of science and technology in Canada presented in the report is accurate and the conclusions drawn by the commit-