

Adjournment Debate

The Hon. Member for York East (Mr. Redway) has put forward a very compelling case for the contribution of a homemaker in Canada. The innovative way in which he brought the matter to the attention of the House is to be commended. I must point out to him and to all Hon. Members that the Government has moved very dramatically on pension reform. It has brought about changes, for instance, in the PBSA. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) brought about changes in the last Budget regarding RRSPs. Also I am pleased to be associated with the changes to the Canada Pension Plan which will come into effect on January 1, 1987. It is an historic agreement.

It contains a number of changes, but in particular there is one regarding homemakers to whom the Hon. Member for York East referred. If there be a divorce or separation, a homemaker could possibly get some of the pension credits at the time of divorce. I think it is a good change.

A second one, which he possibly did not have time to mention, concerns Canada Pension Plan credits earned during marriage. They will be split between spouses at retirement if one of the spouses so requests. That is a second aspect in terms of homemakers who have not been in the paid labour force having a pension account of her own. In most cases it is "her own" as we know.

As well, CPP survivor benefits will no longer be withdrawn from widows or widowers who remarry, and benefits will be restored to those who lost them in the past. That affects approximately 35,000 people, most of whom are homemakers. On balance, some changes for homemakers have already been brought forward by the Government. I am sure the Hon. Member for York East not only recognizes that fact but applauds it.

Dealing with his specific question in respect of homemakers, a task force has been set up. It has already met six times, starting last July. It has been given one year in which to put forward a proposal for homemakers. As the Hon. Member knows, there is a need for provincial co-operation. However, I can tell him that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) has made statements relevant to homemakers. It remains an issue for him which he would like to see completed in this mandate. I can only reiterate his words that that is the approach we have taken. That is the reason for the task force, the time schedule, and work plan. I thank the Hon. Member for his representation.

● (1810)

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY—NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL'S BUDGET (B) NUMBER OF COUNCIL'S EMPLOYEES

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Madam Speaker, I see the Minister of State for Science and Technology (Mr. Oberle) is here to answer some of the questions which I asked several days ago. It is unusual for a Minister to be here, but obviously he realizes that the information he is giving to the people of Canada with regard to the Government's science policy has not been accepted.

On October 9, I asked the Minister of State for Science and Technology two questions. First, how can the cuts to NRC research of \$26 million be reconciled with the commitment of the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) to double research and development in Canada? Second, can the Government guarantee that the 3,100 jobs at the National Research Council that now exist will exist at the end of next year? Since that time a good deal of information has come to light both about the Government's policy of rationalizing research and about the cuts being implemented at the NRC.

First, on the matter of research commitments, it is obvious that we can no longer assume that the target to double research and development in Canada promised by the Conservatives when they were in opposition exists. In the Throne Speech debate on October 8, the Minister of State for Science and Technology said, as reported at page 202 of *Hansard*:

With regard to a target, where we ought to be in terms of the Gross National Product, I chose to ask the Science Council to help me establish realistic funding targets by examining each sector of our industry and by comparing what they are doing in terms of science and technology with what their competitors are doing in other parts of the world.

Why does the Minister have to ask that question, Madam Speaker? We know that Canada's expenditures for research and development are about 1.5 per cent of the Gross National Product and other countries are spending twice as much. The Minister is asking a question the answer to which he should know.

Can the Minister give us an indication that a doubling of the Canadian research and development effort is still a target and a priority of his Government, and, if so, when will this target of 2.5 per cent of GNP be met? After all, it was promised for the first year of this Government's life. In dealing with this issue, the Government must realize that its credibility is at stake.

A host of articles and editorials appearing in all major newspapers of Canada make it clear that the writers assume the Government has dropped the objective of 2.5 per cent of GNP for scientific research and development as being unrealistic. Surely that is the issue in a nutshell.

The Throne Speech makes sweeping commitments to research and development and then these commitments are undercut by actions of the Government. The Government goes on to say how great research and development investments are being made with the universities and the granting councils, but when you look at the billion dollar price tag the Minister is talking about, you see there is very little, if any, new money available. What new money will be available by the Government is contingent on private sector participation, participation which has never been there up to now and is not likely to be there in the next year or two.

Let us look at the whole question of the lay-offs at the NRC. This is what we have learned. A list now exists at NRC of 150 persons whose jobs no longer exist. This number will grow to 200 shortly. These persons have been told that only 40 to 80 jobs in the space program will be open to them and there will