

*Oral Questions***SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

IMPACT OF REDUCTION IN DEPARTMENTAL STAFF

Mr. Thomas Siddon (Richmond-South Delta): Madam Speaker, under the Minister's other hat, his responsibility for Science and Technology, he has also managed to roll back his responsibilities from those that were originally envisaged, by laying off one-third of his staff at MOSST, and in the process he has lost his responsibility for NRC, NSERC, and, I believe, the Science Council of Canada. Will the Minister explain how he intends to heighten the profile of science and its important role in enhancing Canada's economic development while he is allowing his own staff to be reduced to zero?

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (Minister of State for Economic Development and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member is quite right. We have reduced the size of MOSST in order—

Some Hon. Members: He is right, "the Minister".

Mr. Johnston: That is something which it seems to me this Government is always encouraged to do, namely, to make Departments more efficient and more effective in carrying out their missions.

The mission of MOSST now, with the chief science advisory role added, is one that will provide a tight, first-class advisory group on scientific matters for Cabinet, the Government, and the Prime Minister's office, much along the lines, I would suggest, of the role of the chief science advisor in the United States.

In so far as NSERC, the Science Council, and the National Research Council are concerned, those organizations report through me to Parliament, so if the Hon. Member has any questions with respect to those organizations, I am the Minister to whom those questions should be addressed.

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EMPLOYMENT

REQUEST FOR TAX CREDIT PROGRAM TO HELP CREATE JOBS

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. The Minister will know that in 1979 the Conservative Party used employment tax credits to create jobs, and over 31,000 jobs per month on average were created. I wonder whether or not the Minister will be bringing to the House within the next 30 to 60 days the legislation necessary to put in place a tax credit program for employment. It is the quickest and least expensive way of creating jobs. With one and a half million unemployed Canadians, we need something that is quick and less expensive. Will the Minister bring forward that kind of legislation within the next 30 to 60 days?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, we are considering a variety of programs. There are indeed a whole range of them that are

somewhat along the lines of what the Hon. Member has suggested, which are interesting. For instance, I could refer to the experience in Great Britain where there appears to have been some considerable success with wage subsidy programs, particularly focusing in on the problems of those who are entering the labour force for the first time.

We do have a variety of programs under review. I will be happy to look once again at the very suggestion which was made by the Hon. Member. I would point out to him, however, that we have been creating jobs at a rate higher than that which he is suggesting that the Conservative Party created.

Mr. Hawkes: Madam Speaker, that is a tough statement to swallow when there are one-quarter of a million fewer jobs today than there were two years ago. That is not job creation, that is job loss, Mr. Minister. Madam Speaker, I am sorry, but it is sometimes difficult—

Madam Speaker: If it is too difficult, the Hon. Member should refrain from asking questions altogether.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

EFFECT OF TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): May I ask the Minister to tell the House what his departmental estimates are for the coming year in terms of job loss due to technological displacement? How many Canadians will be replaced by new kinds of machines in the next 12 months, and what special plans does the Department have that will put those people back into the work force through a decent retraining program? How many people will lose their jobs to machines in the next 12 months?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration): No, Madam Speaker, I cannot give the hon. gentleman that information. The reason that I cannot do that is because there is such a wide range of opinions as to what the effect of technological change will be. There are many who do argue, as he has suggested, that there will be jobs lost in the process of technological renovation. There are just as many scholars, assessors and critics of the technology scene who believe that the introduction of new technology will create jobs. In fact there is no consensus on what the impact of technological change will be, either negatively or positively, on job creation. I simply cannot give the Hon. Member the information he asks for because I do not believe that there is a sustained view on that.

The whole impact of technological change on the job market is, of course, a matter with which we are very much concerned. Just last week, for instance, I was able to meet with representatives of the Canadian Labour Congress and the Business Council on National Issues to sign a memorandum which creates, under the direction of the BCNI and the CLC, an institute focusing among other things on technological change, its impact on job opportunities, and the need for training skills for it. This is a matter of continuing concern, but the Hon. Member has asked for a specific answer which I cannot give