

The Address—Mr. Daubney

gency has tumbled to the harsh demands of international competition.

The loss of jobs is a problem, but the loss of our complacency can only be good for us. We have to learn from our competitors. We have to encourage new technological development, and we have to plan very carefully for the integration of new technologies into our existing industries.

The Japanese have demonstrated how useful and how necessary social consensus is for the introduction of new technology to society. Their social and cultural patterns cannot and should not necessarily be duplicated here, but we need co-operation between all sectors of our community if we are to make some of the difficult economic and technological decisions which are necessary for economic growth. That is one of the key messages of the Government's Throne Speech and economic statement—consensus and co-operation.

I was happy to see the appointment of my friend and colleague, the Hon. Member for Richmond-South Delta (Mr. Siddon), as Minister of State for Science and Technology. For the first time in many years we have a Minister devoted solely to this fundamentally important sector of our economy. Technological innovation does not come from wishful thinking. It comes from the creation of an economic environment which rewards risk and rewards research.

The Speech from the Throne and the economic statement clearly lay the groundwork for the creation of an economic environment that will stimulate confidence and encourage Canadians to take the risks which research and development involve. There is a long pay-back period on research and development. Investors, entrepreneurs and scientists need to know that government is serious about long-term growth before they will invest in research and development.

There has been a lack of confidence in the country bred in part by the poorly co-ordinated and recklessly expensive projects of the previous administration. In my opinion this has been the prime inhibitor to greater research and development in the past. In fact, the shameful statistic is that Canada spends less on R and D as a percentage of our Gross National Product than any country in the western world except Iceland.

The fact that our Government has shown that it means business on the deficit has already had a positive influence on business confidence in this country and abroad. I am confident that Canada can look forward to increased investment in research and development, increased productivity and increased competitiveness for Canadian industry. As a result we can look forward to more jobs for Canadians.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1710)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions, comments?

Mr. Cassidy: Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment on many aspects of the Member's speech, but I will focus on the area of political rights for people working in the Public Service of Canada. I appreciate very much that the Hon. Member has

indicated that he personally favours giving political rights to people working for the public service and that they should not be forced to continue with the kind of restrictions that now exist, restrictions which have existed since 1966, and which were reinforced by the directives sent by the Public Service Commission to all members of the public service during the months of February to July this summer.

The Hon. Member did not comment, however, on the specific promises that were made by his leader, now the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), and by the Conservative Party during the course of the summer election campaign. Perhaps he recalls that in response to questionnaires from the Professional Institute, and also from the Public Service Alliance, that the promise was made that a Progressive Conservative Government would in fact set up a parliamentary task force or parliamentary committee and would assign that committee the job of looking into the question of political rights of public service workers with a view to taking early action.

While the Conservatives in the campaign did not say specifically what they intended to do, they made it very clear that they felt that most people working for the public service should have political rights. My question is whether the Hon. Member recalls that promise. I presume from his statement that he supports that action. Has he pressed the Government to in fact set up the committee which was promised? Can he give us a report, as a backbencher from the Government side, as to when that will likely take place?

Mr. Daubney: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Cassidy), my neighbour, for his question. I, of course, am aware of our position during the campaign. It is one that I support, as is clear from my remarks. It is one that I as a private Member will continue to work toward achieving.

In answer to one of the Hon. Member's subquestions, I have had discussions with certain Members of the Cabinet. I am confident that this question of political rights of public servants will be one that will form the subject matter of negotiations in due course between Treasury Board and various Government unions. As I said, I will certainly press for a parliamentary committee to investigate further. I think the D'Avignon Committee, which reported a few years ago, has gone a long way toward recommendations which in my view would be acceptable and workable. They are ones that I would be prepared to recommend to my colleagues on the front benches.

Mr. Cassidy: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the remarks of the Hon. Member. I think I made clear that certainly my Party has felt for a long time that these political rights should be given to people who work for the Public Service of Canada. My colleague from Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) has on several occasions brought forward Private Members' Bills for debate. In fact, that was the only occasion on which this matter was raised in the previous Parliament between 1980 and 1984.