

Adjournment Debate

and as a national program, it was looked at. Even today, the Hon. Member for Carleton—Charlotte indicated that if we look at the Memorandum of Understanding, it explicitly provides for the reduction or elimination of export charges on the basis of increased stumpage or other charges by provinces in softwood lumber production. I do not think that we have a tremendous problem, but clearly Canada is heading in the right direction to bring about an end to this charge.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Order, please. The hour provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. Pursuant to Standing Order 42(1), the order shall be dropped from the Order Paper.

• (1800)

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 66 is deemed to have been moved.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY—FUNDING OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT/CONSORTIUM'S APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Madam Speaker, last June I asked the then Minister of State for Science and Technology why, when the Conservative Party had been in opposition it had promised to double support for scientific research and development, we now find that the expenditures for scientific research and development are running at only 1.35 per cent of Gross National Product. The Minister replied that spending has increased significantly but that it took time to reorganize the apparatus of government in line with the Government's plans.

I point out that Canada is the only major industrialized country with trade deficits in all the major high technology groups, including aerospace, data processing, machines, drugs and electronic equipment. One of the major reasons for this low level of sales is because there is a very low level of research and development undertaken in Canada. To deal with the problem the Government has adopted an approach to scientific research and development under which government funding will not increase. In fact, funding for research in government laboratories and universities might decrease. Programs and institutions such as the National Research Council have already been eliminated or scaled down.

The Government expected that the increased effort and expenditures for scientific research and development would come from the private sector. This raises important and serious questions which have not even been considered let alone answered by the Government.

For example, will the private sector increase its efforts and expenditures by the very large amounts needed if we are ever to reach the goal of 2.5 per cent of GNP devoted to scientific research and development, a figure at which most other industrialized countries aim? Or will the private sector invest in the kinds of basic research which have been done in government laboratories and in our universities which, according to most scientists is absolutely essential, as has been emphasized so clearly by both our Nobel prize scientists, Dr. Herzberg and Dr. Polanyi? Or will its efforts be directed at its particular interests in the development part of scientific research and development for its specific benefits?

My second question to the Minister was why had the Government which looked to the private sector not approved the proposal for start-up assistance made by Pre-Carn Associates, a consortium of 31 member companies including Inco, Stelco, Hydro Québec and Ontario Hydro, to mention just a few. Dr. McNabb, the former head of NSERC, plays a leading role in this organization.

It was last June that I asked these questions. We checked again today and were told the following. Some 31 member companies have identified areas of research that they would like to pursue. The technical advisory committee has met a number of times. In the new year it will be putting out a call for proposals on research projects. It has not heard a single word from the federal Government with regard to its application for financial assistance to start up its organization. It understands that the Minister of State for Science and Technology (Mr. Oberle) is preparing a memo for Cabinet.

It seems obvious to us that the Department has been terribly slow in responding. Yet, it splashed grants around this summer for numerous high tech companies. We have to ask ourselves why a government which puts so much store in the private sector, a government which believes that the private sector can do most things and certainly do scientific research and development better than government laboratories and universities, has been so slow to fund this organization. Why can it not do something for basic research, which this organization proposes to foster, and come through with the grants for this organization which is dedicated to working on basic research in co-operation and conjunction with some of the major industrial companies in this country?

• (1805)

I call upon the Government to deal with this application quickly, and to deal with the whole question of scientific research and development in a serious manner, which it has not done up until now.

[Translation]

Mrs. Suzanne Duplessis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Science and Technology)): Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity I am given this evening to respond to the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow), the science and technology critic for the New