

GOVERNMENT



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### THE NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL OF CANADA

#### The First Forty Years

Late in 1916, the Government of Canada established the Honorary Advisory Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, now known under the short title "National Research Council".

In 1917, the National Research Council -- at first an advisory body of eleven men responsible to a committee of six Cabinet Ministers -- began by making a survey of Canada's scientific resources. This inventory showed that industrial research, at that time, was practically non-existent in Canada, and that the national supply of research men, capable of independent investigation, was entirely inadequate. The universities were almost completely absorbed in undergraduate work, the overloaded teachers had little time for research, and scholarships for graduate work were lacking. Hence at that time, most of Canada's postgraduate students went to foreign universities and many of them did not come back.

With a great sense of urgency, the Council set up a system of scholarships to assist students in their post-graduate training, and a system of grants to professors to stimulate research in Canadian universities. More than 2,100 students have held Council scholarships and a similar number of very able students have been employed as research assistants by the professors who have received Council grants. Today, the Council's "alumni" occupy many of the senior scientific positions across Canada. These policies were so soundly based and so successful that they are still an important part of the Council's activities.

In the same year, 1917, the Council began to co-ordinate research programmes of a national character by means of the associate committee mechanism. The procedure is simple but very effective. When a main problem arises the Council calls together all the leading persons in Canada who are working on the problem or who are particularly qualified to offer advice because of special training or experience. Their first duty is to review the present state of knowledge on that problem both in Canada and abroad. They then draft a specific research programme for Canada. This eliminates any duplication of effort. These men serve without salary, and there are normally about 25 to 30 of these associate committees in operation at any one time.