

THE SENATE

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE POLICY

EVIDENCE

Ottawa, Tuesday, November 26, 1968.

The Special Committee on Science Policy met this day at 10 a.m.

Senator Maurice Lamontagne (*Chairman*) in the Chair.

The Chairman: Honourable senators, I am sure that we are all very grateful to Dr. Solandt for again making himself available to the committee, and I know that this meeting will also prove most useful to us.

If I remember rightly, at our last meeting we went through part of the policy report of the Science Council with Dr. Solandt and Dr. Gaudry, and I believe we had reached section 5 in our detailed examination. Without further ado I think we should proceed from that point. Are there any questions?

Senator Grosart: I have one on page 25, where they comment in the report:

Yet another problem in the development of science in Canada is the tendency of organizations whose missions have been realized, or which have demonstrably failed to reach their objectives, to follow programs which are diffuse and self-perpetuating.

I notice that later on you suggest one of the answers is a more or less continuing technical audit of these programs. Do you see this setup as a comprehensive audit done, let us say, by a minister with some responsibility in this area, or are you speaking of audits department by department or project by project? Do you see this being an essential element in an overall science policy of the Government?

Dr. Omond Solandt, Chairman, Science Council of Canada: I see the practice of doing this as a very important element in science policy, but I visualize it being done department by department or agency by agency by people who are knowledgeable in the field but who are not committed to that particular department or agency. For, say, the Division

of Applied Physics in the NRC I would see this as a small committee, which would include a couple of people interested in the application of physics in industry and maybe one or two from the universities, who would come in once a year, go over the program and question the relevance of each program.

Basically what you should do is say, "What will the result be if this program is successful?" That is the first question. The second question is, "How likely is it to be successful?" I am quite sure that if this is done systematically in all the applied research groups in the Government—it can be done in agriculture, fisheries, forestry, mining and all the others—it will lead to a continual stopping of programs. Every year there will be a few. It will be a small percentage but over the years it adds up to a great deal.

I think you keep an applied research organization so much more alive and so much more interested and effective if you prune out projects which have obviously failed and are not going to achieve their objective, or whose objective has been bypassed by some other action that may have happened in some other part of the world where somebody else may have found a good answer to your problem. It is amazing how often these things are not stopped; they keep on drifting away from their original mission-orientation towards being more broadly-based research in the same field but not really properly planned.

The Chairman: You make that statement on page 25 but you do not mention any cases. Do you have any examples in mind within Canadian experience?

Dr. Solandt: It is a little difficult to mention for the record, because I do not know that I have any that are carefully documented. I am sure that you can find these in fields like agriculture and fisheries. One minor one which I heard of recently is that the National Research Council has been working on a counter-mortar radar since 1944 or 1945 and