

Supply

with what it calls the global market-place by merging Canada into a free trade agreement with the United States.

An hon. member: What a joke.

Mr. MacWilliam: While it does that and states that we must be competitive in the global market, we must be competitive in terms of economic development initiatives and technological initiatives. At the same time it kneecaps our post-secondary education institutions across Canada by withdrawing the EPF funding and stating that the provinces have to bear responsibility for it. It pulls back on Canada's commitment to research and development by stating that the corporate sector has to bear the burden. Well, you cannot have it both ways. If we are going to compete in a global economy and in a technological market out there and advance in terms of research and development, then we need a consistent federal presence and the funding up front and centre in order to do that.

In the recent budget the Minister of Finance cut science and technology support by about \$40 million. The Conference Board of Canada found in its survey of businesses that in terms of research and development, corporations plan below inflation growth in spending for R and D right through until 1994. While the government is stating that the private sector has to pick up the slack, the private sector is at the same time stating that it will cut back on research and development. One of the reasons it will cut back on research and development is because it cannot find enough trained people to take on the technologically sophisticated jobs and the tasks at hand. The private sector cannot find enough educated and professional people. One of the reasons it cannot find them is because they are moving south of the border and elsewhere, where job opportunities are better. I have worked in research out west in the universities. I spent some time in the scientific community. I will tell you very clearly as someone who has trained as a scientist before I got into education, the feeling out west in the scientific community is that if you want to go anywhere you have to either move to the States or back to Ontario, because there is not the funding and the commitment there in order to build a solid presence.

I would suggest that that feeling exists in other areas of our land such as the Atlantic provinces. That is why we

need a federal commitment, so we can apply funding across the country, province by province, region by region, and develop the kinds of research and development initiatives on a consistent basis that cannot be there if the federal government pulls back from its funding and allows a kind of educational balkanization of our scientific community.

We have ourselves in a catch-22 situation. The federal government wants to pull back and leave it to the private sector. The private sector wants to cut back on its commitment to research and development because it cannot find enough trained people. We do not have enough trained people because the government is cutting back more and more on educational funding.

The minister recognizes the fact that a recent study demonstrates that Canada is a scientifically illiterate country. That is amazing. The result of that study demonstrates illiteracy in terms of scientific awareness in this land. We have a long way to go. We have a lot to do to catch up in terms of Canada's position in the global scientific community and in terms of the appropriate funding mechanisms that we need in place to make sure we can become competitive and stay competitive.

If the government believes in building a bright future for Canada, it cannot do so by progressively reducing its support of our colleges and post-secondary institutions which provide the highly trained individuals that are necessary for increasing our competitiveness in a knowledge based economy. It is as simple as that.

A recent news release showed that up to 500 jobs at the National Research Council could be cut by 1995. Five hundred jobs, 500 highly trained individuals will be put out of work and looking elsewhere for work. I suggest there will be a migration of those trained individuals to our neighbour to the south, as well as other countries, that will welcome them and their expertise. Is that a commitment to research and development in this country? I suggest that it is not.

It will initiate an acceleration of the exodus of scientific talent from this land, an exodus that in my experience I have seen happen for 20 years in the scientific community.

When we look back to 1984 when the government first came to power, 486 jobs have disappeared since that time in the National Research Council. Now we find another 500 jobs are on the chopping block. That is not a