

*Science and Technology*

chance to diversify their products, so that we are up against tough competition sometimes from abroad. One only has to look, for example, at what the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce has been facing for the last two months—the Textile and Clothing Board that is to inquire into imports that prejudice our own production.

The minister takes action belatedly after the Canadian Textile and Clothing Board has temporarily suspended a specific kind of import, and I think it was polyester or cotton fiber. But as it suspends through the Canadian Textile and Clothing Board imports of a certain kind, no department, let alone Science and Technology, is going to help the injured industries to improve their production so as to compete with those imports in the future. In other words, open competition is hampered because we lack a meaningful policy on science and technology. One can no longer say, especially because of the cost of labour, that Canadian industry can compete with foreign industry. And yet that is the most money, labour, and investments are to be found.

Mr. Speaker, I think this country should have a science policy that already exists and is not left on the shelves in countless reports without ever being implemented. There is also something else I wanted to tell the minister. The department, contrary to what my New Democrat colleague thinks, is a constant source of disappointment to me—it is nonchalant yet, it is responsible for science, technology and public works. I will give you an example: shipping in the St. Lawrence Seaway.

Some may say, Mr. Speaker, that this has nothing to do with the motion before us. I only need a minute to show that it is quite the opposite. As regards shipping on the St. Lawrence, at the beginning, following the dredging of the river, transportation was done by ships up to the Montreal harbour and to the Great Lakes. But those ships did not have the same tonnage as today's ships nor the same speed. As a consequence, in 1975 there were serious damage and landslides endangering even the life of some of our fellow citizens along the river, especially on the south shore. As far as transportation is concerned, those are technological consequences related to inspectors and studies under the jurisdiction of this famous minister.

Several times I asked the minister to conduct a scientific study on the impact of shipping on the St. Lawrence Seaway because of higher speed due to ships of greater tonnage. Thanks to the experts of his department, the so-called engineers and the so-called experts, it was discovered that the erosion of the shoreline had nothing to do with shipping. But, last week, that same minister admitted publicly that a study was being made. How much land will be lost along the shoreline before the department finally takes action? How many victims of such idleness will there be before this obsolete policy is reviewed on the advice of the departmental technicians and engineers?

The motion introduced by the hon. member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre) concludes thus, and I quote:

... science policy... thereby contributing to the long-term benefit of both Canadians and the Canadian economy.

That is what I understood. I understood, Mr. Speaker, that we have the know-how, the engineers and probably the goodwill also. But the delays and the awkwardness of the government are such that today people are deeply

[Mr. Fortin.]

affected. The minister cannot claim that he does not have enough experts around him to assess the impact of shipping on the St. Lawrence Seaway. After all, this is an extremely important source of revenue and I wonder why the matter is overlooked. It is an implication or an application of knowledge which is today much more developed in science or technology.

Mr. Speaker, this is one of the examples that I wanted to give today to remind the minister of the urgent need for action. Whole properties have practically slipped into the St. Lawrence at Deschailons. We have sent about ten letters to the minister. Not only does he not answer, but he refers to an answer he gave me two years ago. It means, Mr. Speaker, that neither the minister nor his experts have made any progress in the last two years. As I said before, how many victims will there have to be? I may be not very learned, but I believe that the use of science and technology is one example.

Mr. Speaker, every member could speak of the impact of the research made by the government in various fields and left unused. The improved condition of society, the respect for the human being, the improvement of a community or the development of a civilization more free, more respectful of human elements, a civilization commonly called "a leisure civilization" require the sharing or the co-operation of all private and public groups so that we may enjoy the benefits of the advance of science. Otherwise, it is useless to look for new techniques, to improve our production or the quality of our products, if finally the people do not profit by it.

Mr. Speaker, this government is probably striving to develop a meaningful science policy. But with my experience of seven years in this House with the minister, even if he were to announce this afternoon a sensational science policy, I would ask for proof that the experts in his department are not there for the sole purpose of getting pay cheques or enjoying job security, but to truly serve the interests of the people. I would simply remind the minister of shipping problems and their implications for the St. Lawrence Seaway. If he solves them, I will then say he means what he says.

If the rules allowed it, I would be very happy to table what I call stupid answers by the minister as far as shipping is concerned. This stands to show how much I am serious today. This may not be as important to every member here, but as far as I am concerned it is, because we have there a tremendous resource.

Scientists from the department came to set up oceanographical apparatus and all kinds of scientific equipment. They even came to install machines to check whether erosion is caused by the tide or shipping, which they placed more than 3,000 feet away from the shoreline when the ships sail closer to the shore. Therefore, their report shows that shipping has no impact on shore damage.

If the minister calls that scientific work, he who is Minister of Science and Technology, I shall certainly question what he says this afternoon. Mr. Speaker, to my mind, that point is extremely important. I appeal to the goodwill of the minister, if he has any left: let him prove, once and for all, that he is really the minister responsible for the development, advancement and progress of science and technology in Canada, and not merely a minister who