

THE NATURE OF
THE NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The need for organized and correlated scientific research was widely recognized during World War I when the value of science to Canada's industry was definitely established.

In 1916, the Government of Canada, acting upon the suggestion of the Government of Great Britain, set up the Honorary Advisory Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, known by its short title - "National Research Council".

The Research Council Act, establishing the Council, was passed in 1917, amended in 1924 and again in 1946.

One of the first activities of the Council was to take, in 1917, a research inventory of Canada. This disclosed that industrial research was practically non-existent in Canada and that the supply of scientists capable of undertaking research was entirely inadequate.

Pending the establishment of its own laboratories, the National Research Council directed its activities along three main lines.

(a) The co-ordination of research and the organization of co-operative investigations through competent and representative committees;

(b) The postgraduate training, through scholarships, of students selected for their aptitude in scientific research;

(c) The encouragement of graduate research through financial grants to heads of science departments in Canadian universities.

The Research Council Act was amended in 1924 to provide for the establishment of the National Research Council Laboratories. Laboratories were set up at the time in temporary quarters. Construction of the present National Research Building at Ottawa was completed in 1932. Additional provision for laboratory space was made in 1939; laboratories for work in aeronautics, hydrodynamics, structures, gasoline and oil studies, aircraft engine testing and explosives were installed and general shops were constructed.

The Research Council Act was again amended in 1946 to strengthen the inner structure of the Council and enable it to meet its enlarged responsibilities. The Council was given the right to create government owned companies to carry out projects on which research was done in Research Council laboratories.