

with which it has shrouded many of its decisions, particularly the decisions in connection with the scientific policies which the government intends to adopt. The government must outline, not only to parliament but to the people and the scientific community of Canada, the direction it is going to take in the matter of scientific development. This is one area in which the government's inclination toward secrecy, its tendency to withhold information and its aversion to explaining anything to anybody will have terrible results for Canada.

Scientists, I think are no less realistic in this matter than anybody else. I am sure they are prepared to accept the fact that there is a limitation on the amount of money that a government can spend in any particular field, be it the scientific field or any other. They are prepared and must be prepared to accept the need for priorities, priorities in public spending and priorities in scientific development.

The scientists will understand and accept, as we will, Mr. Speaker, reasonable explanations of reasonable positions in these matters. But I believe that we have the right to insist that the government make such explanations. The scientific community wants to know, and parliament and the country are entitled to know, on what basis the recent decision to abandon support for three particular scientific projects was made. We think that the government should lay on the table the scientific reports on which its decisions were based, and it should relate in some detail reasons for its policy in each of these three matters.

As far as I know, Mr. Speaker, no one in the scientific community has ever said that the ING project was a bad one. In fact, there is unanimous agreement that it has great possibilities for Canada in the field of nuclear energy. The objections that have come from the scientific community have arisen from the knowledge that there is a limit to what the government can spend, and that the government does intend to cut back on its spending for scientific projects.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, the question was one of priorities. There are dozens of excellent development projects on the drawing board vying for government support. Consequently, it was a very delicate operation to settle the priorities that the government intended to adopt and to maintain the balance of scientific progress. This operation called for a detailed and clear explanation of the factors involved in making the decision to drop the ING project, of the factors that

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might lead the government to adopt some other project and to proceed in some other field. The community should have been given some idea where the government was going.

As I say, Mr. Speaker, this was a delicate operation that should have been carefully explained by the government so that the whole scientific community would have had some indication that the government really did intend to proceed with scientific projects, perhaps in another field. The government's secret decision to drop this whole ING project was like dropping a rock into a basket of eggs. The attitude of the government was a negative one which demolished the project. I fear that unless the government makes some explanation very soon damage will have been done to our country.

Two or three ministers seem to have been involved in this matter, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Greene) made the announcement because of his responsibility for atomic energy. But there are one or two other ministers who have some general responsibility for scientific matters, and it was for this reason that questions this morning were directed to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). Unfortunately, these questions brought forth no response and we are left without any knowledge of where the government intends to go.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I say that the government must not let another day go by without a full statement on its policy and intentions in the scientific field. The dark cloud that now hovers over scientific effort in Canada must be removed, and there must be a clear statement of our goals in this field. I urge the government to make a statement so that the house will know, first, why ING was dropped; second, what is intended to take its place; and third, into what other field of scientific endeavour the government intends to move. Finally, I ask the government to give some assurance that it will begin to explain what it is doing to the people of Canada.

**Mr. John Burton (Regina East):** Mr. Speaker, on rising for the first time to take part in debate in this chamber, I am happy to join with other hon. members in extending congratulations to yourself, sir, on your re-election as Speaker. I also extend congratulations to the Deputy Speaker and to the mover (Mr. Corbin) and seconder (Mr. Marchand) of the address in reply. As the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Aiken) resumes his seat I want to compliment him on his