

Industrial Research Incentives Act

loan these people in order that they may advise Canadian industry. I compliment the minister and the government on this legislation. I hope all hon. members and all Canadians will support our scientific community and give it the due it deserves. Our scientists have worked hard for this country.

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): I wish to make just a few points, Mr. Speaker, not wanting to filibuster my own bill.

The hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent) seemed to think that because this IRDIA legislation on research and development is general, it may not be as useful as if it were specific. At least this is the way his argument sounded. In answer to that I might say that facts do not seem to give any credence to this line of reasoning. We have a growing number of applications for support under IRDIA. In 1967-68, 267 applications were received; in 1969-70, 623 applications were received, and in 1970-71 it is estimated there will be 704 applications. This does not appear to give credence to the argument that because it is general, it is not being used. That may not be the full purport of the argument, but that is what I understood.

Further proof to the contrary is the growing amount allocated to it—\$19.6 million in 1968-69, \$22.7 million in 1969-70 and \$30 million estimated for the present year. Indeed, there has been some falling short, mostly because of delayed applications and provisions for information. This is getting much better now. As a matter of fact, some of the amendments before the House this evening will lead to an improvement of procedures for acceptance of applications.

• (8:50 p.m.)

The information I have is that the review committee found that all programs were popular with industry, both the general and the specific ones. A few days ago I took part in a little ceremony at the Chateau where the department explained to a number of businessmen and provincial government officials the changes that were taking place. Although I had already left—I am never present when things like this happen—apparently at the end of the meeting the department was given a standing ovation. All programs seem most popular with industry, so much so that even though the general programs do not hit the point as well as others do, they nevertheless have been very well used.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, would the minister permit a question on this point? He dealt with one question that I raised concerning the general efficacy of the programs in terms of enticing firms to do research. The more serious point I wanted to raise was that the general programs serve as a means of publicly subsidizing private research that would have been conducted in any case. Has the minister access to any studies done either by his department or by others that would provide evidence one way or the other on this question?

Mr. Pepin: No, Mr. Speaker, I have not seen such analysis. However, as the hon. member for Okanagan-Boundary (Mr. Howard) said, this is the sort of research that would be most difficult to make, because obviously we are not there when the decision to use the program or not is made. But we are not taking chances. We believe very much in research and development. My department has tried to develop as wide a spectrum of programs as possible in order that no industry in Canada would be justified in saying that it was not conducting research and development because there was no program to suit its particular situation. We have tried to have variety in our programs, some are concerned with defence, others with the civilian sector. Some are specific, some general, in order to catch all possible flies.

Second, the hon. member asked me whether I should like to table the report of the committee that reviewed the different programs of research and development. There is a long debate going on now on the subject of the secrecy—as some points of view would allege—or the privacy of government operations. I have some very clear views on that matter. It should be obvious to everybody that industries which come to us for grants most of the time cannot afford the luxury of other companies knowing that they are going to conduct a particular type of research.

Thinking of it in terms of internal communication, if my department is to conduct research into the deficiencies of certain programs, and while doing so is led to think that those deficiencies are in part, for example, deficiencies of the minister, then I do not think anybody would accept the proposition that that kind of report should be tabled in the House!

Mr. Aiken: Well, not that particular one.

Mr. Pepin: Thank you. I think that a department such as mine cannot afford to