

CANADIAN POLICY

Debate without End

from a Special Correspondent

Ottawa, March

CANADA may yet be the first country with an overall science policy, and this within about two years. A debate on the subject is now being pursued vigorously amongst politicians and scientists, and was plainly seen at the recent Fifteenth Winter Conference in Toronto sponsored by the Canadian Institute on Public Affairs and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. The outcome of this debate will be the result of the resolution of a conflict of outlook between two powerful political personalities, both members of the ruling Liberal Party. One is the unofficial "Science Minister", Mr C. M. Drury, the president of the powerful Treasury Board and the minister to whom the National Research Council reports, chairman of the Privy Council's Committee on Scientific and Industrial Research and Controller of the Science Secretariat. The other is Senator Maurice Lamontagne, a former minister and chairman of the Senate's Special Committee on Science Policy. They are both agreed on the need for an overall science policy. They differ about the forms required.

Mr Drury has a Panglossian approach, and would allow existing institutions to formulate and implement policy through such bodies as the Privy Council Committee, the Science Secretariat, the Science Council, the NRC and the Treasury Board. He believes that Canadian science is healthy, and to set up any special structure would run counter to the government's recently instituted system of planning, programming and budgeting. He opposes the appointment of a minister of science to head a new department on the grounds that this would narrow the application of science, and he is opposed even to the notion that a Cabinet member might be named minister of science policy for fear that he might be considered "a mere lobbyist for the scientific community".

Senator Lamontagne proposed two years ago that a federal science department should be established, but he now favours the appointment of a Minister of Scientific Affairs as an overlord for science with powers and instruments to implement decisions. This reflects some of the thinking of figures such as Dr Omond Solandt—Canada's analogue of Sir Solly Zuckerman—who as chairman of the Science Council was responsible for the report *Towards a National Science Policy for Canada* (*Nature*, **221**, 707; 1969). This represents the first step in the formulation of the overall science policy and emphasizes the formative influence of mission-oriented programmes.

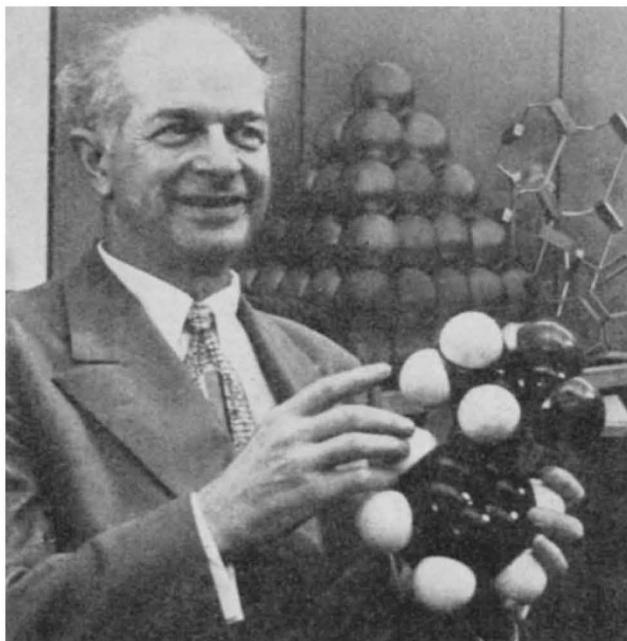
The Science Council recommends that each new activity in research and development should be "critically examined at its outset to identify the appropriate organization to carry through the project to its final conclusion". The result could be that universities and industry will perform more research and development. The Science Council has also proposed that there should be large multidisciplinary mission-oriented projects having as a goal the solution of important economic or social problems and in which all sectors of the scientific community participate on an equal footing. Two prototype programmes to be set in hand immediately are in space research and in the management of water resources. Transportation, urban

development, computer applications and aid to developing countries are to be planned along the same lines.

The Science Council itself will from April 1 secure greater independence by becoming a royal corporation, with its own finances, staff and a position equal with that of the Economic Council. So far, it has been serviced by the Science Secretariat in the Privy Council Office. Its chairman and other officers are part-time servants, but there is a strong feeling that it should have a full-time chairman as well as the full-time executive officer, Dr P. McTaggart-Cowan. It also has members from government departments, and the feeling is that if the council is to be truly independent these should be called on to resign. The situation is fluid and anything may happen before this year is out.

The Science Council was not created to become the voice of the scientific community, but this role is being thrust on it. Meanwhile, the report of the Lamontagne Committee is eagerly awaited, and the private sector of industry has still to be heard. Only when this is in the hands of the Federal Prime Minister will the appropriate machinery finally be set up to allow a national science policy to be developed in Canada.

SETTLING DOWN

New Base for Pauling

PROFESSOR LINUS PAULING is to move to Stanford from the University of California at San Diego on July 1. His new university was delighted to claim its sixth Nobel prizewinner last week; and Pauling, of course, is the only person who holds two of these distinctions. No doubt his arrival at Stanford will bring a sense of involvement with the outside world to a campus which has a long tradition of self-preoccupation. Pauling, who is 68, says that he will teach as well as continue with his own work. His well-wishers will be glad if it turns out that he has found somewhere congenial to settle after the rigours of Caltech, where he spent most of his professional life.