

*Supply*

Similarly, Mr. Speaker, we are also facing, perhaps, a new shadow on the horizon which again will have a very, very dark impact upon the occupational role of women, that is, the changing of our industrial structure. My colleague, the Hon. Minister of Labour (Mr. Caccia), has commissioned a major task force which has reported on the technological change which we will be experiencing in this area. What is pointed out very clearly is the way in which women will be, perhaps, the group of society most profoundly affected by that change, because the occupations which will be altered and adjusted are those which are susceptible to the new microchip technology. That makes it all the more imperative and critical that we address the employment occupational role of women in our society. We must help them adjust to their new jobs, their new training and their new employment opportunities.

I believe that that particular exercise is one which we tried to address almost three years ago at the beginning of this new Government. We recognized that we would have to start a number of initiatives on a number of fronts in order to address that problem. The first area where we attempted to meet the issue was on the basic support which we could give to women in terms of their entry into the work force and their adjustment to new jobs. It was quite clear that many of the systems of guidance and counselling which were available to women were not sufficient because in many respects the ability of younger women in the school system to gain that kind of information was simply non-existent. These women were in fact preparing themselves for occupations which were not going to be there in the future, which simply would no longer exist. Furthermore, women coming into the work force after their families had grown up also did not have the proper skills, the orientation or know-how to go and get that first job or take advantage of the opportunities which might exist.

● (1710)

One of the critical issues we tried to face was to improve substantially and to upgrade the counselling, guidance and employment information system available to Government. Let me just point out two major initiatives we have taken. I think this does reflect in part on the Opposition resolution. We decided that one of the most important things to do was to develop a network of specialized counselling centres for women which would be able to concentrate and specialize in the problems women have in the work force, and make sure they were available on a much wider basis. When I took over this ministry, Mr. Speaker, the number of Outreach Programs available to women, instituted by the previous Government, was 14. I am proud to say that there are now 32. We have virtually doubled the number of Outreach projects, and we will continue to increase those numbers as time goes on. So when Hon. Members talk about sensitivity, I ask, where were they in 1979 when they had the opportunity to do the very same thing but did not do it? There was no increase in Outreach Programs to help women.

Similarly, we recognize that in our own network of employment centres we had to establish a system which would provide specialized centres and a source of information which could radiate out through the other employment counselling centres

across Canada. So what we have done is to establish a series of nine specialized women's counselling units in major centres across Canada. Their job and responsibility is to work with other employment centres, the school system and provincial Governments to provide that specialized counselling, training and information, and make it available to women.

I have a sheaf of correspondence which I received from a number of women who have gone through those programs, benefited from them and have now been able to gain a new or different kind of employment as a result of the services offered. I simply point out that those pilot projects can provide the prototype that we would like to apply across the board to ensure that we are able to take the initiative. I think that indicates that indeed we are responsive and sensitive to the employment concerns of women by putting that network in place.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, going beyond counselling and guidance, you must provide the link in the chain which will ensure that women have adequate and proper skills to take the jobs that will be there. I cannot over-emphasize the critical importance of training as a key element enabling women to cope with the present ghettoization they face, but also to adjust to the new world of work they will be forced to face as this decade proceeds. The ability to acquire new skills and move into new occupational areas is really at the centre of our employment strategy, and one I think which provides the greatest opportunity for women to make a major leap forward in obtaining new occupational opportunities.

So the question is, what have we attempted to do under this particular category of initiatives? Again, the most important step was the passing of a new National Training Act. That Act had the support of Opposition Members, and I am still appreciative of that response. It has also been well received by all the Provinces, which have signed agreements under that Act and are now working jointly with us in its implementation. There are a number of initiatives in that program with special relevance to women. First is the establishment of the COPS program, which will really be a future navigational system to detect and determine the occupational changes in the labour force. We have been flying blind for so long in this country, not knowing what jobs will be there and the skills required to meet them. So we now have established a pooled information system, using all the modern techniques of forecasting, to enable us to begin to forecast and look ahead to the kind of jobs that will be there. Once we have that information in place we will be able to transmit it back into the school system so that young men and women can begin preparing themselves for the jobs that will be there. The school program will then anticipate, not merely react, and then share that information with employers, trade unions and provincial Governments so that we have an early warning system so that young people will not be caught in an occupational trap. They will be able to anticipate and therefore prepare themselves.

A second element of that program is the establishment of the skills growth fund, because we recognize that in order to