

### *The Address*

Canada's ability to prosper in a global economy will be determined by the level of Canadians' educational achievement, by the sophistication of our management skills, and by our attitudes to work and to change.

Further down he says:

As part of my government's new agenda for prosperity, a discussion paper on learning will be published to stimulate and focus discussion on education and training.

And there follows some vague, general promises of vast improvements in our educational system.

The experience by which Canadians must judge this is that the government's pledges to cut illiteracy in Canada just are not matched by its present actions. It has been cutting its educational commitment to post-secondary education and training year by year. It promised a labour force development board or national training board. It was announced in January and has not met yet. We do not know whether it will meet. We do not have any idea what it will do. One thing we do know is that after promising a handsome training project at the cost of the workers' and employers' unemployment payments, at no cost to the government, they took \$100 million out of that for the gulf war.

We also know that the Conservative sales tax proposals include, for the first time in our history, a tax on books and other reading materials. So much for the Prime Minister's credibility in promising vast improvements in our education.

The fact is that there is mounting opposition for these reasons to the free trade agreement, and not only within Canada. Yes, in Canada I have participated in labour meetings, in the fall in Vancouver and earlier this year in Toronto, in which there was strong insistence that methods will be found to prevent heedless plant closings like the closing of Caterpillar, a profitable plant closed simply to increase the profits of the parent company by finding a low wage, non-union area in the American south, and demands going beyond that, that the people of Canada should have control over the disposition of investments.

There is also growing opposition in Mexico. For several years there were small meetings between expert people in church and labour to establish some of the comparable facts in the two countries. There was a major conference last fall with Canadians visiting Mexico and

alerting Mexican labour leaders, officials of government, unions, universities and churches to the experience of the free trade agreement in Canada, the experience of the job losses, contrary to the promise of job increases.

The Canadians who went also learned more about the suppression of human rights in Mexico and the vote rigging at election time used to maintain the PRI in power, the *Partido de la Revolution Institucional*, the party that has ruled Mexico for 72 years. It is the party under which assassinations of labour leaders and other opposition critics are rarely investigated by the police and almost never lead to prosecution and punishment of those responsible. These are apparently necessary to keep the PRI in power, including the government of President Salinas.

• (1620)

We also learned how the peasants are being forced off the land to swell the many, many millions of unemployed in Mexico. We learned how the labour laws are not enforced. There are five to ten million children under the legal age of 15 working in the factories. Why? It is because the owner of the factory or the manager is allowed to take a falsified photocopy of a birth certificate and because for 22,000 factories there are three inspectors to enforce the law. They might be able to visit every factory once in 20 years.

We also learned of the so-called benefit of industrialization of the 500,000 workers in the new areas of the Maquiladora strip, mostly runaway plants from the United States and Canada. The effect has been that in Mexico as a whole the buying power of people's wages has been cut in half during the eighties. So much for the benefits to be brought to the Mexican workers by shutting down factories in Canada or the United States. In fact, Mexican trade unionists told some of us when I was there in March that what we need is an international bill of rights for labour.

The opposition is growing in the United States. This winter and spring there has been mounting mobilization against the free trade agreement. It has not arrived at the point of stopping it yet, but the opposition will increase, the more people experience what it means.

At a meeting I attended in Chicago and at a meeting two of my caucus colleagues attended in Washington, we found that more and more groups of labour, church and