

Supply

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, maybe the Hon. Member was not present for the first part of my speech but this is one of the important points I was trying to bring home. In the first two industrial revolutions there was dramatic job displacement. We went from an agricultural society to a steam engine society to a combustion engine society. We lost 80 per cent of the jobs in the agricultural sector. However, those jobs were then replaced by new jobs in factories. The automobile industry was a new sector where jobs were created. Much of this could not have been imagined when the first and second industrial revolutions started.

● (1600)

Therefore, one of the points I was trying to stress was that jobs will be coming along with the new technologies which are being developed. Our job is not so much to be frightened, to panic and to look for spurious ways of dealing with it, but, rather, to go with the technological revolution and retrain in those new, emerging industries as they come forward.

Mr. Lewycky: Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to what the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Lang) said. I am just wondering if he could tell me whether he is aware that with regard to high technology there is a very great regional disparity. There are the high-tech centres of the various parts of the country where the young people are very much aware of the potential, and they also have the opportunity to participate in the types of programs which are available. Is the Parliamentary Secretary aware of the great regional disparity and, if so, can he tell us what types of plans his Government has to ensure that people from rural and northern areas are able to participate in the information revolution that we are experiencing in this country?

Mr. Lang: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am quite aware of the regional disparities existing in Canada. They have been existing here ever since this great country was put together in Confederation.

Mr. McGrath: That is not so.

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. McGrath: That shows an ignorance of Canadian history.

Mr. Lang:—the Government has been aware of this problem. For quite a number of years, the Government has had the Department of DREE, which has now been merged with the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce, to deal with that specific problem, even before the technological revolution occurred.

However, I think the point made by the Hon. Member is a very good one. The factor involving regional disparities is certainly one which Governments at both the federal and provincial levels must recognize in their policies. Our Government is cognizant of the problem, as indicated by the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Lumley) with his announcement in the House of a new program dealing with

regional disparities. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce sufficiently outlined it in his speech. I will not try to encapsulate it in a response to the Hon. Member's question.

Mr. Lewycky: I am not asking for a summary of the Minister's speech, but I would like to know if there are specific ways in which the Government will be including people from rural and northern areas. For example, the Canada Tomorrow Conference was discussed. Will there be people from northern Indian reserves and from rural western and northern Canada participating in this type of conference so that they might become aware of some of the present possibilities in the high-tech cocoon? People outside of the cocoon are not as exposed to such possibilities. I am just wondering if the Hon. Member could indicate some specific plans of the Government to ensure that these parts of Canada are included.

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, to be quite straightforward concerning the specific conference mentioned by the Hon. Member, the Canada Tomorrow Conference, I do not know of the detailed plans or of the accessibility to be afforded to people from various rural and urban regions to attend the conference. I do know that the Government considers it to be a very high priority that all Canadians be aware of the technological revolution which is occurring and aware of the part that we must all play in it, as I have outlined in my speech.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the Conservative Party brought forth the motion today concerning the lack of research and development in this country. I think that all one must do is consider the statistics and compare Canada with other countries around the world to see that we, as a nation, have really fallen down in terms of spending money on research and development and thus ensuring that we keep up with the rest of the world.

We have spoken at length today about the transition from the industrial society to the information society. I wish to begin my remarks by saying that I am glad there is a growing realization among Hon. Members in the House that we are in the new society, in the age of the computer, that things have really changed. Whether we like it or not, we are now here and we cannot turn back the clock. Unfortunately, one still hears Hon. Members of different political parties pretending that we will go back to the good old days, but that will not happen.

If one wishes to consider what is happening in Canada today or Canada tomorrow, all one must do is look at one's own children. For example, in our case, my wife and I have a nine year old boy. A few weeks ago our television went on the blink. My wife works in the television field and she and I tried to repair it. We tried to adjust it and spent a great deal of time, but we could not do it. Our nine year old boy, Jason, said: "Daddy, you are stupid; let me try".

Mr. Nickerson: He's got it right.

Mr. Nystrom: He has it right. I was about to take it into a television repair shop. After 15 minutes, at the age of nine,