

Some of the key elements I see are: the communications and technological revolution that, I would almost say is engulfing us; the human dimension of economic restructuring - which to a large extent is a result of this revolution; and the fiscal realities that our governments are facing. In Canada, all government activities are now influenced and often determined by these realities, and our International Cultural Relations and Higher Education Program, like other government programs, must adapt to this situation. Very directly, this means declining budgets; more profoundly, it means a complete re-thinking of our programs and activities. Exchanges of views with like-minded countries, and international linkages are a high priority in this process of re-thinking, and this is the framework in which I would like to place our discussions to-day.

High on the agenda of the Canadian government are : job creation and human resource development. Both these issues have an important international element. We are moving into a knowledge-based world economy, in which information and all products of the human mind will flow freely across borders. Computer-based information networks, inter-active television, the 500-channel universe, the electronic information highway are all developing at a rapid pace, and will determine how economies are shaped. The challenge for governments is to guide these developments for the benefit of all their citizens.

In this new economic situation, knowledge will be the key to success. Already, only 15 percent of the active population physically touches a product - the other 85 percent add value through creation, invention, management and the transfer of information. Less than 25 percent of current technology will be competitive by the year 2000, but close to 90 percent of the workforce which will then be active, is already in place. The conclusion is obvious: learning and training and re-training is a national priority. In Canada, much of whose prosperity has traditionally rested on the exploitation of natural resources, this requires a fundamental change in our approach.

Institutions of higher learning have traditionally been the instruments for developing the human capital that is essential to a competitive and prosperous economy. They still are. But more than ever before, they must look across national borders, and plug into international networks. I see it as one of the important tasks of our Higher Education programs to help our universities and research institutes to develop international linkages, and to be connected to international networks.

The Canadian government expects us to demonstrate that our ICR activities are relevant to overall government objectives, and that, to put it bluntly, we can provide a return on investment. International higher education and human resource development have become strategic questions that must be seen in a context