

a decision, no matter what it may be, is, as the hon. member suggested, as important as arriving at the goal which the government, various parties or groups of individuals may pursue.

A special group of parliamentarians, such as that to which the motion refers, perhaps can consider matters relating to present day reality and questions which we must face. Perhaps it need not look as far ahead as the 1980s. In this country a number of consultative bodies function. I am thinking of bodies such as the Economic Council of Canada, the Science Council, and the Council for Social Development. I think the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona referred to such consultative bodies. Evidently, since the hon. member has suggested the establishment of a special group of parliamentarians for the purposes set out in the motion, he feels that the consultative bodies previously referred to are not totally in touch with present-day reality; that their reports are not sufficiently comprehensive and do not indicate clearly what we should do in the years to come.

If that is the hon. member's position, I agree with him. A special parliamentary group of the kind suggested could consult with the Canadian people about a number of areas of concern and return to Ottawa with interesting ideas. For example, take the field of education. All of us, young Canadians included, ask if our educational system is preparing people adequately for their entry into the labour force. Is it preparing Canadians for those tasks in the labour force which must be carried out in our complex society? Or, because our young are trained in the ideas of the past which considered higher education as a desirable goal in itself, and the alternatives to it as perhaps not worth pursuing, or attractive, are certain types of jobs in the labour force begging for takers left chronically unfilled?

I am referring to the large numbers of graduates our universities produce every year who are considered as over-qualified or too highly educated for the jobs available. For these reasons I suggest it is time the federal government looked carefully at our educational system. I know education is not a federal responsibility in the main. Nevertheless, employment and the labour market fall under federal jurisdiction. Therefore, it is of the greatest importance to the Canadian public and educational institutions, to determine if our educational institutions are in tune with the demands, needs, aspirations and realities of our labour market. Are we educating people to meet that demand?

● (1730)

Another area which comes to mind is that of renewable energy. The subject has already been mentioned by the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona, but I should like to add that consultation among Canadians as to what interest they have, what steps they are prepared to take, and what they would like the government to do in the field of solar energy, for instance, or the utilization of wind and tidal power, or of the utilization of the products of biomass, would be most valuable. The shortage of conventional energy sources will

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become more acute as the years go by, and certain decisions will have to be implemented probably much sooner and with a greater degree of priority than might presently appear likely.

Another area this committee could cover is that of automation and its effect in wiping out, virtually, large numbers of unskilled or semi-skilled jobs, resulting in unemployment unaccompanied by parallel work opportunities. Inevitably we see technology producing ways of eliminating jobs through the introduction of automation. Evidently this gives rise to difficulties with which the average Canadian is familiar either on a personal basis or through observation. As a phenomenon of our time it certainly has implications for the years ahead.

This displacement of the work force has yet another aspect. In Canada today we find an increasing number of people who, having spent 20 or 30 years at work in a highly demanding occupation, find themselves physically incapable of continuing in their jobs, simply because, having arrived in their fifties they have given the best of their energies. At this point they find there is no suitable alternative employment available to them, though this used to be the case before the trend to automation began. The alternatives are disappearing. Here we have individuals with five, ten or 15 years of useful working life ahead of them, who can find no place to go as a result of the trend in automation. I regard this as an important point, and it is one I should like to raise in relation to the motion before us.

Yet another field is that of the relationship of Canadians to their environment. This is a subject which concerns Canadians of all ages and at all income levels. National priorities would be well worth establishing. We would, I am sure, be able to find out what Canadians in all the various communities are thinking—those who live by the sea, in the mountains, in the cities or on the prairies. We could ascertain what Canadians believe governments at all levels should do to protect the environment. I am not thinking only of pollution. We all know what is taking place there. I have in mind the spread of new diseases such as the budworm disease in Nova Scotia which does not seem to respect provincial boundaries and which therefore calls for techniques based on a new approach.

Another thought which comes to mind is related to an issue which the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona raised last week—it was dealt with subsequently in the media—consequent upon the resignation of the Chairman of the Royal Commission on the Concentration of Corporate Power. There is definitely a need for a continuation of this kind of dialogue. The terms of reference of the Commission were criticized at an early stage as being too narrow. It was said that certain groups in Canadian society could not be heard. In view of the latest developments, it occurs to me that this question of the concentration of power in our system might well be one into which a parliamentary committee could inquire. The committee might spend some time establishing the consequences of this concentration of power, and determining what should be the policies of the eighties with regard to its redistribution.

When we talk of concentration of power we must also talk about taxation. The present system of taxation is designed to