

## IN TRAINING, ONLY WORK WORKS

(1) The *Consultation Paper on Training*\* asks: "Training for what jobs?" This question sets the stage for any discussion of training. However, we have not yet found a way to answer the question "training for what jobs?". All efforts at predicting the appearance of specific jobs have failed. We are poor prophets. At best, by projecting past trends, we can predict that change in the workplace will continue accelerating, as it has since the Industrial Revolution.

(2) Though we cannot predict which specific new jobs will emerge, we know more about which jobs will disappear: those in industries that manufacture mass-produced, standardized goods. Newly industrialized countries buy the latest technology and, with their cheaper labour, take away such manufacturing jobs from us. Only with robots, not people, would we stay in the field. Unless we adopted protectionism with all its prices, where our people will find work may be in

"... the production of those complex goods that require a high degree of flexibility, know-how and sophistication; and *innovation* in the development of new products or the improvement of existing ones. It is here that, by virtue of our more advanced expertise and higher levels of education, we can hope to retain comparative advantage over competitors in the newly-industrializing countries..."

(3) "What is true of manufacturing is even more true of the service sector: one of the key characteristics of our service economy is that it is knowledge-intensive. As one of still relatively few "post-industrial" societies in a world predominantly composed of newly industrializing countries, we have a potential comparative advantage in the form of a comparatively highly educated population and a relatively high degree of expertise. We need to compete vigorously in the large and growing market for know-how not only in such traditionally tradable services as banking, engineering and computer software, but in a whole host of other knowledge-intensive services needed by increasingly affluent developing countries seeking to build up their infrastructure: health care, education, agricultural technology, project management, business planning,

and so on." (*Ontario Study of the Service Sector*, p. 14, Ministry of Treasury and Economics, Dec. 1986.

(4) In Canada, the shift to services, knowledge-intensive or otherwise, is well under way. We have left the industrial age when our economy was almost solely resource-based and manufacturing was the major engine of growth. In this information age, the Canadian economy is undergoing — and has already undergone, to a great extent — a massive shift to services. Between 1976 and 1986, only 154,000 new jobs were created in the goods-producing sector and two million in services. The service sector accounts for 75% of employment in Canada or 72.4% of GDP.

(5) And the growth is most strong in knowledge-intensive jobs (para. 3 above). Between 1941 and 1981, knowledge-intensive producer or business services grew by 789% in Ontario; consumer services (restaurants, cleaners, barbers) only grew by 179% (*Ontario Study*, p. 10).

(6) To sum up: many of the old jobs will disappear. Many of the new ones will require higher levels of knowledge and skills, including social skills, but since

"It is simply not possible to predict what specific skills will be needed in the work force even five years from now ... We must conclude that a worker with mechanical training in specific skills is bound to be in a far less advantageous position than one who has learned how to study, think independently and learn quickly." (A.R. Dobell, President, Institute for Research on Public Policy, *Ontario Study*, p. 23.)

(7) The question, then, is: what kind of education and training best equips people with "core skills"? This training must cover the ability to read, write and understand complex material, to communicate in one's mother tongue, to know a certain level of mathematics and computer science, how society and the world work, and to learn how to learn. As well, we must give people the skills needed to work with a team, lead where appropriate, innovate, adapt to change. In short, we must teach people to assimilate information, transform it into knowledge and apply it in order to find, hold or create a job.

\* *Consultation Paper on Training*, Government of Canada, December 1984.