

Economic Development

The United States Congress has given Canada its assurance that the entire line will be built, and surely this should be sufficient for Canada to proceed immediately to approve the pre-build portion of the Alaska gas pipeline.

[Translation]

Mr. Dennis Dawson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the debate today dealt mostly with the industrial aspects of the industrial strategy or the close relation between the field of energy and that of industrial strategy. The incentive to industrial growth and the promotion of energy policy are the two most important challenges which we will have to accept during the eighties and in the future.

I will remind the House however that the most important part of our over-all economic strategy for the eighties is not capital investments or the development of technology itself but human beings for whom our economy exists and without whom it would not operate.

The most important aspect of the directions we should adopt for the 1980s concern our endeavours in the field of human resources and manpower adaptation. Our studies have indicated that nothing is more crucial for the future performance of the Canadian economy than the means with which we adapt it so that it is possible to make efficient changes. That is essentially the role of the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission.

Of course, the economic society we dream of rests on fundamental needs. It must have the necessary mechanisms to produce the skills needed to face the demands of our future growth.

It must also provide the necessary income and direct aid in cases of adjustment to facilitate inevitable geographic and occupational changes. In particular, it must work for a number of groups in our society which would otherwise lose ground or not fare well and thus cease to be full-fledged and productive members of our society. Wherever and whenever there is a high unemployment rate, it must provide jobs and formal as well as on-the-job training in fields in which skills are required, to ensure that we get maximum benefits from the efficient evolution of our industrial policy.

The House will recognize that it will not be easy to attain such goals. To do so, we must be sure of the direction we have taken, the problems we have studied and the chances of success. We must also foresee adequate planning on the national and regional scale, and be determined as well not to relinquish our objectives once these have been singled out.

Mr. Speaker, this is why the government has decided to create a special committee on employment opportunities for the eighties. This committee, chaired by my colleague from Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, will concern itself especially with the dearth of personnel in skilled jobs as well as seeking the advice

of the greatest number of interested people on other aspects of employment in the future.

[English]

Within employment and immigration, the labour market development task force is undertaking a fundamental review of the nature of the labour market and will work closely with the UI Review Task Force.

When these reviews are completed, the minister intends to establish the key directions for the remainder of the decade. It is, however, already clear that major changes are required. The government has already taken a number of steps to ensure that sound policies and programs related to human resources, people capital, are in place.

We have had, for over a decade, one of the strongest programs of adult occupational training in the western industrialized world. That program has provided retraining, and the upgrading of basic educational prerequisites to skilled training for many Canadians. It has provided language training to enable new immigrants to use the skills they bring to Canada, and it has played an essential role in assisting many, who would otherwise be condemned to poverty, to play productive and rewarding roles in our increasingly industrial society. Over the years the nature of the training provided has shifted toward a more industrial basis, and we expect that this year 55 per cent of the full time trainees will be undertaking apprenticeship or other forms of industrial training.

It is clear, however, that further changes and strengthening of the program are required. In too many of the trade skill areas Canada has been dependent on the now shrinking pool of foreign-trained tradesmen to supply our basic needs. We have been unable to ensure that our native people have the training required to take advantage of the economic opportunities which frequently arise in close proximity to them. We have found that our training programs have not been able to enable those women who wish to do so to break out of job ghettos.

That is why the Minister of Employment and Immigration last month announced new initiatives in these areas. The financial provision for the critical trade skills training program, which is designed to assist industry to generate the skills it finds in short supply, is being expanded from \$20 million to \$30 million this year. If industry is able to respond in the way we hope, that should constitute a significant step toward providing the high level blue-collar skills which we will need and people will require three, four and five years from now.

May I call it six o'clock, Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): It being six o'clock, I do now leave the chair until 8 p.m. this day.

At six o'clock the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.