

*The Budget—Mr. Regan*

recognize that our colleges and universities are national as well as provincial bodies. They are an asset to the nation as a whole.

For a university to achieve any success at all in achieving its primary purposes, it must be more than provincial in its nature. These universities provide strong links among the regions of Canada and with the international community. For these reasons, as well as its involvement in areas such as research, official languages in education and occupational training, the federal government has for some time played a growing and important role in post-secondary education.

This budget marks an important milestone in support by the federal government of post-secondary education and of human resource development generally. It allows us to get on with the job of strengthening the structure of federal support of post-secondary education and human resource development generally. I include under the term of human resource development, federal support of students and support of the colleges and universities in carrying out their central responsibility for creating and transmitting knowledge and critical capacity across a broad spectrum of disciplines as well as for their professional and more occupationally related programs.

During the past year, there has been intensive discussion on the future of post-secondary education and human resource development in our country. Much of this discussion has centred, of course, around the activities of two very important parliamentary task forces; one on Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements, the other on Employment Opportunities for the '80s. The reports of these two task forces are based on a wide spectrum of views expressed by individuals and groups from across our country. As well, a number of conferences and studies have explored the financing of post-secondary education in the future.

During this period of consultation and discussion, a growing understanding has emerged throughout Canada that a major review is needed of the ways in which the colleges and universities which are faced with financial uncertainty are to maintain excellence in their core undertaking of creating and disseminating knowledge. Similarly, a review is needed of the way in which Canadians are to be provided with the knowledge, skills and critical capacity that they will need in order to take full advantage of the opportunities which will be offered by Canada in the eighties and the nineties.

The challenges facing the educational and training system are considerable. Demographic change suggests that the participation of young persons in post-secondary education may slow down and decline over the next decade. If that happens, there will be new demands in areas of continuing education and in the retraining of mature persons. Projections indicate that demand for occupational skills will likely change markedly in the 1980s.

This brings me to what I consider a very important point. Many people today feel they should only be concerned about training and education that is directed at a particular trade or skill. I do not believe that is correct. We are told by the experts that technological change occurs at such a rate today that

many people who enter the work force may have to be retrained two, three or four times for other occupations during the span of their 40 years of work because of technological change doing away with the opportunities provided in their first or second chosen field.

I believe very firmly that a broadly-based general education for as many of our citizens as possible provides the best base upon which retraining can be undertaken. I contend that those people who have had as much general education as possible, liberal arts education, for example, are better equipped to take retraining in unrelated skills compared to the field they were formerly in.

I am also constantly reminded of the fact that in this century the United States, as a result of its higher per capita number of university graduates than other countries, has been a leader in technological innovation.

I think the value of education can be found in many ways. I believe we would be dead in the water, as we say in shipping, if we allowed general learning to be eroded. That is not to say that there is not much more that needs to be done. Emphasis will have to be placed on research and the training of researchers in the universities if Canada is to have the capacity to meet its research and development targets. Major demands will likely be placed on colleges and universities to produce graduates who are able to operate effectively in both our official languages. In this respect, I do not know of anything more important in relation to employment opportunities.

For example, if you look in the newspapers of any major city in this country—and I am not talking about government employment advertising, I am talking about the private sector—there are more and more cases in which having a command of both official languages will result in obtaining a better chance of employment, and in many instances it is an absolute prerequisite for obtaining a job.

Important challenges still remain for the educational system in the area of Canadian knowledge and understanding. Technology is bringing about significant changes in the nature of education and training itself. Major institutional adjustments will be needed as a result of the blurring of lines of demarcation among education, work, training, culture and communications.

These challenges which we face in the development of our human resources are becoming widely understood. There is an equally widespread confidence, I think, among interested groups and individuals that we can successfully meet these challenges, but there is no tendency to underestimate the problem of doing so. The federal government intends to maintain its financial commitment to human resource development and to strengthen the way that support is provided for that area.

In recent weeks there have been those who questioned the federal government's commitment to post-secondary education. They predicted massive cutbacks in federal spending in this area. Advertisements were circulated and those claims were made before the budget came out. The budget has