

example, I have nursing friends who have sabbatical leave, I believe every two or three years, which in that field makes great sense. We are talking about a goal here. It has been achieved in some countries. Having been married to a small business person, I know that there are difficulties in that area. However, at the same time the only alternative for many workers is to be on unemployment insurance to which we are contributing as well. Therefore, I believe what we are talking about is a more sensible kind of planning and distribution of work, including sabbaticals, retraining programs and earlier, more flexible pensions.

I would like to mention that our own federal Armed Forces in Canada receive pensions after 25 years of work. Why should this not be the goal we are aiming at for all Canadians? Make it flexible so that people can use their potential. As they become older and their families are reared, they can do some exciting things with their lives and still have an adequate income. We are going to pay for it one way or another. We are paying for it in unemployment insurance and in the loss of human resources. We want to be productive and positive.

● (1140)

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, in commenting on that last response of the Hon. Member for Vancouver East (Ms. Mitchell), I just want to say that it is a pity she was not a member of the parliamentary task force on pension reform so that she could have learned some of the realities of life. If she believes that everyone in the country can suddenly begin to receive a public pension after 25 years of work, she has at least the responsibility to answer where the money would come from to fund such a program.

This debate comes at an opportune time, Mr. Speaker. In a few short weeks the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) will bring down his Budget and with it we hope he will unveil the economic strategy for our immediate future. Be that the future of the coming months or the coming decade, high technology is going to play an increasingly important role. It is very timely, therefore, that the Government address this issue—timely and long overdue. Indeed, this whole debate is long overdue. It is well past time that the Government recognize and respond to an issue which is not simply important to the well-being of our country, but absolutely vital to the future of the country.

I deplore the fact that we always have to wait for Opposition Days for this issue to be raised. The Hon. Member for Vancouver East has raised it on behalf of the New Democratic Party today. Members on this side of the House have raised it time and time again over the last number of years but that is the only time it is raised. That has been the response of the Government to the whole issue of technological change from the beginning. Let someone else do something about it has been its response. Let someone else forge the way ahead; let someone else make the commitment of brains, money and national will; then the Government will come along after all is done.

That might be an adequate response to other issues and problems but with high technology it can only promise failure.

Supply

In the high-tech era, to be second place is to be no place. To be "Johnny come lately" is to be "Johnny come never". Report after report and expert after expert have warned us that if we do not become a nation committed to technological innovation and leadership now, we will be left behind forever in the technological race. That is not a Doomsday saying; that is just plain common sense.

If our scientists and engineers cannot find work in this country because we are not prepared to invest in our own high-tech priorities and industries, they will quickly go where the work is. If we do not have our own industries creating competitive hardware and software, we will become dependent upon systems and supplies created and built elsewhere which may not be compatible with the Canadian experience. The branch plant mentality will be even further enforced. We will see more research and development being performed elsewhere and with it more and more jobs lost that could have been ours. This is not speculation, it is fact. We have known of the problems and challenges of high technology long enough.

A report from the Science Council of Canada has the following to say:

The development of a national policy with appropriate industrial strategies, for the production of computer hardware and software, the training and certification of men and women capable of working with the new technology, and the provision of adequate standards and safeguards for insuring that this industry serves our national interests.

That was not written or produced by the Science Council of Canada last year, nor the year before, nor the year before that; that was written, published and produced by the Science Council of Canada in 1973, over a decade ago. Yet today we still have no sign of a national policy. Our inadequacy and our unpreparedness confront us on every side. In fact, the Government compounds the failure to do anything about this issue.

Last Friday in the House we debated Bill C-12 whereby the Government is going to cut out \$380 million of funding that otherwise would have gone to post-secondary education. That at a time when enrolment in universities and community colleges is escalating by 5 per cent annually; that at a time when more and more students are looking for the very training that is needed in high technology in order to be able to meet the demands of the Canada of the future; that at a time when our whole future is being imperilled by a niggardly Government that cuts back in the one area it should be supporting—training and education in high technology fields and training and education in computer technology, engineering, science and arts faculties.

The Government is trying to have it both ways, Mr. Speaker. It says that we really have to move into the future, and at the same time it is hamstringing those who would do something about it. The Canadian Association of University Teachers perhaps best summed it up in its presentation to the Macdonald Royal Commission in these words:

As we move into the 21st century, how we deal with our universities, their faculties and their students, will in large measure determine Canada's position in the next century.