

The Address—Miss MacDonald

hold our own and to catch up in the next five years, then the race as far as Canada is concerned will be over. We must put Canadians back to work. We must keep Canadians in work.

That requires two objectives. First, we must remove the obstacles to economic growth. We welcome investment. We restore an atmosphere which shows that Canada is once again a good place to do business. We build better, sell better. We manage our own affairs, our own economy above all, in a professional and competent manner. In other words, we build confidence at home and internationally, confidence in Canada itself and in the ability of its people.

This development of economic resources was highlighted by my colleague, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson), last Thursday. I may say that in that one address we heard more sound commonsense on economic matters than we heard in the whole of the previous four and one-half years by all the former Ministers of Finance.

If the first condition we must meet in our quest to create employment for all Canadians is economic development, then the second is the development of our human resources. Indeed, the two are inseparable. Without the skills we cannot fill the jobs and without the jobs in a growing economy we will not create new opportunities.

The world of work is changing. The place of work is changing. In the future, what we do and how we do it may change not just once or twice during our lifetime but over and over again. Skills will not be static. They must be developed and upgraded on a continuing basis. Every working Canadian, young and old, male and female, must expect and indeed accept new training and retraining as part of their working lives.

That is what it is. It is part of our working lives. The era in which we went to school, acquired our skills and then worked 30 or 40 years in the same job is at an end. In the information age that we are rapidly entering, today's skills are but a stepping stone to tomorrow's and not an end in themselves. We, as a society and as individuals, must be prepared to accept this fact and to accept this challenge.

Clearly, it is an enormous undertaking. Some estimates suggest that fully 5 per cent of our annual GNP will eventually be directed to training and retraining. There is no question that the task is huge or that the time is short. Virtually nothing has been done to prepare our society to meet the scope of this challenge of human resource development. However, our Government is determined to make up for lost time.

The enormity and complexity of this task will require the co-operation and determination of all sectors of our society. The old unilateralism just will not work. To meet this challenge, I have already launched a process of consultation. Over the coming months I will meet with provincial ministers, business and labour leaders and with groups from the community. The challenge is common and so must be the solution.

It is obvious why we must consult with the provinces. Basic education, the foundation upon which we prepare for our working lives, rests with the provinces, as does most of our

post-secondary education. The role of community colleges and technological schools is already expanding and will become even more critical in the years ahead.

Training and retraining does not begin and end only in the classroom. The responsibility cannot rest solely with governments. Industry has a vital interest in contributing to a trained labour force. Training will be an ongoing part of work and if industry will share this responsibility government will share the cost of this human investment.

In the future, training and retraining will not be restricted to schools and institutions. It will also take place on the shop floor and in the office. If for no other reason, this would require the participation of organized labour.

Labour has an even greater role to play. The trade union movement in Canada has helped to shape our lives. It will continue to do so as we face the challenges of tomorrow and labour's participation can help ensure that we maximize the opportunities of technological change, be it through better working conditions or a new equality in the workplace.

The goals we are striving for are basic. We must ensure that we have a skilled labour force which can meet the needs of the future. We must stimulate economic growth, a dynamic force for the creation of new job opportunities. We must also ensure equality of opportunity, equality in competition and equality of access to jobs. We have a national challenge and it will take a national commitment to meet it.

The federal Government has signalled its determination to meet our share of this national challenge and national commitment. We have already allocated an additional \$1 billion for employment development. But our commitment is to people as well as to providing money. When I talk about investing in people, I think of those groups in our society today who are at a particular economic disadvantage—groups which need a particular commitment.

● (1540)

I should like to mention just three of them: youth, older workers, and women. Youth unemployment is a continuing tragedy. Many young Canadians still lack training and practical experience. They are having trouble getting their first job. They need to prove their worth and their competence. They need to get on with their lives. Dealing with youth unemployment requires more than the random spending of dollars. What happens when our young people leave school? How can we help them make that transition from school to work? What about those who do not go on to post-secondary education?

We are considering a number of options, Sir, which will be set out in a discussion paper on training and which I will be releasing shortly. These include a new emphasis on co-operative education measures and on apprenticeship. Employer-based training is another concept which merits study and consideration. Through the process of consultation and commitment with the other players in our economy, we will find the answers to this critical waste of talent and potential which we see now.