

Training and Development Program

operate without increasingly perfected computers. The same applies to the government and business sectors.

During the last thirty years, changes have been relatively gradual. Information processing invaded our daily lives without giving anyone much cause for concern. The 70s, for instance, were a time of considerable economic development. There were jobs for whoever wanted one and our standard of living was rising in a manner that was quite spectacular.

However, economic development was also visible in the information processing sector, and in an even more spectacular manner. While all other sectors were experiencing considerable price increases and inflation was gradually becoming a major problem, in the information processing industry, we witnessed a quite incredible drop in price, at a ratio of 10,000 to 1. I mean that what cost \$10,000 in 1960 now costs only \$1.00.

As a result, computer science and microelectronics have gained worldwide currency—from offices to industry, in private homes, invading sectors where man would find a job which is now done by a machine. Car assembly lines have been turned into computer-controlled plants monitored by a handful of men or women; a secretary using a word processor does the work which used to keep three employees busy. Many jobs disappear, traditional skills no longer exist—typography is a good example. On the other hand, completely new types of jobs appear. Newspapers are full of employment offers for programmers, computer engineers, systems analysts and designers, and electronics technicians.

Those factors have given rise to a paradox in Canada: a seasonally-adjusted national unemployment rate averaging 11.9 per cent, and close to 19 per cent among youths aged 18 to 24, yet at the same time—and that is the paradox—there is such a severe shortage of qualified workers in specialized sectors that in many cases we have to rely on immigrants to fill those jobs.

Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Task Force on Employment Opportunities for the '80s referred to that problem in its report entitled "Work for tomorrow". It even pointed out, and I quote:

The existence of imbalances in many sectors of the Canadian labour market and the probability that such imbalances will grow worse in the '80s unless corrective measures are taken to set the situation right.

Well, just what are those measures? To anyone reflecting upon the situation, it becomes clear that a radical change is required in the training given to Canadians. This change is needed as much in traditional education and training sectors, colleges and universities as in manpower retraining. That is the challenge we Canadians must meet if we are to remain in the forefront and protect our international markets as well as our standard of living.

To achieve that, we must be creative and imaginative. The transition from a consumer society to a data-processing society forces us to devise new methods and to set up new, more dynamic and flexible structures. An ability to adapt to change

will always be paramount in our new programs. Above all, the various interest groups at all levels of Government, industry and traditional education systems have to realize the extent of the problem with a view to working together towards a common objective.

All those efforts must be channeled. We must have a master plan to provide the basis on which these new training programs will operate. The problem is national in scope. It is a problem that should, in our national interest, be one of our priorities. It would seem that the federal Government would be eminently suited to playing the role of conciliator. Where occupational training is concerned, there is, of course, both a jurisdictional and ideological conflict between the federal Government and the provinces.

Let me explain. The Canadian Constitution gives the provinces the right to legislate in the area of education and training. This is a historical development and goes back to the time when this country was founded and it was felt that each province should have the means to preserve its cultural, linguistic and religious identity. On the other hand, the economic development of Canada as a whole is a federal responsibility. The occupational training issue is tightly wedged between these two sets of priorities, hence the jurisdictional problem. However, we must understand that the present situation no longer compares with the one that existed when our country was founded. Canadian society has changed and is now facing new challenges. It must turn towards the future and prepare for the twenty-first century.

The problem of occupational training is a national one, as I said. Whether they are from Ontario or Quebec, from the East or the West, all Canadians are affected. Our economic future as a nation is at stake. Therefore, there must be a definite federal presence, otherwise the federal Government will be accused of neglecting to fulfil its role. The participation of provincial governments is absolutely essential and it can only be obtained if we make them understand the urgency of the situation.

However, the situation is not entirely new. There is already a certain body of federal legislation that concerns occupational training. In 1960, the Parliament of Canada passed the Technical and Vocational Training Assistance Act, which received royal assent on December 20, 1960. This legislation made it possible for the federal Government to become more actively involved in this area, and the provinces have benefited from the attendant economic spin-offs. For instance, before 1960, federal spending on vocational training totalled about \$110 million. From 1960 to 1966, it increased to \$850 million. Most of that money—70 per cent—was earmarked for capital expenditures, which explains the phenomenal growth of educational institutions. In those days, during the 1960-70 decade, Mr. Speaker, the provinces had a secondary school and