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ence arranged by the *Financial Post* and dealing with future technologies. This article pointed out how essential it was for Canada to plan a major catch-up operation in this field. In fact, most other industrialized countries do face the same problem. However, in the case of Canada, at a time when our traditional sources of immigration are becoming more and more depleted and we are considering extensive industrial megaprojects, it is obvious that we have to make additional, and especially concentrated efforts on a national scale.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, the importance of the challenge which we shall be facing during the forthcoming decade in the human resources field has been described in various studies mentioned by the minister this morning, and more specifically in that sponsored by our own department and conducted under the leadership of one of our colleagues and dealing with employment prospects for the eighties. In the past 12 months, Mr. Speaker, the government, the private sector and the trade unions have become very concerned with human resources policies. The consultations which led to the recent federal-provincial conference held in Vancouver early in January to deal with job training are now over and we are about to implement a most effective training program for the whole country. This will be a flexible program which will meet today's needs and provide long-term benefit to all Canadians. We are now witnessing a dramatic decrease in supply throughout the country. The average growth rate of the labour force, which had reached 3.5 per cent in the early sixties and seventies, will have fallen to a mere 1.8 per cent by the end of the eighties. In addition, the make-up of the labour force will have undergone radical changes. The number of newcomers on the labour market will decrease during the next decade and two thirds of them will be women. In western Canada the native people will account for over 20 per cent of the population increase. At least one out of every five newcomers on the labour force will be from the native community in that part of Canada. The average age of the workers will substantially increase. This factor alone will affect the labour market and even our daily life.

Mr. Speaker, all members are well aware of the unprecedented changes that will occur in the economy and the labour market during this decade. However, we are faced with an extraordinary paradox. The unemployment figures are high, but the evolution of our economy is causing serious manpower shortages, especially in the specialized fields. In fact, certain jobs cannot be filled in Canada because of a lack of specialized workers, and this is why we have to call on immigrants to fill certain positions.

● (1610)

No later than this week, the president of a big engineering firm in Montreal pointed out, and rightly so, that the country is very short of engineers at this time, and that this shortage will become crucial in the years to come; that it may even

harm the megaprojects we are planning to get under way. Similarly in private industries, Mr. De Grandpré, chairman of Northern Telecom spoke recently of the shortage of qualifications in his own company. He predicts that Northern Telecom will have to recruit up to 65,000 engineers and experts over the next ten years, if it wants to keep and strengthen its lead in the key technological fields of electronics and telecommunications. A study of those needs in manpower, and especially skilled labour, and the high rate of unemployment, makes action imperative. There is a pressing need to speed up the process of change in the training system across the land. That is precisely why we had that great conference in early January where the topic of vocational training was debated at length.

Like all my colleagues in the House I witnessed the general outcry on the part of certain provinces which were accusing us of trying to interfere in a field of provincial jurisdiction. Of course they did not take into account the fact that our purpose was to train people who are already out of the education system and on the labour market. We also noticed that the province of Quebec was reluctant to participate in this program. Last year we gave the province of Quebec about \$65 million for vocational training.

Mr. Speaker, I was very surprised today when I heard the arguments of our colleagues opposite because they did not even say that those programs exist in the province of Quebec. My colleague from Joliette did say that the members from the province of Quebec were not doing anything in the House of Commons. I would like to remind him that during the constitutional debate the Leader of the Opposition and a few of his colleagues tried to bring pressure to bear on the government of Quebec in an attempt to make certain amendments to our constitutional proposal. Mr. Speaker, they knew full well that it was a sheer waste of time to try to convince an openly separatist party to sit at the bargaining table in Ottawa with a view to amending a proposed constitution. They knew beforehand that it was an exercise in futility.

But in concrete cases such as this vocational training project, where do our friends opposite stand? Did they try again to pressure the Quebec government to sit at the same table with us in an effort to renegotiate that constitutional agreement? Did they? I would like to know. I hope that our friend from Joliette who is telling us that he is just—I am looking forward to the reaction of the Quebec government in that respect to see if indeed they will be able to convince the Quebec government.

We on this side of the House have offered to the government of Quebec a program especially designed to train throughout Canada the skilled labour force we will need to meet our needs in the coming years.

The Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) has just announced another very important program, a program he successfully negotiated with the government of Ontario to enable roughly 2,000 forest workers to be