

able to take a long step forward to discount or eliminate many of the hard or unyielding areas of discrimination that have existed up to now. I am confident that we can break this barrier down if we find ways of working in a partnership.

**Miss MacDonald:** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) took part in the debate. I want to express to him now, as I have before, the concern that the Government does not seem to be aware of the magnitude of the problem that confronts us, and not just today but that will confront us in the next number of years. As the Minister knows, employment amongst women increased 41 per cent last year. The Minister responsible for the status of women said that that was not very substantial, but I consider it to be substantial.

I am concerned as well that every study, every document, every analysis shows that one million additional women may become unemployed in the next few years as a result of the technological revolution that is sweeping over us. The Minister made some very encouraging comments with regard to training younger people. The question that has not been addressed is what happens to these millions of women who are presently employed and are going to see their jobs vanish in the next few years. These women hold the jobs that are considered most vulnerable to the high technology revolution.

These things are not going to be resolved by increasing the number of Outreach Programs or putting in nine new counselors, or whatever number the Minister mentioned. That is fine, but it is not the major issue. The question is, what is being done about this major problem? It is being addressed by other countries in different ways. The problem is not just the number of people who will be unemployed; it is also that women, more than men, are reluctant to come to grips with the high technology revolution. That has been proven in studies in France and Japan where public information and educational programs have been carried out in a television series so that people can be educated while their jobs still exist.

Is this sort of thing being considered by the Government? It is of such magnitude that it goes much beyond anything the Minister said this afternoon. I am not arguing with what he said, I am only asking him to address a much larger question.

**Mr. Axworthy:** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the Hon. Member asked for elaboration. I was trying to cover a number of topics in my response and did not take time to address the issue she raised, which, unquestionably, is of great magnitude.

I point out that not only the numbers of women coming into the labour force, but the adjustment of many women in their present occupations, represents one of the major challenges the country faces. The question is, how do we respond to this challenge?

I believe we have to start with a new training system and a way of transmitting new skills. If we do not have that framework in place, all the other information and education programs would be of no avail. If a woman is prepared to change and wants to know how to go about it, we would not be in a position to help her if those programs were not in place. That is why I put such strong emphasis on the modernization of our

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training systems, such as helping community colleges to buy new machinery or facilities in order to open up new hi-tech training opportunities.

I can give an example in the Province of New Brunswick. About 25 per cent of the training offered was in high-skill trades. In one year, with the skills growth fund, that has been increased to 38 per cent. This dramatic leap is owing to the strategic allocation of funds and to help given that college to buy the new simulator it needed.

I should like to tell one small anecdote, Mr. Speaker. I went to Holland College in Prince Edward Island which has a training program for deck officers in the offshore industry. We are still required to import people from offshore because not enough Canadians have been trained. By sheer coincidence I found a young woman from my riding in Winnipeg taking the course. A year ago, the college could not train people in the high-skill navigational jobs because it did not have a navigational simulator which cost \$900,000. It had been trying to get one for ten years. We made the grant from the skills growth fund, and two months ago the college bought the simulator. It is now in a position to train 60 or 70 additional deck officers, and they will be able to find instant employment in the offshore industries on the East Coast. Women are being trained because that is part of the agreement.

I recognize that once the framework is in place, we must take the next step. We recognize that the essential ingredient is to provide ways for people to train while they are on the job. A special task force has been established in my Department, involving business and labour, to look at the whole area of skill development leave. That is so that workers presently employed would be able to take a month or three months or six months off to be retrained for a new occupation.

There is one other area that I would like the Hon. Member to consider, although it is not yet policy. We are looking very seriously at the way in which the work-sharing program that has been very successful across Canada—we have signed 11,000 agreements with private sector firms—might be utilized to enable workers on the job to be retrained in new skills, new technology and new machines on which they will have to work, so that they can still maintain their income while on the job and gain a new skill. This would require some very serious co-operation from business and labour, who are both quite nervous about it because it will break many of the old rules of unions, of hiring and of doing business. It will take some basic restructuring of our industrial fabric in order to respond to the problem.

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We cannot provide a major reform or change simply in a unilateral way. We have to bring people along with us. We are using that particular task force and the work done by the Minister of Labour to try to develop a consensus on a new form of paid educational leave in the country which will allow people to be trained on the job for the new skills they will