almost immediate rush of applicants for programs which would be of great benefit to all Canadians, especially our many unemployed workers. Still, I am convinced that a great many Canadians stand to gain experience and improve their situation. We will continue to refine our formulas and adapt them to the worldwide technological revolution but, I repeat, all interested persons ought to get on board. We must also keep in mind the economic situation in the world and, just to show how unpredictable it can be, Mr. Speaker, I would simply recall the extent to which the impact of the oil markets on the Canadian economy took the experts by surprise in recent years. It has often been said that progress does not stand still, but even trying to slow it down can turn out to be a very costly proposition in the long run.

• (1220)

State-of-the-art technology in office equipment, robots and new activities will create upheavals and eliminate jobs, true enough, but at the same time they will create new needs and new jobs about which it is now impossible to predict whether they will be more numerous and more financially rewarding than those they will have eliminated. Where would we be today if in the past we had rejected electricity, cars, aircraft, telephones, chemistry, television and so on? More recently, the market was invaded by digital watches, TV sets, videorecorders, medical equipment, just to name a few. Think for a moment about space research programs and their fallout in Canada in the fields of telecommunications, new materials and transportation where many Canadians developed new skills. Given such fields of endeavour where people can be trained to acquire even more highly specialized skills, we will be able to open new vistas for young Canadians and retrain others who unfortunately lost their jobs. On the other hand, industrialization did create some problems, such as the accelerated depletion of nonrenewable natural resources, environmental hazards, drastic changes in our way of life and the risks inherent in modern weaponry.

More recently, the slowdown in our economic growth and the deteriorating unemployment situation have coincided with a certain public reluctance to accept any technology. In short, major scientific and technological developments have radically transformed our way of life and all these transformations are occuring at an increasingly faster pace.

On the other hand, the developments in information technology, when coupled with the advent of newer generations of computers, video recorders and telecommunications equipment, are likely to transform the field of education, as evidenced by the feverish changes now taking place in our training and educational institutions, including in Quebec.

Robotics, whose development could, according to some, make the situation even worse, while others hold the opposite view, could, on the other hand, release workers from dangerous or repetitive tasks in addition to increasing industrial performance. The same technology may be used to alleviate the problems of the handicaped thanks to new types of prostheses and other innovative techniques. Should we forbid the use of robots in the automobile industry, for instance, when Japan is already far ahead of us? To ask the question is of course to provide the unavoidable answer, and those who would want our workers to find shelter in traditional sectors under the pretense that these require the hiring of more people, would condemn our work force to a type of production soon to become outdated and unprofitable while better products manufactured by competing industrial nations or even Third World nations would lead us to bankruptcy and oblivion.

What should we really be doing? I repeat that we must lunge forward and jump on the technological bandwagon. We must also promote research and encourage industry into taking the greatest possible advantage of this research so that we can be in the forefront of any future development which will enable us to maintain one of the highest standards of living in the world.

If we look back at the major industrialization eras, generally, we must recognize that the innovations which they brought about have been among the major reasons for economic and social progress and had a positive influence on the overall employment situation.

Needless to say, Mr. Speaker, more than half of the people who enrol in the training program subsidized by Employment and Immigration Canada are under 25 years old. The main user target are of course our young people. These programs can also help those who need retraining, especially those over 40 years of age who have often had the same job all their lives and suddenly find themselves in a very difficult situation since, because of their age and the hostile economic environment, they have never known what it is to have to look for a job time and again.

Since my allotted time allows me to do so, I would like to deal again with the new national training program and say that it provides for special mechanisms, such as larger and extended wage refunds for women, native people, the handicapped, the dropouts or the less persevering, if you prefer. The Government has tried to develop a flexible mechanism which would be accessible to as many workers as possible, and to do so in a more practical way than in the past when experience has shown that people have been trained for jobs which had ceased to exist or for which the demand was constantly decreasing.

I also want to remind the House that education and training must prepare people mentally for technological changes. Among other things, we should deal with the effects of worker displacement, the work reorganization and the protection of the most disadvantaged groups in our society, such as women and older workers.

Analyses have shown, among other things, that we have to consider the reaction of both labour and the general public to