

*Technological Change*

We are lagging far, far behind almost every other industrialized country in the world in terms of retraining our people and preparing our young people for the information society. Japan, for example, has about five times the population of Canada, yet the Japanese have about 40 times as many young people in electrical engineering schools as we have in Canada. Is it any wonder the Japanese are leading the world in electronic goods, microelectronics and computers when they put such emphasis on retraining, the retraining of the young as well as the middle-aged and older worker?

The impact on jobs is there. I heard a researcher speak at a convention in Chicago last September. This gentleman was director of research for the UAW. He said that by the year 2000 around 80 per cent of the jobs that existed in the auto industry in the United States in the last 1970s will have disappeared. We have to make sure that we retrain those workers, that we have some alternative for them because they have to provide incomes for themselves and their families. In many ways it is like the great revolution in technology and agriculture a number of years ago.

When my father was growing up in Saskatchewan he used to have great threshing crews in the days before the combine. There would be 20 to 25 members of the threshing crew hauling the sheaves, throwing them into the threshing machine and hauling away the grain. Today that job is done by one person with a modern combine. Those farms are now more productive than they were 40 years or 45 years ago. We cannot turn back the clock to the days of the threshing crews and the oxcart. We have to make sure the transition into this new society is one that ensures people are retrained and have a job.

Third is the whole area of labour-management relations and the question of who should control the introduction of new technology. Can we continue with existing management prerogatives regarding production and planning functions? Has the federal Government a leadership role to play? Has this Parliament a leadership role to play? I suggest we must look very carefully at having the workers in the plants, the consumers, the farmers, and everyone affected more involved in the decision-making about the introduction of new technology and the introduction of technological change.

I think we should look at the whole question of democracy to make sure that ordinary people have a say in the economic destiny of this country and their own lives. This should not be in the hands of just a few people holding the stocks or the shares, or the management of a company having the whole say over economic destiny and the introduction of technological change.

The fourth area is the whole question of Canadian ownership. This is something we should look at very seriously as a Parliament. There is the question of public intervention or public investment in high technology. The economic transition to the information society is characterized in most other nations by increased public investment, by increased public participation in terms of the direction of these industries.

We have to ask ourselves in comparison to others—the Germans, the French, the Japanese, or whomever—whether Canada has an adequate investment strategy. Does Canada have an adequate strategy in terms of making sure that high

technology is Canadian, that it serves Canadian purposes, that it provides Canadian jobs, that it is developed quickly enough that we will have an industry here to supply not only Canadian needs but the export market for many people around the world?

Fifth, this committee can look at occupational health and safety. We have had many complaints about the low level of radiation in many offices. We have had problems dealing with stress on the new production line in the case of VDT operators in many offices and plants across the nation. We have to look at this scenario. We have to ask ourselves about the present health and safety measures in legislation, as to whether or not they are adequate or have to be revised.

Sixth is the question of privacy. Is the privacy of Canadians adequately protected given the profusion of data banks and the extension of information on individual finances, health, medical records and things of that sort? The whole question of privacy in the information society will become something that we should look at as legislators in this House.

Seventh is the question of research and development. Historically we have lagged far, far behind most every other industrial state in the world in terms of spending money on research and development. In fact, if we were to take away the foreign-owned industries in Canada or the branch plants, you would find, Mr. Speaker, that our Canadian firms spend roughly as much in Canada on research and development as do the French, the Germans, the Japanese, the Austrians and the Scandinavians. But because our economy is foreign-owned, about 26 per cent compared to 3 per cent in the United States and 1 per cent in Japan, we find that these branch plants of the foreign firms spend virtually nothing at all on research and development. Because of that we are lagging far, far behind in product innovation, modernization, new ideas, jobs for the young people of Canada, in scientific research, technology and development. High technology is a brand-new field for which we should be training our young people in the years ahead.

Eighth is the question of co-ordination of efforts between the federal Government and the provincial Governments vis-à-vis our different procurement policies, how we use the public purse in terms of high technology and economic strategy in Canada. I think, for example, of my own native Province of Saskatchewan where the Government three or four years ago, together with the Saskatchewan Telephone Company, decided to go into fiberoptics. It was decided to transform the telephone system into one based on fiberoptics. The Government used leverage it had with Northern Telecom to get Northern Telecom to establish a plant in Saskatoon to produce fiberoptics. The Government said to Northern Telecom that it could have the contract but it had to establish a plant in the Province and provide jobs for its people.

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Once we have a fiberoptics industry established in our Province, we want a plant which will provide world leadership