New Economy: Opportunity to Rethink the Canadian Way

June 1, 2001 – "The new technologies have shrunk the world and made us a part of the interdependent global economy," says Judith Maxwell, President of Canadian Policy Research Networks. "But the same technologies open up new possibilities on the domestic front, possibilities that can enhance our distinctiveness as Canadians. We have the freedom. It is up to us to use it."

Maxwell made her comments while delivering the H.D.Woods Address at the annual conference of the Canadian Industrial Relations Association in Quebec City.

Maxwell outlined some of the contradictions raised by the New Economy; between globalization and the desire for community; between newly liberated knowledge workers and marginalized low-skill workers; between those who access and employ the new global communications technologies and those who are excluded; between the role of government as international actor and its role as builder and defender of domestic communities.

"Governing in this new global environment brings with it new and complex challenges," says Maxwell. "Some have wrongly described these as insurmountable. What they forget is that while the global economy is characterized by interdependence, it is also diversified, specialized and regionalized. Therein lies our opportunity."

Maxwell calls for "a new synergy between social and economic policies" in Canada, one that;

- recognizes the vital role of families in raising healthy adjusted children and caring for the elderly
- recognizes the role of public education in the learning economy and the creation of a mobile, skilled labour force
- recognizes the importance of jobs that pay enough to support the self-reliance of its citizens, and,
- requires a new era of coordination between all levels of government - national, provincial and municipal to ensure a high quality of life for Canadians.

"Too much of the current discourse on globalization and the New Economy is in terms of a kind of 'either/or' pessimism", says Maxwell. "I am convinced the New Economy represents an opportunity, a chance to work together on a new national project that will meet both the economic and social goals of Canadians in the new century."

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