

American Education Initiative

It is clear that our state is in the midst of a profound transition

...from an industrial economy based upon the abundance of natural resources, unskilled labor, and, to some degree, constrained, slowly moving domestic markets...

To a knowledge-based economy, characterized by intensely competitive world markets, rapid change, and--most important of all--educated people and their ideas.

It is clear that we face a watershed--a fork in the road ahead.

My central theme is that education, broadly defined, will be the pivotal issue in determining which of these two alternative futures will be Michigan's...and America's.

Indeed, I am absolutely convinced that the dominant issue of the 1990s will be the development of our human resources.

Previous economic transformations were closely associated with major public investment in infrastructure such as railroads, canals, electric networks, and highways.

In the coming economic transition, an equivalent infrastructure will be an educated population.

Today, an unprecedented explosion of knowledge marks the onset of a new era. Since people are the source of new knowledge, we will rely increasingly on a well-educated and trained work force to maintain our competitive position in the world and our standard of living at home.

Yet here we are in real difficulty, because we are not educating enough new people to keep our economy competitive.

Further, there are serious signs that the education of the present American workforce is simply inadequate to meet the demands of the next century.

This has become known as the "pipeline problem", since it involves the full spectrum of education, from preschool through K-12 through higher education to lifelong education.