

VareseNews

“From underwear to satellites, the magic word is change”

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There is a crisis, and the magic word is “change”. This was said by Michele Graglia, the chairman of the Union of Industrialists of Varese Province, in the usual press conference at the beginning of the year, in which he described the situation and laid out the future of the economy in Varese.

“This crisis is a watershed. It’s affecting every sector, throughout the world. After the financial system and the real economy, now the devastating effects are hitting employment. We saw a collapse of the stock market at the end of 2008, but in 2009, the financial markets recovered exceptionally well,” Graglia stressed. “But this recovery was good news only for those who work in the financial sector, not for anyone that has to keep industry going. In fact, the positive signs of finance, in 2009, highlighted the complete separation of finance from the situation of industry; the year that has just finished showed how finance and manufacturing are two completely separate worlds.”

However, it is the events of 2009 that, in some way, will be able to “rebuild” the economy. “It was a crisis that was neither better, nor worse, but totally different, from previous ones.” A situation the first effect of which was on the industrial fabric and on those who represent it. “Our first task is to urge the political system to ensure that the whole country becomes competitive. But then, we have to look in the mirror and ask ourselves what we should do,” Graglia admitted. “And, in a situation like this one, it might be necessary for our companies immediately to change. We have to adopt a different viewpoint.”

Companies in Varese need to reflect on how to react to the world market. “China is about to achieve 10% growth, and even India and Brazil are undergoing great expansion; we need to understand to what extent our province can attach itself to these driving forces in the world. The products we manufacture vary from knitwear to satellites, which are extremely different in terms of technology. And if, somehow, satellites sell on their own, how can we make the other products equally competitive in a market like this?”

In any case, a little time and good will are not sufficient to get the recovery going in a situation like this one. “It takes more work to ensure presence in future markets, and, never before, have the associations had to be places that create the stimuli for businesses. Consider the consortium of aerospace industries, which are considered to

be very important by the industries themselves. And if the companies also “sell on their own”, they understand that it is time to get ready for a different world; for anyone that lacks these resources, from the point of view of the product and of the ability to compete, it is even more important that they do this.

And the 53 million hours of redundancy fund payments requested in recent times demonstrate that the current situation in anything but ordinary. “We are in a difficult situation, and the redundancy fund has been very useful, but we all know that it is only a stopgap measure. In order to be ready for the future, we need to develop medium and long-term policies.”

But how do we bring this change about here? Who can achieve it? “There isn’t someone that makes this fundamental change, and someone to whom it is made, everyone must be involved. To make this change in mental approach easier, there are facilities created especially to accompany businesses; ours is one of these. We can also implement legal initiatives; it will be the job of organisations like ours to suggest the approaches to follow. However, the starting point will be the same in every case, deciding to begin thinking in these terms.”

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