

*Alleged Failure to Reduce Unemployment*

an unacceptably high rate of unemployment and an unacceptably high rate of inflation, both at the same time and both as a result of the same policies. I say the government has deliberately brought about these conditions, Let me indicate just a few points which support this proposition.

As has been pointed out, there was a cancellation of the winter works program on the ground that the program was abused. To my knowledge the program was not studied by a committee of this house. No report was published, no evidence given and no information was supplied to this house, to the municipalities, or to the people of Canada. We have no knowledge that in fact it was abused, the extent or ways in which it was abused. There was no information whatever given to parliament, the country or even to the municipalities involved. Suddenly one day an announcement was made that the program was cancelled because it was abused, with no alternative program presented.

I do not know of any other action which demonstrates the total lack of concern and appreciation of the problem of unemployment during the winter months than that action by the government. I would like to know to what extent the program has been abused. I can think of one or two ways it may have been abused to some extent. However, I have seen no evidence, nor has this house or anyone else in Canada, that this program was abused or that the government was justified in increasing unemployment in the urban centres of this country by the total and complete cancellation of that program.

We have been told that the alternative for the winter works program would be action by the Department of Manpower and Immigration. The Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. MacEachen) is in the chamber and I challenge him to rise in his place during this debate and tell this house what his department has done, even one little thing, to deal with the increasing rate of unemployment in Canada. I say, Mr. Speaker, his department has done nothing to deal with the situation! As a matter of fact, according to a recent story in one of the newspapers, the grants for vocational and manpower training have recently been cut by millions of dollars or have been brought down to a low figure. No program of training can deal with the unemployment situation in Canada.

There is a substantial proportion of unemployed people who do not have the education or skill required to take advantage of the

[Mr. Lewis.]

training program. As a matter of fact, some 24 per cent of those unemployed in December had been unemployed for four months and were unable to take advantage of the training program. It is obvious the training program can meet some problems and present opportunities for some of the unemployed. It is equally obvious that anyone who talks about the training program meeting the problem of unemployment is deliberately misleading the people or simply does not know what he is talking about.

Another way the government has deliberately increased unemployment in this country, Mr. Speaker, has been by cutting back on government capital expenditures. I will deal with some general philosophy with which perhaps the members of the Conservative Party may not be entirely in agreement. It is not in a time of high unemployment that you cut back government expenditures. It is precisely at that time that you try to maintain or even increase the rate of government expenditures, particularly if they can be increased in areas which have a multiplier effect on the economy.

Today, we had the tabling of a report on housing. I do not want to deal with the contents of that report, but it does disclose that there is a critical need for housebuilding. As one travels across this country speaking at universities, it is obvious the facilities of the students are criminally inadequate. The buildings, opportunities and facilities for research are insufficient. Even the number of books in the libraries is inadequate. There is a tremendously critical need for added expenditures for the construction or expansion of universities and colleges. In this field of construction this winter the government could have stopped, or lowered the rising unemployment rate to the 3 per cent or less, which is the figure the Economic Council of Canada advises is the maximum we should tolerate.

If the government had the imagination to make available large sums of money for the construction of homes and educational facilities across this country, they would deal with the unemployment problem in a very immediate and practical manner.

• (4:20 p.m.)

Instead of that, public expenditures were cut and taxes were increased, both of these steps impinging upon the ordinary working people of the country. This lack of understanding of modern economic theories, this