

per cent in 1989 to 16.5 per cent in 1994, an increase of nearly 50 per cent in five years. In Quebec, more than one out of every three unemployed workers are young people.

When we realize that young people are usually in low-paying jobs, how can the Minister of Finance expect to give them any hope, when he has no job creation policy to offer and on top of that, limits their access to unemployment insurance by making them work for at least six months to qualify for unemployment insurance benefits for the first time?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very concerned about the unemployment situation among young Canadians. We have always been very concerned about this, even before the economic downturn we are experiencing today. That is why at the beginning of our mandate, the Minister of Human Resources Development put in place a number of programs for the purpose of creating jobs for young people, to provide incentives for them to go back to work or start a career.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how can the minister seriously claim that his government has given young unemployed workers hope and the dignity of work, when the unemployment statistics fail to reflect a situation that many are experiencing, and I am referring to the fact that more and more young unemployed workers are on welfare?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member looked at the figures he would see that the unemployment rate for young people is now at its lowest point since 1990 when the recession began.

The job creation measures have helped to bring down the youth unemployment rate by three or four points to its lowest level. In the meantime, to recognize the special importance of young people, in this last year we have increased the direct investment for youth training and youth employment programs from \$193 million to \$236 million, a net increase in this one year alone. At a time when budgets are very limited and we are facing real fiscal restraint we have increased the investment for young people by \$43 million. That means this year we will have 15,000 to 20,000 young people enlisted in various forms of internship programs, the youth service corps and other youth-related programs.

Our commitment to young people admits of no question from the Bloc Québécois. We are committed to helping our young people get back to work.

Oral Questions

ECONOMY

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' February budget based its revenue projections on a GDP growth of 3.8 per cent. The actual growth in the first quarter of 1995 was less than 1 per cent. There is little prospect of improvement in the second quarter. The budget did not plan for a recession.

• (1445)

Is the Minister of Finance willing to admit that his budget forecasts are wrong and that his deficit targets are being threatened?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our deficit targets are not being threatened. At the time we made them we made it very clear that we have brought in both prudent assumptions for growth and for interest rates. We also put in place substantial contingency reserves. I can assure the hon. member that we are on target in terms of the deficit.

The hon. member knows as well that a majority of economists projected strong growth for this year with a decline in growth next year in the United States and consequently in Canada. The view today on the decline that was projected, I believe, is that it is going to occur earlier than expected and that it should lead to an increase in growth next year.

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, there is speculation certainly in that answer. I do not think the minister can downplay the current poor economic conditions. A lot of Canadians are very concerned. They are concerned about their jobs. They are not buying houses as they did a few months ago. They are not buying cars. Consumer purchasing is down.

Reform has told the minister that the one thing government could do to restore consumer confidence is to lay out a plan to eliminate the deficit. The minister and the government have not taken our advice.

My supplementary question is for the same minister. What is the plan of the government to restore consumer confidence and avert a recession in the country?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that consumer confidence is not dependent on whether the government provides, as we have decided to do, rolling two year targets in deficit reduction or a longer target.

The member also knows that the credibility of long term targets by Canadian governments has not been all that great. We are the first government in a long time to not only hit its target but to do substantially better. This is the realization of a