

The Canadian Economy

was 55 years old and it was impossible for him to be retrained in order to earn a decent living, and the third because he did not fulfill the conditions required in the present regulations.

I would suggest that these conditions be amended at least in regard to young people. It is not their fault that they are 18 or 20 years old, that they have just graduated and have not been for at least three years on the labour market as required by regulations. They are unable to pursue their studies and receive such benefits as provided by law. Therefore, I would suggest that these conditions be amended in order not to discourage these young people, but to allow them to follow up their education. If later on they are offered an opportunity to contribute by their knowledge and work to the development of our country, we will not have completely wasted our money.

I should like to comment on another aspect of the program, namely, public works. I recall having often suggested here, in this House, a policy intended to encourage public works, federal, provincial and municipal, to offer the workers job opportunities. I also suggested that those public works be put at the disposal of the public. We would then kill two birds with one stone. Through public works, we would increase the purchasing power of the consumer and simultaneously build useful works from which the country could benefit.

I am pleased with the program as announced, but once again, Mr. Speaker, I do not agree with its mode of financing because I have had experience as an administrator in a municipality when the winter works program was in operation. The same problem occurred again and again: Where to find the money to undertake those works? Some advantages were offered by the government to pay for labour, but the fact remains that there are always some materials to buy, some machinery to pay and the programs did no more than that introduced this evening, include any provision to that effect.

In the special development loans program, one can read the following:

Provinces and municipalities will receive in assistance of \$3 for every \$4 they spend on labour hired locally for projects approved up to the end of May 1972.

Mr. Speaker, I do not like the expression "from now until the end of May 1972", because although the idea is to promote winter work, I would wish that encouragement be given to summer work as well, for it is less costly for municipalities to have water systems, sewers and so on built in summer than in winter, and people eat as much in summer as they do in winter.

Everybody knows that the labour cost portion of public works is consistently decreasing. The member for Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (M. Bécharde) shakes his head in dissent. I would suggest to him that he ask people who are seriously engaged in construction, and he will be able to see, from the figures he is given, that labour is the smallest item of expenditures related to the construction of municipal services.

This is the reason why I submit that, in the case, at least, of work done by machines, government compensation should also be granted in respect of such necessary equipment. Then comes a statement of the terms under which such loans will be made—I quote:

The incentive will consist in forgiving loans to the amount of 75 per cent of on-site labour costs incurred up to May 31, 1972.

It seems great, at first glance, for up to 75 per cent of a loan to be forgiven. But here lies the problem: under present rates of interest, few municipalities can afford to get into considerable debt in order to engage in public works. This is, at present, the great problem which every municipality is faced with, and I know what I am talking about. In order to get the 75 per cent they will have to undertake a work program and there will be the difficulty: finding money. The municipalities will go into debt. If they really want to do something, they will have to contract colossal debts. That is the reason why I have come to following conclusions: according to the figures mentioned this evening by the Minister of Finance the situation will be worse once that work program is achieved within four or five years than it is today because municipalities will have to pay back the capital and high interests, as I said at the beginning of my remarks.

Canadian mayors—they are not a candid lot—have already thought about discussing that problem. In April 1971 they submitted a brief to the federal government. Not in the days of Noah, Mr. Speaker, but in 1971. They made an interesting submission and the other day, about a week ago, I urged the Minister of Finance to read it again in order to pick up some ideas and be in a position to announce a more generous policy than the one put forward tonight concerning financing municipalities. I can only assume that he did not take it so much into consideration.

Recently, the Executive Committee of the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities brought forward the following press release.

The Executive Committee of the Canadian Federation of Mayors and municipalities met in Montreal on September 30 and October 1 last in order to discuss, among other things, the major problem of unemployment in Canada, particularly for the coming months. The Executive Committee then perused, and decided to support a request from the City of Toronto asking the federal and provincial governments to contribute financial assistance in the form of grants and loans to municipalities that are anxious to accelerate implementation of projects and initiate new ones in order to reduce the number of people unemployed.

The Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities also urged its members to prepare such programmes for immediate action and, through their provincial association, to call on their provincial government to get financial assistance.

I did not invent this. The mayors and municipalities are requesting financial assistance because they don't have the means to undertake the works that would be necessary within their respective boundaries.

• (11:20 p.m.)

The hon. member for Témiscamingue made very practical suggestions in his speech. I could see that members behind the curtain were laughing. The suggestions seemed funny. However, people should not laugh too long at the Canadian population.

This week, I heard a minister ask the opposition to make suggestions. But some make fun of proposals that are advocated instead of examining them seriously to see if they are sound. Tonight, the hon. member for Témiscamingue suggested we provide security to all Canadians because Canada can do it. The evidence is that there are