

Employment Programs

tion of unemployment where the unemployment conditions are especially severe." This is being done. "Just under a third of this sum would be used by the Department of Manpower and Immigration in an extension of its manpower training program." Many of the programs involved in the \$60 million are under way and new jobs are being created as a result of the funds which were allocated last spring and a month ago.

It is not correct to say that the government has been callously standing by while the unemployed have been suffering. The government has been investing enormous amounts of public money in programs which will give permanent benefits to the unemployed. The government is not merely adding a few dollars and saying its responsibility ends there; it has consciously designed programs to ensure that people will have employment on a continuing basis. In the Pacific region, where my home is, actual allowance payments and other training payments paid by Canada Manpower centres in 1968-69 alone amounted to \$8,502,592—a substantial amount of money. This could mean not only long-term benefits for those who are unemployed—but long-term work opportunities and life incomes.

It is important to stress at this point the results which the government's fiscal and monetary measures have achieved. Consumer prices are now beginning to stabilize, as indicated by the fact that the consumer price index has remained stable for the last three months—not an insignificant fact. Investment and residential construction have risen to the point where housing starts are at a rate unprecedented in the history of this country. There is no need to emphasize further the very substantial reduction in interest rates which has taken place at all levels and in particular by the Banks of Canada.

It is strange how many critics blossom forth on the subject of so-called tight money and how little they say when those interest rates begin to decrease and the prime rate of interest eases. The silence is, to coin a phrase, "underwhelming." Yet, this process has been continuing for the past seven months but there has not been one acknowledgement today from the official opposition, although they should rejoice with us and the rest of Canada that interest rates are coming down. These are some of the positive results of the government's policy.

My main purpose for entering the debate is to discuss the second part of the motion which refers to increasing the amount of unemployment insurance benefits. All of us can understand the impatience which this motion implies. I can assure hon. members that the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey) shares their desire to increase unemployment insurance benefits at the earliest possible date. The government has been urged to do this. Countless editorials have urged the minister to initiate action to bring about immediate temporary increases in unemployment insurance. There have been many communications from the public since the white paper on unemployment insurance was tabled in this House on June 17, 1970. Yet, as has been indicated, one must deploy as effectively and as beneficially as possible the limited funds available to the government at this time.

[Mr. Perrault.]

This does not constitute the main reason why the government sees certain difficulties in attempts to increase unemployment insurance benefits at this time. It is important to realize that there are no precedents for raising benefits without raising contributions or, in other words, for raising benefits out of general revenue. Hon. members know that one of the main purposes of the Canada Assistance Plan is to provide supplementary assistance to the unemployed. In fact, one of the original elements of the Canada Assistance Plan was the Unemployment Assistance Act of 1956. There are still agreements by some provinces that are carried out under the terms of the Unemployment Assistance Act.

● (5:40 p.m.)

The minister and the government realize that by many Canadians unemployment insurance or assistance in any direct form is labelled welfare and has a bad connotation. I shall not attempt to identify the reasons for this, but hon. members should be reminded that this form of providing for the unemployed, where there is a basic insurance program supplemented by an assistance program, is the normal pattern in most European countries and in the United States. Be that as it may, no one on this side will deny the need for bringing unemployment insurance benefits up to date. This is certainly one of the basic reasons for the white paper which the Minister of Labour presented last June.

During the consideration of the white paper proposals there has been some excellent co-operation from some hon. members on the opposition side. I think it has been a very useful exercise indeed. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and others have made a constructive contribution to this dialogue. I think they appreciate more than anyone else how earnest the government is in its desire to bring in unemployment insurance reforms.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Perrault: I was dismayed to hear the hon. member for York South criticize the preliminary remarks of the Minister of Labour. He suggested there had been a less than frank disposition on the part of the minister to use certain unemployment figures correctly. This is the same Minister of Labour who has expressed his deep concern about the unemployed in the words of his white paper:

People such as the hired hand on a wheat farm in Alberta; the fisherman casting his nets for cod off the banks of Newfoundland; the young Gaspé-born clerk working by day in a large corporation and taking college courses at night; the newly-arrived immigrant who knows little English or French and possesses few skills, but who is determined to make his way in a complex Canadian city such as Toronto or Montreal.

And then:

The rewards of economic growth should be directed not only toward the individuals who have had the opportunity for a good education, a well paid job, a two-car garage and a home in the country. They are also for the widow or divorcee who has to raise her children alone on minimum wages earned working long hours in an inner-city garment factory; for the youth who has had to drop out of school to help his family and now finds his particular skill is no longer needed in a sophisticated eco-