

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTION PERIOD***[English]***EMPLOYMENT****REQUEST FOR NEW INITIATIVES TO COMBAT YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT**

Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Over the weekend the Minister mused publicly about new initiatives, saying that new training programs aimed at young people would be announced within a few weeks. Given the fact that, even though the figures, generally speaking, are encouraging, the labour force survey on Friday indicated that we still have 19 per cent unemployment among young people, representing about 556,000 unemployed young people, are there new initiatives? Why cannot we have these new initiatives announced now because the need is urgent?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, it is not a problem that was discovered by us simply last Friday. We have a variety of proposals, programs and initiatives which we are considering. There have not been definitive decisions taken about which of these would be the most cost effective way of responding to the problem. I would hope we could bring forward these initiatives in the broad framework of a Speech from the Throne so that it could be seen how they would relate to the whole variety of government programs we would like to bring forward. I urge Hon. Members on the opposite side of the House to help us arrive at that position by expediting the passage of the Crow Bill.

Mr. McGrath: The only program we have so far is the Access Program. It represents if it reaches its target—and it is just starting—31,000 jobs and 4,000 conservation jobs, or about 6 per cent of the total unemployed youth in the country.

REQUEST FOR EARLY ANNOUNCEMENT OF PROGRAMS

Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Madam Speaker, since youth unemployment has been at 20 per cent proportions for the last several months, why is it necessary to wait for a new session of Parliament? If there is anything left in the cupboard, why cannot the Minister announce the programs now so that desperate young people can take advantage of them?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, I would partially reiterate my previous answer. We are considering a whole variety of approaches that we think would be beneficial. It is a question of trying to determine which of these will be most effective.

I would like to point out to the Hon. Member, as we have in the past—and I suppose we will have to do it again in the House—that at the present time the federal Government is spending approximately \$2.5 million a day to help young people with employment problems, across the country. Close to \$1.5 billion for the year 1983-84 will go to assist young people

with training, job creation, and matching their capacities to job opportunities. A great deal is being done within the context of the revival of the economy as a whole to help them, but we have some new ideas we want to bring forward. We want to bring them forward in the proper way after we have ascertained they are cost efficient and see how they relate to other government programs.

USE OF SKILLS TRAINING FUNDS

Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Madam Speaker, the Minister complained about having surplus funds in a program called the Critical Trade Skills Training Program. So far this year only 11 per cent of those funds has been spent. This means there is still \$70 million sitting in that Program; we know that is in the cupboard. Last year only 66 per cent of funds for that Program was spent. Why cannot that money, which is not being utilized, be redirected to wage subsidies to the private sector to provide jobs now, not some pie in the sky musings of the Minister about some pre-election Speech from the Throne?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, as I have already pointed out to the Hon. Member, there is money available now under the Career Access Program which is directed toward providing, through job subsidies, assistance to young people entering the labour force. Our estimate is that something close to 25,000 young people have been helped by that Program or predecessor programs in this year. We expect another 33,000 or so to be assisted in the forthcoming year. There are already these programs in place.

The reason the Skills Training funds have not been taken up to the degree we expected has been a certain reluctance in the private sector to use the funds, given the overhead costs involved. Given the strength of the recovery that is taking place in the country we believe there will be an opportunity, not only this year but next year, to use these funds. I am not convinced by the Hon. Member's argument that the appropriate thing to do at this time would be to shift funds away from training into the Career Access job creation program. As I said earlier, that program is operating and seems to be operating effectively and, who knows, may be able to be expanded in years ahead.

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SPECIAL RECOVERY CAPITAL PROJECTS PROGRAM**IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECTS**

Mr. Thomas Siddon (Richmond-South Delta): Madam Speaker, I would like to direct my question to one of the Government's harshest critics, the Minister of State for Economic Development. According to reliable reports the Government is lagging by one-third, \$250 million in the present fiscal year alone, on the planned projects which were to be fast-