

history, about 5 percent over the previous year, reaching an average St employment for the year of about 8.7 million.

This gain was shared by all regions and all groups — by adults and by young people, by men and by women. The increase in employment for women was the most impressive, making up nearly half the total increase in employment and marking a continuation of the long-term rise in the participation of women in the labour force. But the labour force as a whole continued to grow at a rate well above the average for other industrialized countries.

Despite this exceptional growth in the labour force, the rate of unemployment declined appreciably in 1973. The average unemployment rate fell from an average of 6.3 per cent in 1972 to an estimated 5.7 per cent in 1973.

Large increases in
consumer spending

Consumer markets remained generally buoyant in 1973, extending to three years the period of large increases in consumer spending. Continuing support came from the strong advance in personal disposable income generated by rising economic activity and gains in employment.

Consumer expenditures rose to an estimated \$68 billion for the year, up by about 14 per cent from 1972. The strongest sector was consumer durables, where expenditures increased by nearly 20 per cent, faster even than the rapid pace of expansion in the previous year. Highlighting the trend, passenger-car sales showed a major gain, moving up to around one million units for the first time. Increases have also been substantial in other sectors of consumer spending.

Strengthening trend
in investment

The strengthening of capital investment provided an important thrust to economic expansion during the year. It is anticipated that total capital spending by both government and business for the year will have risen by about 15 per cent over 1972 to over \$25 billion, and may even attain \$26 billion.

Housing construction was the major element of strength, with increased expenditures of more than 20 per cent. Housing starts reached a new record level of over 250,000 units. The level of housing investment in the third quarter of 1973 represented a higher proportion of GNP than in any period in the past decade.

Business expenditures on new machinery and equipment also increased strongly, and at a rate not much lower than that of housing. This came after several years of comparatively modest increases.