

from the Happy Valley-Goose Bay military base DREE set up a research group composed of representatives of five federal departments, the provinces as well as the local community. We obtained very substantial results, including decisions by federal departments and the signing of an auxiliary agreement with the province. While we were expecting about 150 jobs to be lost in this area it seems today that out of the 150 civilians who could have been out of a job fewer than 25 report not having found another one locally.

That is yet another example, Mr. Speaker, of the cooperation between the federal government, various departments and the provinces. Finally, there was great concern about the coordination between the objectives of the Department of Regional Economic Expansion and the Department of Transport, and I want to assure the House that there was and will always be a great deal of coordination, consultation, discussion between my friend the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) and myself, as well as between the representatives of our departments in terms of the general policy. That means transport services will be financed in all areas where they serve as a support for a springboard to development even if the total cost of investment cannot be charged to users. Such is our answer to the criticism where a general policy was set up but that general policy is actually being influenced by regional economic expansion policies, and that is why my colleague the Minister of Transport agreed to look into it.

There are other departments, Mr. Speaker, which are certainly interested in cooperating with our department. For instance I could name Manpower and Immigration Department through its job creation program which is oriented towards areas needing most job opportunities, and the recent amendment to the Unemployment Insurance Act which once again recognized the particular situation of various regions so that they could have a different treatment in terms of unemployment insurance.

Gradually each department recognizes the necessity to coordinate government policies aimed at particular regional needs. That could not be done overnight, nor within a year, we had to gain experience. Mr. Speaker, if I had to quote only the report just published by the Economic Council of Canada, they took three years to find out what we knew well before because we had to fight the problem every day. There is a need for coordination, for many instruments to settle regional disparities. They recognized also the great complexity of that issue, that there were many intermediate agents, not only government agents but also private industries and individuals.

Evidently, if we try to co-ordinate all that, Mr. Speaker, to have everyone working towards the one and same objective, that is not an easy task, a challenge we could take up rapidly. Mr. Speaker, the opposition members should recognize that the government has committed itself to the job and has decided to live up to the challenge.

Many figures have been quoted and many things have been said. Of course, I could quote some figures myself. I have some here which I don't like at all. I find it interesting to look at some statistics on manpower, unemployment, income, partici-

Regional Unemployment

tion. The figures concerning the increase in the labour force are interesting. For instance, let us take a specific province, Prince Edward Island, for instance. In 1966 the labour force consisted of 34,000 people and ten years later, in 1976, this figure had reached 48,000. As far as employment is concerned there is no doubt a problem in Canada: a large number of unemployed. It is obvious from the figures released this morning. There is nothing which satisfies me in all that, even though there is a slight decrease in unemployment in some Atlantic provinces and in Quebec. We are looking and hoping for a much larger increase. There is nothing gratifying in these figures, and I am not contented, Mr. Speaker. I am not any happier than the opposition members, and especially not more than those who are now unemployed and who are directly affected.

The other important factor to note, and it is a positive one even though to a certain extent, it is responsible for the unemployment rate, is the fact that while the participation rate in a province like Prince Edward Island was 49 per cent of the labour force in 1966, it is now 55.8 per cent. This is an indication. In Quebec, the rate was 54 per cent and it is now 58 per cent, and for Canada, the rate is now 60 per cent while it was 57 per cent in 1966. These figures are interesting since they seem to indicate an increase in the interest shown by the labour force to turn to the labour market and look for work.

The unemployment rate was released today. Everyone knows what it is. The *per capita* income is not satisfactory, Mr. Speaker, although the official figure has gone up. Of course, it has increased elsewhere in central Canada, that is obvious, but we must still admit that there has been some progress. In 1966, the *per capita* income was \$1,576 and it was \$4,400 in 1975. This still shows an improvement. Now, I am going to stop this enumeration to deal with a more specific subject.

● (1650)

I think it is clear from the figures I have just quoted that we have not succeeded in creating heaven on earth.

Mr. Paproski: No jobs, either.

Mr. Lessard: I do believe, however, that we began to turn the tide before the current economic slowdown. I believe, as well, that the multi-year agreement we have put in place with each provincial government will promote further gains when the general western economic climate and the national economy begin to pick up. Equally, I have no doubt in my mind that without strong DREE efforts on incentive measures, on GDA programs and on policy co-ordination, the situation in Quebec and the Atlantic provinces would be much worse than it is today.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lessard: We certainly have to recognize that. Let us just look at the figures. Since 1969 DREE has spent—