

What the government can do directly is limited; to a great extent its role is educational. During the past few years we have been studying the nature of the problem in co-operation with employer and labour groups and with provincial governments. We have been trying to promote positive action.

In February 1952, the National Advisory Council on Manpower referred this problem to a committee of the Unemployment Insurance Commission called the National Employment Committee. During the summer of 1953 this Committee conducted a survey of 18 seasonal industries, questioning more than 600 employers on the causes of seasonal variations in their employment and on the methods they had already developed or could suggest for reducing these employment ups and downs. The survey showed that a great many employers were alive to the problem and were developing techniques for stabilizing employment. The Federal Minister of Labour distributed 20,000 copies of a booklet "Seasonal Unemployment in Canada", containing a summary of the results of the survey and the Committee's recommendations for reducing unemployment. It was sent to all employers with more than 50 employees, all trade union secretaries, all local offices of the Unemployment Insurance Commission and many other national and local groups.

Last winter the Federal Department of Labour sponsored a series of radio broadcasts designed to encourage the public, industry and business to co-operate in efforts to increase winter employment by doing as much as possible in the way of maintenance, redecorating, renovating and purchasing of supplies during the winter. The speakers included employers, union leaders and a woman commentator representing the average householder. As Minister of Public Works I was particularly interested in the three broadcasts dealing with the construction industry. The report of the National Employment Committee laid great emphasis on both the need for and the possibility of increasing winter employment in this industry, which employs so many workers all across Canada and which has always had a serious seasonal unemployment problem.

In March of this year, for instance, more than one-third of all male applications for employment on hand at National Employment Service offices were made by skilled and unskilled construction workers. In August of 1954 only about one-sixth of the total number of applications were made by construction workers.

In the past this industry used to close down altogether for three or four months each year and even now there are more than 25 percent fewer men employed in winter than in summer.

In his radio broadcast Mr. Raymond Brunet, a past president of the Canadian Construction Association, emphasized that construction work can be carried on during the winter, and that the preference for carrying it on during the summer is largely a matter of habit and custom. What is needed is close co-operation between owners, architects and the contractor so that outside work can be completed and buildings closed in before cold weather sets in. If this is done, construction costs will be no greater than in summer. This was proved in an interesting experiment carried