

We take pleasure in mentioning among the numerous public buildings a beautiful new one in Rivière du Loup, the metropolis of the Lower St. Lawrence region. This building is one of which Rivière du Loup is bound to be proud. Credit must be given to the Minister of Public Works for that construction.

Moreover, by the end of December, the Department of Public Works had paid \$73 million, in round figures, an amount equivalent to half the cost of implementation of the Trans-Canada highway project, the other half being paid for by all the provinces, with the exception of Quebec. As a result of the agreement arrived at on the occasion of the conference held last November, the Minister of Public Works hopes to be in a position to grant even more help for the completion of this "main street of Canada."

Records indicate that in the field of housing an unprecedented number of housing units, 125,000, have been constructed in 1955; this bears witness to the success achieved through the amendments brought, the preceding year, to the National Housing Act.

Furthermore, the department has continued its traditional policy for the construction, repairing and maintenance of hundreds of marine buildings from coast to coast, many of which are located in the province of Quebec. No less than 371 major constructions undertaken by the department were under way in 1955, 190 of which have been completed. Moreover, the department undertook the construction of 1,200 smaller marine units during the same year. It is undeniable that the Honourable Robert H. Winters, that active and devoted Minister of Public Works, has given a strong impetus to building activities. He has led the way in this field.

Decrease of seasonal unemployment—The Honourable Milton F. Gregg, Minister of Labour, obtained the support of several other governments and of some private concerns in order to reduce seasonal unemployment during the winter. The action of his department in this connection deserves recognition.

On February 17, 1954, the National Employment Committee completed its report on the causes and effects of seasonal unemployment, prepared at the request of the National Manpower Council, and made several important recommendations toward stabilizing employment. The same day Major General George R. Pearkes, one of the most enlightened members of the Conservative opposition in the House of Commons, made a remarkable speech, in which he expressed the opinion that the unemployment which existed at that time was, to a very great extent, seasonal.

The Minister of Labour succeeded in co-ordinating the efforts of heads of industries, of employers and of public bodies, in order to remedy seasonal unemployment. The Government adopted the policy of letting building contracts in winter. It got the support of municipal authorities and chambers of commerce, as well as of the press and radio, to encourage individuals to have their properties repaired or done over during the period of lowest employment. Very interesting booklets were widely distributed by the Department of Labour, the National Research Council and the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, which kept the public advised of the efforts of the federal, provincial and municipal authorities' efforts to fight seasonal unemployment. The co-operation of industry was essential and the Minister of Labour obtained it unreservedly.

Last night, at Winnipeg, the Honourable Milton F. Gregg had the satisfaction of being able to state, before the annual general meeting of the Canadian Builders Association, that the year 1955 had beaten all records in regards to commercial activities and employment in Canada. The value of our national production for 1955 will reach \$26.4 billion, or an increase of 10 per cent over the previous year, which is a record increase for the post-war period.

Employment also reached a record high in 1955. It shot up to 5,641,000 in the month of August. Since then there has been some reduction in employment, but it is much lighter than for the two previous years. In mid-December, although there were 291,000 more non-agricultural workers than last year, unemployment insurance offices listed 75,000 fewer applicants. The improvement brought last year to the Unemployment Insurance Act will ensure greater protection to those who are temporarily out of work, especially during the winter season.

The National Employment Office renders the greatest services to the working class. This makes me particularly happy because the Honourable Norman Rogers, Minister of Labour in Mr. King's cabinet, stated on March 9, 1936, that the report which I had prepared on the classification of unemployed had served as the basis of his department's policy.

Mr. St. Laurent's government leaves no stone unturned when it comes to helping the working class. The following excerpt from the Speech from the Throne is ample proof thereof:

My ministers have also conferred with provincial ministers to consider and develop an arrangement for sharing the costs of assistance to unemployed persons not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits, and in need. Detailed agreements have been submitted to the provinces. You will be asked to approve the legislation necessary to implement this program.