

Manpower Retraining Programs

ble to me and my colleagues, and we found it to be well researched and the argument for limiting allowances to 52 weeks to be substantiated, then we would no longer raise this question. I find it incomprehensible that the government should refuse to make this document public. I know it will be said that it is an interdepartmental document. But, Mr. Speaker, this is a government which has often talked about participatory democracy. It should live up to that slogan.

We have established Information Canada, which is spending I do not know how many millions of dollars to tell the people of Canada the things that they want to know. I urge the government to adopt a policy under which virtually every government document and study, except those dealing with personnel matters and security, is made available, not just to Members of Parliament but also to the media representatives and to the ordinary citizens.

Mr. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I should first deal with the request of the honorable member for the production of a report. The department informs me that there is not a precise and definite document on the subject in which the hon. member is interested. It has a series of memoranda and notes that were prepared by individuals in the department who were brought together to study a number of aspects related to the adult education and occupational training program, including the question of the 52-weeks limitation. Therefore, if a document is not produced it is because the departmental officials are not able to find a definite document, the document to which the hon. member refers.

We are grateful to the hon. member for raising this subject. We know that his interest in and knowledge of it extends over some years. When discussing the departmental estimates in April, 1970, the hon. member raised this question and drew attention to the weaknesses that he saw in this type of limitation. The hon. member is quite right in saying that the 52-weeks limitation is spelled out in the act. This is an act which was passed in 1967. I have not been able to find in the records of the votes taken on second or third reading of that bill, any vote recorded in opposition to it. At that time the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) was a member of this House of Commons. Probably this clause escaped his attention but that does not mean he should not now question the validity of it, having experienced a number of incidents several times at each level.

• (5:20 p.m.)

The requirements of this provision ought to be put on record again, as this might help to clarify the restrictions that are presently imposed. First, it has to be said that no course may exceed 52 weeks in duration; that is fact. Second, it has to be remembered that successive periods of basic training for skill development courses may not exceed 52 weeks in total. Third, successive skill courses may not exceed 52 weeks in total. Finally, basic training for skill development and subsequent skill training may not exceed 104 weeks in total. This means that a potential trainee could enter training for a maximum of 52 weeks and, having completed this training, he could enter the skill training for another maximum of 52 weeks for a total of 104 weeks.

[Mr. Orlikow.]

Certainly a year ago these limitations might have caused some hardship to potential trainees. Even within the 52-week period, the person with limited education might not find it possible to develop his educational level from say Grade I to Grade VIII or whatever is required for the subsequent training. At the same time, a limitation of this kind has advantages because it puts pressure on the federal government to have a close look at the existing methodology of training adults. In other words, it promotes the incentive to find methods for achieving greater results within the 52-week limitation. Over the years, as the hon. member is aware, the department has taken several steps.

First of all, it has endeavoured to improve methods of training adults. Here we are dealing with mature people unaccustomed to the school environment, and there is a need to develop a new methodology to permit upgrading in a shorter time. The department also provided the incentive for experimentation with new methods. In this respect, the work of some of the New Start agencies has been extremely helpful as they have pioneered in the area of adult training with techniques and methods hitherto unknown which have permitted those interested in manpower training to evaluate the results of the experiments and make the new techniques available.

Having improved the methodology and experimented with new techniques and their application, one can perhaps still criticize the department. This, of course, would be fair except for the fact that there is a limitation on how the department may spend its allocation of funds for training. Ninety per cent of what was allocated in previous years to provincial institutions for the training of adults has to be made available in the subsequent year. This leaves a very limited amount available for experimentation, but nevertheless it is being done. A few weeks ago the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Lang) attended the inauguration of a teacher training course in Prince Albert made possible as a result of New Start endeavours, and which will introduce new techniques for the teaching of adults. This is a classic example of a visible effort on the part of the department within the restrictions imposed by the government and approved by this Parliament to achieve greater results in a shorter time.

Surely, anyone in this chamber tonight knows, Mr. Speaker, that while the educational system for youngsters is structured according to certain traditional lines, it is quite a different thing when it comes to the training of adults. Surely, there is no human element which should hamper the acceleration of training techniques and methods which would raise people with limited education to higher levels in a short time. We must keep in mind of course that there are economic considerations. If no restrictions are imposed, it could mean that at the end of any fiscal year fewer people would be trained for the same amount of money. Some people could be left out because some others were receiving training for three or four years as the hon. member is suggesting should be done.

This does not mean there is no merit in his submission. He referred to a hotel management course in Winnipeg which required two years to complete in which potential trainees could not enroll because of this limitation. I suggest that this is the exception rather than the rule, Mr.