

MORE TRAINING FOR UNEMPLOYED

Methods of increasing training programmes for unemployed persons to fit them for available employment was one of the main concerns of the members of the Vocational Training Advisory Council, which met in Ottawa recently.

The meeting was attended by provincial educational and training authorities and representatives of employer, employees, agriculture, veterans and women's organizations.

Reviewing the number of training programmes being carried on under Schedule "M" of the Federal-Provincial Vocational Training Agreements, the Council agreed that, in relation to the number of unemployed in Canada, inadequate use of the schedule was being made. (Under Schedule "M" the Federal Government agrees to pay, in provinces which have signed the Agreements, 50 per cent of the costs of providing training for unemployed persons in approved training programmes, which must be implemented by the provinces.)

Between April and September of this year, the Council was told, 2,595 unemployed workers received training under Schedule "M". This was 408 more than for the same period last year.

The figure does not represent all training in Canada, since unemployed persons are trained in trade schools in Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and Quebec, where Schedule "M" is not operating and many are referred to private schools for training by the Unemployment Insurance Commission where publicly-operated facilities are not available. The base of eligibility for unemployment insurance benefits while taking part in training programmes was recently broadened. In addition, between April and September there were 424 physically handicapped persons trained under another Schedule of the Federal-Provincial Agreements (Schedule "R"). This compared with 368 in the same period last year.

The Council thought that the fullest possible use should be made of Schedule "M", particularly during the winter months, with a view to opening up new opportunities of employment for unskilled and semi-skilled workers.

SCHEDULE "M"

The majority of those trained under Schedule "M" are unemployed persons who have no formal training in a specific trade and are unskilled or semi-skilled workers laid off because of seasonal inactivity or who have difficulty in finding satisfactory employment as unskilled workers. With the decreasing demand for unskilled workers the need for training and upgrading of adults is increasing. This training is successful and is contributing greatly to the welfare of the individual and to the general caliber of the work force.

The Council was told that some of those now being trained are in a different category and present a more difficult problem from the training and the employment aspects. These are the unemployed persons who are highly skilled in an occupation for which the demand is decreasing. Most of these have had continuous work at high rates of pay and have their roots deeply set in a community from which it is difficult to move. The retraining and readjustment of these workers is more difficult than that of unskilled workers.

Indications are that there may be an increasing need to re-train some of these skilled workers as the mechanization of production advances and as coal mines, textile mills, and possible other industries reduce the number of their workers.

It was thought that co-operation from employers and trade unions when planning changes that will result in a reduction of personnel would assist in providing a re-training programme before the situation reached the emergency stage. More specific information on trends in various occupations and future employment needs would also help training authorities to make best use of existing facilities for the adult workers.

FARM TRAINING

One of the series of reports on skilled manpower "Vocational Training in Agriculture", was discussed by Council, which urged that the study of vocational training in agriculture be continued by whatever means and devices the Federal Government sees fit and that the findings of this research be brought before the Council for consideration and recommendations. Members stressed the need for a good training programme in this field.

Apprenticeship continued to make progress in Canada. It was reported that, on September 30, 1959, there were 18,645 apprentices registered in the provinces where the federal-provincial apprenticeship agreement is active. This is an increase of 1,357 over the previous year. (Many other apprentices are trained in private programmes in Canada.)

The increase in the training of technicians was also discussed.

The full-time total enrolment in institutes offering advanced technical training in 1959-60 has reached an all-time high of 8,304 students distributed as follows: first year - 4,148; second year - 2,526; third year - 1,557. The "engineering and scientific type" of technician outnumbers the other by 8 to 1.

The Council heard a report prepared by the Economics and Research Branch, which compared the product of the school system with the needs of industry. The study pointed out the rapidly decreasing proportion of unskilled workers in the labour force and indicated the need for more vocational training. The Council will discuss the report in detail at a future meeting.