

Training of Public Servants

I take it from that that the government has no general policy at the present time. The hon. member who proposed this motion supports the government. I suppose it is possible that this might have been considered by his caucus or by the cabinet ministers involved; therefore, I have to assume that there is no general policy for training public services employees, in spite of the fact that the member of the New Democratic Party who just spoke said that there is a government policy.

Whether there is a government policy or not, the point of this motion is that the government should be assessing training and development programs for public service employees. I find this difficult to understand. The smallest businesses in the country periodically assess each program they have to find out whether they are getting results.

Is the public to understand from this motion that each department just carries out training and development programs at its whim and at the wish of the minister or deputy minister? If that is the way this is being done, it is not a great way to run a business. Is there a hodge-podge of programs which are different in each department? Are people being trained at public expense and then paid additional salaries because of the training? What public servant will be foolish enough not to accept training when he is told his salary will be increased if he undergoes training?

I cannot understand this type of motion. Surely to goodness the Government of Canada assesses all its programs periodically, throws out those which are not any good, amends others and adopts others that are good. That is just ordinary business.

I know hon. members on the government side do not like me to refer to Alberta but in the Alberta government every minister is required to assess every program periodically and report to the cabinet. There is no hodge-podge program whereby every minister acts according to his own whims. Public money is being spent, and ministers are responsible. If public money is being spent to train an employee, there has to be very definite justification.

I agree that there should be special training if the public is to be the beneficiary, but I do not necessarily agree with paying higher salaries to people who take training. I do not believe in training if trained people are already available for particular positions. Why should the public service use public money to compete with those who have educated or trained themselves? I just cannot follow that. It is not fair. I have heard people say that if they could get into the public service they would receive many benefits and they would get this, this and that at public expense. We should realize that we are spending public money, and somebody should be accountable for it.

I assume from reading this motion that there is no accountability and that there are just hodge-podge programs operated by the Government of Canada to train certain people. I wonder who these people are. That is a condemnation of the government. Surely to goodness the government does not need to have a resolution passed in the House of Commons asking it to assess its various programs; nor should it be necessary to

have a motion asking that a general policy be established. That is just ordinary, everyday, elementary business, and I cannot understand the purpose of the motion.

I believe in special training if the result is a contribution to the development of this country. Our native people have had many difficulties because their culture is not oriented to the white culture and white standards. However, the University of Calgary has undertaken programs, with the assistance of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, to provide training for native people because the training of our Indian people is a public responsibility. We have undertaken in treaties to do that. Even so, native training has been very skimpy. If my memory serves me correctly, 32 Indian people have graduated from the University of Calgary with degrees and are now out serving the people of Canada.

I also believe in training those who are disabled. When Syncrude started its work in the Fort McMurray oil sands, there were not enough people to do the various jobs, so Syncrude made sure that the people who were going to do jobs there knew what they were doing. On-the-job training was provided to many native people and to some white people as well. Those people became valuable employees. With that assistance they were able to do work. However, the need was there.

I should think that the Government of Canada would provide training where the need is evident, particularly to disabled people, native people and others. I do not support any hodge-podge training for the sake of training. I do not think every department should carry out different programs simply to give certain employees higher salaries. That is not my idea of carrying out a sensible program at all.

If this motion is serious in asking the government to assess training and development programs with a view to establishing a general policy, that is a terrible condemnation of the present government and its policies.

Mr. John Campbell (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to comment on the hon. member's motion regarding the provision of training and development programs for public service employees.

It is unfortunate that I will not have time to mention all the programs in the departments, but I will try to provide as much information as possible.

The subject of training and development in the public service is one to which the government has given much attention during the past few years. The government clearly recognizes the importance of effective human resource management, of which employee training and development are essential components. In this regard, we should not lose sight of the fact that the Canadian public service has earned and maintained an international reputation for its high standards of performance and competence. This is due in no small measure to the way in which human resources management and the training and development of employees take place in the federal public service.