

Manpower Retraining Programs

tenfold. It cost in the neighbourhood of \$26 per job placement under the national employment service and now it costs something in the neighbourhood of \$270 to \$280.

I will not discuss today whether the department is doing a better job than did the national employment service or whether they are doing a good job, although I would say to members of the government and to whoever is replying for the minister that it is a disturbing thing to me to see the proliferation of private employment agencies, each one of which, quite legitimately in our free enterprise system, receives a pretty substantial fee either from the employer who is looking for an employee or from the employee who gets the job for fitting the person looking for a job to the job vacancy. It seems to me that there is something wrong, that the Department of Manpower and Immigration which has been charged by the government with finding jobs or helping people who are out of work to find jobs, is not doing the job which it should do. If it did, these private employment agencies would not be proliferating in every city in Canada.

However, the subject of my motion today is not the employment side of the Department of Manpower and Immigration but rather the training side. We embarked, as of 1966, on a very elaborate and very expensive program of manpower training. We were certainly advised to do so by labour, by industry and by the Economic Council of Canada. Hon. members will remember that the first two or three reports of the Economic Council came down very heavily on the side of a comprehensive manpower training policy to upgrade the skills and the education of the Canadian workforce. Hon. members will note that in many parts of Canada, particularly in rural areas, in the 1940's and 1950's a large number of people left school at grades five, six or seven, and it is very difficult for people with that kind of education to get jobs because most jobs which are available increasingly require the kind of skills which these people do not possess.

However, the last report of the Economic Council, which came out just a couple of weeks ago, made a very interesting point, namely, that in no country in the world is as much job training done in special institutions as it is in Canada as compared to training on the job, as it is in Sweden and many other countries. So, we have embarked on a very comprehensive program of job training but one which is also very expensive. It is not my intention today to discuss the details of whether or not our job training program is a success. That I think we can do best when the estimates of the department are before the appropriate parliamentary committee. But there are some very interesting questions which need to be asked.

If the government has decided, and Members of Parliament from all parties have agreed, that a substantial part of job training and skill upgrading shall be done under government auspices and in training institutions financed if not actually operated by the Department of Manpower and Immigration, then we have a right to study whether it is being done in the best way possible. We have a right to study whether the courses which are given are designed to fit the needs of the 1970's or 1980's or whether in fact, as so many people have complained, they have been designed to fit the needs of the 1950's and 1960's which no longer exist. As a result, many people take a manpower training course, complete it, cannot get a job, go back and

take another training course. The department should look into the question of whether there is in fact a substantial number of people who have not had just one training course but three or four opportunities for job training. Some of the courses offered by the department in some of the institutions in Canada take longer than a year.

I remember one of my constituents speaking to me at considerable length and in great detail. He was a man with a number of years of experience in a business in which he has been fairly successful, but the nature of our economy and the fact that we are permitting a large importation of clothing from such places as Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan and Mainland China have had a drastic effect on the clothing industry. This constituent of mine decided, therefore, to enter another field of endeavour. He chose a hotel management course in the community college at Winnipeg. The course offered by that institution is a two-year course, and yet under either the act or the regulations there is a limit on the time for which the department will pay retraining allowances to people taking courses under the manpower retraining program. That limit is 52 weeks. This problem was raised when the act was originally being discussed in the House. It was also raised in committee. There have been a number of changes in that ministry since then, but I believe it was the present President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen), when he was in charge of that department, who told me that the government was studying the question of whether the 52 week limit should be continued. It has also been brought to our attention that the department assigned a task force to study the question.

• (5:10 p.m.)

If the government has information which can help Members of Parliament, representatives of the press, radio and T.V. media, as well as the general public to understand the reasons the government has adopted a policy, the government should do everything possible to make that information available. I happen to think that it is a mistake to limit these allowances to a 52-week period. I am the first to admit that I am not an expert in this field but I believe it would be much more sensible if the government had a flexible policy. If a course lasts six weeks a person should get the allowance for six weeks; if it lasts six months he should get the allowance for six months; if it lasts one year he should get the allowance for a year, and if it last 18 months he should get the allowance for 18 months.

The whole point of manpower retraining is that a person should get the training required to do a job. If a person wants to take a course which lasts two years, what sense is there in permitting him to start it if, at the end of the first year, the government says it will not continue his training allowances? In all probability he will have to stop taking the course, and he will not be qualified to hold a job in that field. The department has a responsibility in this connection because before a person starts a course it must determine if there is a reasonable chance that he will get a job when he completes the course. There are very few people taking manpower training programs who do not need the allowances.

Let me assure whoever replies on behalf of the government that if the report of the task force were made availa-