

Public Servants' Training

the use of recruiting standards and methods which only took into account the education, behaviour and experience that are to be found among English-speaking male Canadians who traditionally made up the larger part of Canadian labour.

It is most important, Mr. Speaker, that all public servants feel they have equal opportunities to develop fully in terms of their career and that their skills and personal abilities are fully used and that they be convinced they have all the same promotion opportunities. It has not always been so. Should I refer, Mr. Speaker, to the difficulties which have met and are still meeting some minority groups, which find it most difficult to make a career in the public service. Certainly one among a host of factors against many Canadians was the difficult and sometimes unbearable conditions of our provincial education system which affected the training of young Canadians, men and women. Being ill-equipped for the competitive life of the labour market, those minorities were not however more stupid or less ambitious. They did not have access to basic instruments to get a proper education and therefore, whenever they were hired as public servants, most of them were filling vacancies at the administrative and operating support levels.

Fortunately things have now changed slightly. People have acquired a greater collective awareness of such discriminatory practices and our society tends towards more justice and seems ready to correct its past errors. Mr. Speaker, education is one of the most important influences to maintain our main social values. Consequently, true and continuous efforts have been made to remedy traditional inequities so that on one hand our minorities can be assured of an equal status and of career opportunities and that, on the other hand, an end can be put to all kinds of unfair clichés. In that respect, I must commend the Public Service Commission and all various departments for their constant and honest efforts. They have been effective agents of change. The advisability of establishing a National Administration School for civil servants employed by the federal government is absolutely necessary, Mr. Speaker, if one considers that the proper needs of the public service are not necessarily met by regular courses given at the post-secondary level.

While recognizing that some civil servants might need a technical or scientific training which requires university studies, it seems clear that public administration training as such would be better ensured if it were given in a school especially created for civil servants employed by the federal government. This way, the creation of an administration school in the national capital region would allow student civil servants to benefit from visits in various departments and government agencies, from encounters with senior civil servants and from on-the-job training within the public service, integrated with institutional teaching. No need to say that these various possibilities would not be available to those who prefer to study individually, in colleges or universities.

Furthermore, the special vocational role of a National Administration School would allow the various departments and the school to agree on intensive specialized sessions of two or three weeks for specific groups of civil servants. Finally, the establishment of such a specialized school by the Canadian

[Mr. Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier).]

government should be a first step towards the creation of a body entrusted with the training and development of public servants. This having been established, Mr. Speaker, why should we set up a body responsible for the training and development of public servants?

A study of the various facets of the training and development of federal civil servants clearly illustrates the obvious need for an agency capable of coordinating the various initiatives already taken in the field. For instance, even the Chairman of the Public Service Commission, Mr. Edgar Gallant, admits that his agency is only administering 15 per cent of training activities within the federal public service. That is because many departments have very advanced training programs to meet their own specific needs. Such is the case in the Post Office Department and the Transport Department.

However, the special initiatives of the departments lead to a considerable variety of interventions by each one of them. To be convinced of it, one need but mention the number of employees involved in training programs or furthering their studies, and the resulting expenses. That diversity is such that it could lead to a loss of control over that sector of departmental activity. That is why, Mr. Speaker, one is not surprised by the questions hon. members put, both on the government side and that of the opposition, which reveal their concern about departmental expenditures for employee training, educational leave, trips, transfers and all that is involved in improving one's qualifications. By putting those questions, hon. members are only trying to exercise the supervision that is needed in a field where the skeleton key reply of the departments always seems to be the same: We are trying to meet our own requirements.

The need to set up a coordinating agency seems obvious. To convince ourselves of its use, let us remember the need now being felt for a body capable of making a survey of all needs in the federal public service, of evaluating the results obtained by existing programs, and suggesting needed changes. A study of the training and development of employees working for the federal government reveals the need to adopt new rules relating to the choice of candidates for educational leave.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but his time is expired. However, he could continue with the unanimous consent of the House. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I have only a few things left to say. It is essential that the government acts in this regard to eliminate as much as possible the possible partisanship and the risk of arbitrary decisions. It seems that the matter of the training and development of civil servants will soon be examined in depth. In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would say that the establishment of a government school would allow us to centralize the existing systems. It would allow the government, in this period of austerity, to make economies of scale while providing better planification to maximize the potential of the available pedagogic resources.