

Training of Public Servants

training policy of the Treasury Board quite clearly spells out that most of the training done by departments will have to come out of the budgetary allotments to departments. If that is left strictly to the departments, then the money will not be there for training. The people least influential in making sure there is adequate training are those on the bottom rungs.

We all know at the present time, as the hon. member who preceded me pointed out, that women are underrepresented in the middle and senior management categories. We recognize that at the present time women, native people and the handicapped are concentrated at the bottom levels of the federal civil service. Those people do not have much political clout. Those people, as a whole, do not have much clout within their departments. Those are the people who could use the kinds of courses which the Public Service Commission was offering in the past, which are now the responsibility of the departments.

I am concerned about the policy which actually exists. The policy which the government came up with last summer is taking away rather than giving to those individuals. Day after day in this House we talk about affirmative action. The Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) has had a few problems with the Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Last year that group made some good recommendations. It pointed out some of the problems which exist in the public service. It is unfortunate that the Advisory Council on the Status of Women is under a cloud of suspicion at the present time.

There are a few other things in the D'Avignon report which I shall bring to hon. members' attention. At page 210 of that report we find "except at the level of organization where program plans are executed at the working level, training and development is often viewed as a necessary evil." That is an unfortunate characterization of what is happening within departments, but it is an understandable thought within departments. Departments which are out there to provide services to the general public, whether it be Indian Affairs, Employment and Immigration, or Health and Welfare, are not really in the training business. It is quite natural that the people who are hired to provide a service in Thompson, Manitoba, or Ottawa, Ontario, are not going to have expertise in the training area. They are not equipped with an economic background or any experience that will make them look at training as a natural goal for their department. In addition to that, they may not have any knowledge of how to go about training. It is fine to tell them to go over to the Public Service Commission to get some ideas, but that is not the same thing as having a group within government, such as the Public Service Commission, providing courses.

Upward mobility cannot be left to the individual within the public service otherwise we will always have the elitist system that we have at the present time. The previous speaker quoted a line from the staff training policy which referred to the fact that individuals will have the responsibility to do their own training as far as their own personal goals are concerned. That very line may recognize the fact that individuals may have personal goals and have a right to go out and take university or

community college training if they want, but it is also saying there is no responsibility, or very limited responsibility, on the part of government to do so. On the basis of past experience I am afraid that that one line from the training policy will not be just one line, it will be one of the paramount lines in the policy. It will be used every time somebody working in some office, factory, or what have you in the public service, wants to take training. They will refer to that and say to the individual "You can do that. You can go out to your community college or whatever you have in your community and do that on your own time, with your own money." Basically what is said in the report is that it is up to you to be responsible for your own personal goals.

Almost all the training people take, whether it is to be a lawyer, to be a teacher, to be a nurse, or to work within the government or within the private sector does relate to personal goals.

I think the government does have a leadership role. The government, above and beyond any other employer, has a leadership role to play in trying to help those individuals who need help, and also in making sure the people who are working for the Government of Canada and the people of Canada have the expertise to do a good job. If we take that role away from the Public Service Commission and give it to the line departments, this help will not be forthcoming.

● (1730)

I have already referred to the comments in the D'Avignon report and the fact that this is not considered top priority in most departments. D'Avignon had other things to say. He referred, of course, as I mentioned earlier, to the fact that women, the handicapped and natives have not received their fair share of training in the past. Referring to native people, the report says there is a cost to be borne for training that is clearly essential and is recognized as essential by the employer. That will not be the case with the new staff training policy of the Treasury Board.

When it comes to safety within the workplace, again D'Avignon touched on that topic, and again this is something very important. It is important for the federal government especially, to provide leadership in this field. I spent Saturday and Sunday of this weekend at a NUPGE conference, that is the National Union of Provincial Government Employees. It spent three and a half days dealing specifically with the topic of workplace safety. I was amazed as I listened to these provincial government employees list all the hazards and dangers that exist in public service jobs. Many of the jobs that provincial government employees do are the same as jobs carried out by our federal government employees. Too often the public views public servants as people who work in offices, and they do not recognize there are a lot of people in the public service who work in the same conditions that exist at any other industrial site and that the dangers faced by public servants are very similar to those faced by blue collar workers in private enterprises. It is my feeling that if we leave it to the