

Adult Occupational Training Act

during the course of the committee proceedings to call experienced administrators in the trade union field to deal with the matter.

Even as a result of certain arrangements worked out in the past whereby employees have gone to training schools outside the employer's premises, in the opinion of some of those who are most familiar with the details of operation in the industry some of the courses offered have been less than useful vis-à-vis the amount of federal funds expended upon them. In the view of some of these people whom I know, the employer in effect has unnecessarily leaned on the public purse in order to provide a poorer kind of training than that which has been traditionally provided on the job without any supplement from the public purse be it federal or provincial.

This is another aspect of the matter which I think should be considered and is another reason provision for consultation should be made between the agents of the people involved and the employer before the minister is given the authority, as proposed in the bill, to enter into contracts.

Mr. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, I wish to raise only one point regarding this bill but it is a very important point. It is not clear to me whether the bill or the regulations to be made thereunder cover the point. I fully approve of all the evident measures put forward in the bill and congratulate the minister for them. I am particularly pleased at the provision removing the requirement of three years in the work force and that regarding the eligibility of women who work in the home as housewives.

My point concerns those individuals who live in bilingual areas in Canada, such as Montreal, Ottawa, Moncton, Sudbury, Cornwall and so on, and who cannot find work due to the fact that they cannot speak the other official language. As a representative from Montreal I have found in the past few years that many well trained Canadians have been laid off from work for one cause or another and are unable to find other work because they do not speak the other language. For example, I have met many English-speaking stenographers and secretaries who are most competent and are looking for work, but when they go to the personnel office or employment agency they are asked whether they can also speak French. Very often, although these people have had some training in the second language it is insufficient to permit them to work in that language and this is the principal reason they cannot obtain employment.

I have been arguing for several years now that our manpower retraining program and retraining allowances should apply to people such as this, whether it be a French-speaking person in Ottawa who cannot find work because he does not have sufficient knowledge of English, or an English-speaking person in Montreal who cannot find work because he does not speak French. I maintain that our manpower retraining program should give these people courses in the other language so they can become qualified for work, just as other people need training in the art of carpentry, electronics and other trades.

As the House knows, courses are given under the manpower retraining program for completion of high school

[Mr. Barnett.]

and many people take grades 9, 10 and 11. If we agree it is necessary to be educated to grades 9, 10 and 11 in order to find work, we should agree to train people in the second language if that is necessary for them to find work. In areas such as Montreal and other bilingual districts, such is not now the case.

• (1510)

I am pleased to back the government's program which has been to promote bilingualism in those areas of Canada where it is necessary. At the same time, I believe that when people are affected by these requirements in their work we should help them, under the manpower retraining program, to acquire proficiency in the other language with which they are not familiar.

One of the anomalies of our programs is that under the immigration program we help people to acquire a working knowledge of the French and English languages. A person who comes to Canada as an immigrant can take a French or English course through the Manpower and Immigration Department and is paid a training allowance while taking the course. People coming from countries such as England, Ireland or the United States, being English-speaking can under the Department of Manpower and Immigration program take training courses in the French language while receiving a living allowance. But an English-speaking person born in Montreal, a Canadian citizen, cannot go to the Department of Manpower and Immigration and take the same course.

I have argued that if the government is going to provide courses to immigrants so they can learn the official languages of this country for purposes of employment, we should do the same thing for our native born Canadian citizens. Perhaps the minister in replying can cover this point. I should hope that as a result of these amendments or the regulations to be passed in relation thereto, language retraining programs will be included as a course one can obtain under the adult occupational training program. If this were allowed I think we would solve many of our employment problems in areas where bilingual capability is needed.

This is the only point I wish to raise in respect of the bill, and to me it is extremely important. My constituency is in Montreal. Seventy-five per cent of the population is English-speaking, yet they live in a city where 80 per cent of the population is French-speaking. The 75 per cent English-speaking figure includes immigrants from many parts of the world. We have many British people, Italians, Greeks, Germans, and so on. Once they become citizens and require employment, they must have the capability of working in both languages.

One of the objections raised by the government is that evening language courses are given by the school commission of Montreal and the people to whom I have referred can take them. The courses under the school commission are not as good as those provided by the Department of Manpower and Immigration. They are not nearly as intensive, and they are conducted in the evening. There is no retraining or training allowance attached to them. I argue that if the government carries out retraining programs and pays training allowances in order that people can finish high school, learn a trade and so on, the govern-