

National Training Act

was high unemployment, there were very serious shortages of skilled workers and professionals.

Our work confirmed that these mismatches or imbalances were in fact present in the marketplace. We made some serious recommendations to deal with this. The imbalances were due to either lack of or inadequacy in training programs in this country. We found that only 20 per cent of major industrial firms did any serious on-the-job training. It was a bit of a scandal. The large companies recognized and admitted that they had not done enough in the past and were now changing their ways.

The reason many of them had not done any serious on-the-job skilled training was that since the Second World War it had been easier to go to Europe and other countries, and through immigration find the skilled workers needed rather than train Canadians. None of us is against immigration, but we feel that much more should have been done and still can be done to train Canadians to fill those high-skilled jobs and professions rather than having to go abroad to get workers.

I might say the major companies today are not having success in finding the skilled workers they want from Europe. In the first place, there has been a decline in the birth rate in those countries such as we have had here. Also, the standard of living has increased considerably. Therefore, it is more difficult to attract workers in Holland, Germany, Scandinavia, France and so on to come here. Many witnesses told us that their recruiting teams going to Europe are becoming non-cost effective. Whereas they used to attract 15 or 20 recruits, but now come back with only three, four or five.

It is imperative that we improve our job training and on-the-job training program. As chairman of the task force, I want to say that, in my opinion, this bill moves very considerably in that direction. It will do a lot to deal with that serious problem.

The task force came to the conclusion that not only must we considerably improve the training programs for our young people through apprenticeship programs, co-operative education programs, technical colleges and institutions, but that training must become a lifelong process. We were told over and over again that no matter what you are trained for at 20 or 25, because of rapidly advancing technology it is very likely that in the future, and possibly even today, you will have to be retrained at least two or three times during your lifetime. Serious retraining will be required to keep up with the technology.

What we are aiming for is sound, basic technical and professional training in the first place, and a system of education and training where a person can retrain and upgrade throughout his entire life. We want a system which will facilitate easy entry at all stages of one's life, one with support systems, training allowances and bursaries to allow a person to go back and to keep up with new technology and new systems. If we do not do that, we will rapidly fall behind our chief competitors in the United States, the Common Market and Japan where they are doing these things.

We are saying that our training, retraining and upgrading programs must be improved. Also something must be done about this very shocking figure of 28.4 per cent of functional illiterate people in this country who at the present time are not ready for any training program. The only training program they can take advantage of is a very basic education program.

To a great extent these people are being wasted. It is a waste for them, for society and this country. If these 28.4 per cent functionally illiterate people, who cannot properly read, write, compute or express themselves, are going to be used in this rapidly developing society, they must have the basic tools so that they can train for the technologies that are coming on line.

Over and over again we have been told that the jobs in short supply—this has been put on the record before, but it is worthwhile doing it again—are welding, tool and die making, machinists, engineers of all kinds—

Miss MacDonald: All jobs that can be held by women.

Mr. Allmand: The hon. member says all jobs that can be held by women. We pointed that out in the report and we deplored the fact that more women had not been permitted or attracted into these particular fields. Our supervisors told us over and over again that where women had entered the fields of welding, machinists, tool and die making, the high-skilled trades, women had done as well as or better than men. They welcomed the policies and programs to encourage women to go into those particular high-skilled trades. There are shortages also in such fields as electronics financial analysis, administration, accounting, the health field professions, nursing, physiotherapy, psychotherapy and so on.

● (1640)

I think one of the major accomplishments of this bill is that it provides much greater flexibility, first of all in enrolment in training and retraining programs, entry into training and retraining programs, greater flexibility in the provision of allowances and support systems for those who are on training. It provides that the training programs can be carried on not only by provinces and by provincial training systems, but also to a greater extent by employers and by others. By "others", I presume it means private schools and private training institutions, of which we have some very good ones in the country.

The bill also provides for greater funding for equipment and machinery for training. Some pretty shocking situations were brought to the attention of the task force, cases where they were training electronic technicians on equipment that was out of date by ten years. That was a bit of a scandal, Mr. Speaker. This bill provides for more funding and more co-operation in the provision of equipment, machinery and buildings for training. All that goes along with the recommendations of the task force report.

Because this bill is going to committee and we will have a chance to study it at greater length, I will not spend much time on it here. I merely want to say, as chairman of the task force, that the bill does not provide the total solution to our training,