

Training of Public Servants

Very often, training is the responsibility of the employer. It could therefore be said that it is institutional in nature.

On the other hand, development is a much more complex process which requires long-term planning. It is much closer to ongoing education. The individual is urged to acquire new knowledge to become better qualified and better equipped for a more difficult and therefore more senior position. Development is more individual than institutional and is supplementary to already acquired training.

● (1710)

[English]

I would like to deal now with some recent reports and changes as they apply to training and development.

The necessity of development, as well as of training, was recognized by the D'Avignon committee. The D'Avignon committee pointed out that if the reality of a "representative public service" is to be achieved, adequate programs of both training and development would have to be made available to such groups as French-speaking Canadians, women, native people, and handicapped people. The D'Avignon committee stated that programs which help candidates improve themselves, such as the Northern Career Program, were needed to attain government objectives. The D'Avignon committee spoke against the divorce of training from development in these terms:

It is beyond understanding how governments and treasury boards have failed to recognize not just the power of training but the fundamental requirement for the continuous training and development of staff, in the interests of economy and effectiveness.

The committee pointed out that the greatest part of the funds now allocated to training is spent by a small number of large training schools.

It is one of my major concerns, which I share with the D'Avignon committee, that without a policy which covers both training and development, government objectives pertaining to a fully representative public service will not be realized in the years ahead. The needs of French-speaking Canadians, women, native people and the handicapped must be adequately addressed.

French-speaking Canadians continue to be underrepresented in the upper levels of the public service and in the scientific and technical categories.

While the proportion of French-speaking Canadians in the public service is now representative of their proportion of the Canadian population, due to the accelerated recruitment programs over the past few years, recruitment cannot be relied on to solve the problem of underrepresentation at upper levels of federal departments and agencies. Part of the solution must be a properly conceived program of training and development if this situation is to be remedied in the medium term.

The situation of women in the public service remains disadvantaged. In recent years the proportion of women public servants is gradually approaching their rate of participation in the labour force as a whole. Women public servants remain

concentrated in administrative support categories and continue to be underrepresented in the officer categories. Even in those occupational categories which are predominantly female, women are concentrated at the lower levels.

The occupational categories in which women public servants are now concentrated—those which involve clerical and information handling activities—are those which are most likely to be transformed by the impact of microelectronic technologies. Research under way at the Institute for Research on Public Policy indicates that some existing jobs in these categories will be downgraded as machines take over functions previously performed manually and that the new jobs created will require greater skill and different aptitudes. Unless such changes are anticipated and planned for, women will not obtain their share of the new employment generated and may bear the brunt of the negative effects of the introduction of new technologies in the workplace.

Despite the attention that has been given to the representation of the native peoples in the public service, these groups continue to be underrepresented. While opportunities for the handicapped are gradually being developed, as a civilized society we must do much more. Adequate programs of training and development must be an important part of this process.

As for the public service as a whole, the rapidly shortening life of knowledge acquired at specific moments in the life cycle has prompted both the OECD and UNESCO to urge governments to view learning as a lifelong process and to build in the necessary opportunities for updating and new learning into the work experience itself. It is imperative that those occupational categories in which knowledge acquired early in the life cycle is particularly shortlived be identified, and that appropriate training and development strategies be devised to maintain the original investment Canadians have made in their public servants.

A most important report, that of the Royal Commission on Financial Management and Accountability, tabled in March, 1979, identified some of the major difficulties facing the federal administration in the area of personnel management. The commission recommended that personnel management responsibilities should be centralized under a secretary for personnel management in Treasury Board. It was recommended that the Public Service Commission be relieved of its role in the staffing, and training and development process, and that training services be provided through a separate revenue-dependent organization under a secretary for personnel management.

As recently as January 22 of this year it was announced by Treasury Board that the position of assistant secretary of developmental personnel policies and activities has been created. Treasury Board views the creation of this position as an indication of the government's commitment to innovative human resources policies within the public service. The new assistant secretary, Miss Denise Moncion, will be responsible for developing and leading activities in such areas as affirmative action and the quality of working life. I was glad to hear this because I directed a question to the minister some weeks