

Adult Occupational Training Act

• (1600)

Mr. Muir: On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could try to act as devil's advocate. If we could all agree to allow the hon. member to finish his remarks, we might then co-operate with the minister in giving the bill second reading as quickly as possible.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I understand that my hon. friend from Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) will be able to conclude his remarks in ten or 15 minutes. Perhaps the minister needs only ten minutes or so in which to close the debate, and on that understanding we might take that much time out of private members' hour.

Mr. Speaker: Is this agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Orlikow: Mr. Speaker, in the few minutes so far available to me I was discussing the purpose of such a large program as this unless we are committed to a policy of full employment. I turn now to a second question. My feeling is that we are to a large extent concentrating our training programs on the wrong people. I have the impression that students who have to a large extent finished their high school education can, given conditions of relatively full employment, find jobs themselves, at least if some encouragement to industry is forthcoming by the government to provide on-the-job training.

The people we are neglecting completely in our present programs are those who for historical and cultural reasons have never really fitted into our work economy. I refer, for example, to the Indian and the Métis people. I refer to large numbers of citizens in the centre core of every city in Canada who for various reasons have never found regular, gainful employment. In large numbers of families one finds second and third generations living essentially on welfare. I suggest to the minister, whom I believe to be one of the better ministers of the government, one of the more imaginative ministers and certainly one of the most concerned ministers, that his department should give special attention to the difficulties of those who have never been able to fit in to our work-oriented society, with a view to providing training for them.

We have often heard the suggestion that the government should be the employer of last resort. Proposals have frequently been made that the government should assume the responsibility of providing a job in the public service for every person for whom private industry could not find work. I suggest that the minister consider the idea that governments should become the employer of first resort for the hard-core unemployed. This is not a criticism of private employers, but we cannot expect private employers to hire large numbers of individuals who do not possess any skills and who have not received any training. Private employers are in business to make a profit, and one cannot fault them for doing so.

The minister and his department might well consider training those whose names are now largely to be found on the welfare rolls of this country at municipal, provincial and, indeed, the federal level in the case of the Indian people. They could then begin employment in government jobs. I am sure there are many poor people, both white

[Mr. Mackasey.]

and Indian, who would with some training work in hospitals as orderlies, nursing aids, and so on. I am sure there are many among the native people who could do work looking after the forests in the northern regions of Canada.

I suggest, too, that there are many Canadians, particularly women, who could benefit from training programs which, while not necessarily providing them with an opportunity to work, would help them make a better life for themselves. For example, many women, particularly in low income families, could make the few dollars which their families get in the way of earnings or welfare go a lot further if they knew more about the nutritional value of foods and more about cooking. There must be a large number of women who could make a better life for their families and themselves if they were able to sew, make their own clothes, and so on. In short, I believe the department should take a fresh look at the whole purpose of the manpower training program.

Lastly, I wish to say that I heartily approve the first steps about which the minister talked today toward the provision of a greatly extended program of manpower training on-the-job instead of concentrating almost all our effort on manpower training through the provision of courses in schools and community colleges. I am sure the minister has read even more carefully than I have the observations made by the Economic Council of Canada in connection with manpower training and policy in its eighth annual report. The view expressed by the council should cause all of us a good deal of concern. For example, it is pointed out that in the fiscal year 1969-70 only 3.9 per cent of the money spent by the federal government on manpower training in Canada was for training in industry, whereas in the United States 76.8 per cent was used to provide on-the-job training.

The council further points out that the Canadian adult training program represents, in comparative terms, a very substantial undertaking second only to that of Sweden. Further, the overwhelming proportion of our effort has been directed toward training not directly related to acquiring industrial skills; there has been heavy emphasis on institutional rather than on industrial training. The council states, and I am sure the minister knows this to be true from his experience, that to a large extent real training can only be carried out on the job itself where workers have an opportunity to become familiar with the physical plant and the materials used in circumstances in which they are involved with other personnel operating the equipment which is actually in use.

• (1610)

I should like to quote some examples given by the study commissioned in the United States. According to the survey—

—it probably “doesn't pay for schools to invest in locomotives, earth-moving machinery, big computers, etc., especially since instructional equipment is used only a few hours a day”.

In other words, this observer is saying, and I completely agree, that the most effective job training that there can be is training on-the-job, in the plant, in the factory, in the workshop.