

Manpower Retraining Programs

Speaker. Since its inception the main effort of the Department of Manpower and Immigration has been directed toward the upgrading of large numbers of individuals with a low level of education who needed a fast educational push in order to qualify for skill training which would place them in the various openings in various regions.

It is not out of the question that in years to come, having completed this phase of general upgrading and movement of some segment of the labour force from the non-skilled or semi-skilled into the skilled, that we would see the desirability of adopting some of the hon. member's suggestions such as providing for longer term training. It must be kept in mind of course that there has to be an occupational tie-in. The program was meant for the purpose of training people so that they could find employment and not just for the purpose of providing a general education.

• (5:30 p.m.)

As has already been stated before the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration, the average type of skilled development training is far shorter than 52 weeks. Once the training is completed, the trainee is permitted to move on, if approved by the counsellor, to the type of skilled training that will bring him closer to the kind of employment or occupation for which he is looking.

The hon. member made a number of other remarks that deserve attention. He quite rightly criticized the proliferation of private employment agencies, a criticism that is not shared by everyone. There has been a proliferation in this area over the years. I remind the hon. member that the matter of private employment agencies is under the jurisdiction of provincial governments. It is for the provincial governments to regulate their operations and even their existence.

Mr. Orlikow: Will the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Caccia: I will be completing my remarks very shortly. The existence of private agencies tends to indicate that there is in the department a basic general role to be performed in the training and placement of a large majority of Canadians. The private agencies are skimming off the top people with the type of education which means they can be easily placed in another job. Within a short period the agency earns its commission as these people move rapidly from one sector of the work force to another.

All that one can do at this point is bring to the attention of employers who are paying the agency fee that basically they are being taxed twice. They are being taxed once when they provide the funds which permit the opening and retention of 390 Canada Manpower centres across the nation and, second, when they turn to a private agency for a specific placement. Of course, in the kind of free enterprise society in which we live the employer is free to make his choice. This is probably one of the reasons for the proliferation of private employment agencies. It seems to indicate there are certain sectors where the private agency is quicker in its provision of services.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): The hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) wishes to ask a question?

Mr. Orlikow: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I thought I made it clear that I was not suggesting any prohibition of private employment agencies. Could the hon. member, who I presume has spoken on behalf of the minister, tell the House whether the department has made any inquiries or conducted any investigation to find out whether the rapid expansion of private employment agencies indicates that the 390 Manpower centres are not doing the job as well as they might. The employers and employees of Canada would like to feel that the department, which uses a great deal of the taxpayers' money, is doing the job which is necessary.

Mr. Caccia: Mr. Speaker, one could reply by saying that the 390 Manpower offices are active in placing the vast majority of Canadians who need their services, people who are unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled. The private agencies reflect only a modest percentage of service to the total labour force.

Mr. Charles Turner (London East): The hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) has been making a great many requests for the production of papers, but in his request for a copy of the report of the so-called task force of 1968 under the Department of Manpower and Immigration he is in error when he states that it recommended a 52-week limit for all federal government manpower training programs. I am sure he realizes that the 52-week limit was established by section 2(d) of the Adult Occupational Training Act which provides as follows:

Occupational training course means a course of occupational training which provides not more than 52 weeks of full-time instruction or 1,820 hours of part-time instruction.

When the proposed legislation was being debated on March 3, 1967, Hon. Jean Marchand, then Minister of Manpower and Immigration, said:

We want to provide a second chance to people who need it most. These are the men and women who missed the chance to acquire a skill during their youth or whose skill has been made obsolete by technological change. They are the people whose whole lives can be changed, dramatically in many cases, by giving them the occupational training they need.

Occupational training will be provided in course of 12 months or less. The experience of the last six years has shown what can be accomplished in this way. But it has also shown that many mature adults lack the basic arithmetic, scientific and linguistic facility they need to learn a new occupation. The provinces have developed accelerated courses to provide adults with this background material, and the program will pay for any such basic training that is needed for an occupational skill. To put it another way, our concern is with skills, but when people must have basic background to learn the skills, the program will meet both necessary parts of the total cost.

The provinces have built up extensive systems for providing the type of training adults need. We wish to make use of these facilities and we will pay the provinces for training the adults we refer to their courses.

I think, Mr. Speaker, from what I have just read that it is quite evident that the members of the House were kept fully informed of the plans of this government with regard to the occupational training for adults program. During the same debate the hon. member for Winnipeg North said:

I am sure the broad general principles enunciated by the minister will be welcomed by every member of the House and by every person who has looked at the problem in respect of full employment and manpower training and retraining in our complex socie-