

COMPULSORY EXAMS OR NOT, THAT IS THE QUESTION

(or at least one of the debatable questions these days)

Education and philosophies of education are in the limelight these days. Ontario has already outlined its major change allowing students to complete high school in 4 or 5 years and will gradually implement it starting this September. Quebec outlined major reforms in 1982, implemented them and now this April has had to postpone everything for one year in order to restructure the system. In addition, the topics of French immersion, enrichment classes, drug-alcohol policies and especially compulsory final exams are all being actively debated in the various provinces.

In terms of compulsory exams: Quebec and Newfoundland have always retained them, Alberta and British Columbia introduced them this year, New Brunswick is expanding its testing program and Ontario is battling with the issue right now.

ONTARIO

Over the past 20 years, in terms of examinations, the pendulum has swung from one extreme to another — from the compulsory, all determining final exams of the 60's, to the credit system, no compulsory subjects and no provincial exams of the 70's and now, it appears, partially back again to the compulsory but not all determining exams of the 80's. Where to next?

On March 21, 1984, Ontario Education

Minister, Bette Stephenson, announced that Ontario standardized achievement tests would become compulsory for almost all Ontario students by 1987; then on March 27 she stated that no decision on mandatory exams would be taken until the idea had been studied by a special committee. It is evident that the debate is raging. Meanwhile some of the boards of education have gone ahead and made their own decisions concerning exams, plus many other topics.

The Ottawa Board of Education will reinstate final exams in grades 9 and 12 in the 1984-85 year and in all grades by 1986. They are also discussing a French immersion in grade 4 (rather than just in senior kindergarten and grade 6) plus have just passed a drug-alcohol policy whereby students in grades 5 to 9 will receive instruction pertaining to smoking, alcohol and drug abuse.

The Carleton Board of Education as of next year will be offering enrichment classes for grades 4, 7 and 9 students. The top 25% of the students will receive special instruction and the top 3 to 4% will receive even more advanced courses.

The Ottawa Separate School Board has decided to close 10 schools and is about to reorganize its system so that the parents can choose a school which best suits their childrens' needs. The Board will pay for busing.

HAVE YOU HAD YOUR MEDICAL CHECK-UP?

By Dr. L.L. Palmer

Before you go abroad you are required to have a medical examination done by a Health and Welfare doctor. This examination is important to you because it will enable your Department to be sure that you are suitable, as far as health goes, for your Post. It may be that a Post with more suitable medical facilities is better for you. The examination also establishes your "norm" or "base line" health. In this way, any illness you acquire later, can be dated.

Health and Welfare keeps a record of your medical status. This is valuable in many ways but two examples can be given.

First example:

You may develop some condition abroad and wish to know urgently if this existed before.

A telex from where you are living to Health and Welfare Ottawa can usually elicit a quick response. If a "spot on the lung" is seen on an x-ray, for instance, you can ask Health and Welfare to send your old x-ray for comparison.

Second example:

If you develop a disease abroad it may be as a result of your posting. Amebiasis is an example. The records should be sent to Health and Welfare because, if later in life, some problem arises that is a result of the amebiasis, you will want this documented.

Health and Welfare also assures that you have the right immunizations which can protect you and your family in countries where the hygienic standards are not the same as in Canada.

POSTED AND NEEDING LEAVE WITHOUT PAY...

Should you be employed by the Public Service Commission and wish to accompany your spouse on a foreign posting, then LWOP (Leave Without Pay) is extremely important to you.

This subject has been researched by the Posting Briefing Centre and a paper pertaining to it is available upon request. To summarize it as succinctly as possible:

You are entitled to up to 5 years of LWOP. Should you wish an extension, you would have to submit a request to your employing department. They, in turn, if they approve it, would have to forward a submission to Treasury Board.

Then, should your position not be filled during your absence, you would be able to resume your work upon your return. (This would occur only in rare instances). If your LWOP is for more than 1 year, it is more likely that your position would be filled with a person appointed for an indeterminate period. In this case, upon your return, you may go back to that position, or alternately you may then, or for a period of one year thereafter, be appointed without a competition (and in priority to all other persons) to another position in the Public Service that in the opinion of the Commission you are qualified for. It must also be noted, though, that if no work is, or is likely to be, available on your return from LWOP, you could be laid off.

In terms of Superannuation Contributions, while you are on LWOP you must pay twice the single rate (both your share and the employer's share). For any period that you may be employed as a locally engaged staff, you would pay only the single rate. In an extended absence, payment normally would have to be made in a lump sum on your return to duty or by deductions from your salary in equal installments over a period equal to the period of LWOP.

For more detailed information please contact the Posting Briefing Centre and request the "Leave Without Pay" fact sheet.

PRE-POSTING MEDICAL PROCEDURE

It is essential for employees and their families to have medical examinations before any posting confirmation can be issued. A circular document on pre-posting medical procedures has been published in order to facilitate the administration of these medical examinations prior to and on return from postings.