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SOME ASPECTS OF THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING SYSTEM IN USE IN THE PRINTING INDUSTRY OF MONTREAL

MARCEL FORGET

Vocational training is the necessary and indispensable road to an intelligent and efficient practice of a trade. It is still more necessary in the case of the trades destined to be of service to thought such as those of the printer, pressman and bookbinder.

The Apprenticeship Commission of the Printing Trades of the City of Montreal put into effect, some time ago, a program of vocational training for the printing apprentices and for the pressman and bookbinder apprentices under its jurisdiction. We should like, in this article, to explain the working of this vocational training plan which the Commission has elaborated.

Vocational training consists of giving to an individual the technical instruction and the practical training necessary to the mastery of a trade in order that this individual can by his labour acquire the goods indispensable to his life as man and take part in the development of the socio-economic life of his surroundings.

Employers' and employees' associations, the natural organisms resulting from the free initiative of individuals and destined as such to augment the returns from their economic and social activity, consider that they have rights as concerns vocational training and that this latter is a responsibility which quite naturally devolves upon them. They believe that, because of their really representative character and the knowledge of their needs in that which concerns the quality as well as the quantity of the necessary manpower, they represent the authority best qualified to organize their labour market. Otherwise said, the employers' association and the employees' association are of the opinion — as are all Christian sociologists — that the professional « family » has a rôle of primary importance to play in the organization, the distribution and the control of the vocational training of its present and future members. They believe that the rôle of the State should be of a suppletory nature, i.e. the State should assist the professional bodies to solve their problem of manpower and should not act except as these latter are unable to accomplish their task.

As the Collective Agreement Act gives the professional associations jurisdiction in matters of apprenticeship and as the Apprenticeship As-

sistance Act permits them to set afoot apprenticeship commissions, they avail themselves more and more of these two pieces of legislation to organize their own labour market.

Strong in this conception of the rôle of the professional bodies and in this legislation which acknowledges their authority in matters of vocational training, the employers' and employees' associations of the printing industry asked the Parity Committee in 1945 to inquire into the labour market in their particular economic section. Conducted with care and objectivity the enquiry revealed the following two facts:—

a) a shortage of some 500 craftsmen.

From 1938 to 1944 the mean percentage increase of companions was only 10.6%; that of apprentices, 3.9%. On the contrary, the mean percentage increase of male assistants was 31.2% and of female assistants, 71.7%.

On the other hand, for the same period of 1938-1944, the average percentage increase of hours paid at the regular rate was 25.6%; that of hours paid at time and a half, 74.3%; finally, that of hours paid at double rates 132.9%.

The training of a competent labour force in sufficient number did not then keep pace, if one have faith in these statistics, with the increase in production and the advances in industry.

b) A progressive substitution of duly qualified craftsmen by labour specialized in some operations only or by semi-qualified craftsmen.

Preoccupied almost exclusively with responding to the ever-growing demand for printing of all sorts, the printing establishment has practically ceased to create men who master their trade in all its essential operations, men who to culture add the experience necessary to the honest exercise of their trade. The training of apprentices is left to chance and is done in a haphazard fashion. The apprentices do a thousand jobs at the same time that they endeavour to learn each day something of their trade.

Or else again, the apprentices work during their six years at the side of « companions » who unfortunately too often initiate them, come what may, into their trade. At the end of their period of apprenticeship they receive, according to the requirements of the Decree relating to the printing trades, a certificate of competence from their

workers' organization or a registration card from the Parity Committee. Through lack of technical instruction and methodical training in all the operations of the trade, the apprentices are not generally anything more at the end of their apprenticeship than unskilled workmen specialized in some operations of their trade or semi-qualified workers having a superficial or fragmentary knowledge only of their craft.

This enquiry conducted by the Parity Committee in 1945 brought to light then that the labour market of the printing industry was in a state of disorder and crisis which would only become aggravated with the years. The remedy to the situation lay in insuring to the industry a competent and sufficient supply of labour through a rational regime of vocational training.

Applying themselves to the problem and its solution, the Parity Committee unanimously adopted, at a regular meeting held the 28th of May 1945, a resolution to the effect that the Lieutenant-Governor in Council be asked that the City of Montreal (situated in the territorial jurisdiction of the Decree over which it had supervision) be recognized in virtue of the Apprenticeship Assistance Act as an Apprenticeship Centre for the printing trades. On the recommendation of the Minister of Labour the Lieutenant-Governor in Council acceded to the request of the Parity Committee by Order in Council, number 2660, on July 6th, 1945.

Following this recognition a group of twenty employees and employers took steps to form an Apprenticeship Commission and to incorporate it under the name of the « Apprenticeship Commission of the Printing Trades of the City of Montreal ». Duly incorporated, as the regulations approved which govern it, by order number 3035, August 3rd, 1945, this Commission was formed of representatives of the employers' and employees' associations as well as three representatives of the government administration: — a delegate from the Department of Youth and Social Welfare, a delegate from the Department of Health and a delegate from the Department of Labour.

With the purpose of promoting a rational system of vocational training in the printing trades the Apprenticeship Commission made exhaustive researches to discover the training methods in force in certain centres in the United States, in Great Britain and in France. After which the Apprenticeship Commission, by virtue of the powers conferred upon it by the Apprenticeship Assistance Act, decided upon a regulation which determines the standards and foresees for all the apprentices a program of vocational instruction

both theoretical and practical as well as one of social training. It also determined the means as a whole of controlling the progress of the apprentices.

Standards of Vocational Training

In terms of the standards candidates for apprenticeship in the printing trades can only be admitted if they have not passed twenty years of age. They must display a natural aptitude, a marked interest and a condition of health as well as a psychological equilibrium sufficient for the branch selected. Further, they should possess a certificate of studies issued by a primary complementary school, or its equivalent.

Finally, to give to the procedure of selection a scientific strictness which would permit from the first the elimination of the vocationally inapt, the candidates for apprenticeship are submitted to a complete medical examination and to a series of vocational tests, after which they are interviewed by men in the trade and by a psychologist. Only after the candidates have passed these different tests and have been judged suitable for the branch selected by them are they accepted by the Apprenticeship Commission

Once admitted the apprentices are bound by an apprenticeship contract. Signed on the one hand by the Apprenticeship Commission and the employer who hires him and on the other hand by the apprentice (and his guardian if he is a minor); this contract is registered with the Commission. By it the apprentice is obliged to make all necessary efforts to learn his trade, to conduct himself loyally and to fulfil all the duties of an apprentice towards his employer. The employer on his side, engages to teach, or cause to be taught, the apprentice the trade which this latter has chosen with the approbation of the Apprenticeship Commission, and to pay him for his services at least the hourly remuneration established for the apprentices of his classification by the decree relating to the printing trades.

By virtue of this contract the employer should concern himself with the training of the apprentice and encourage his progress. In fact he is obliged to do so, and must render account to the Apprenticeship Commission of the instruction he furnishes. He cannot then give him jobs which are not related to his apprenticeship and can only confuse or retard the training. The apprentice, for his part, is under an obligation to learn progressively his trade and to complete his six years of apprenticeship. It is, in consequence,

forbidden him to wander from one shop to another or to content himself with being, at the end of his apprenticeship, a semi-qualified workman. It is quite clear that only good effects for the printing industry can result from the apprenticeship contract.

The apprentice, like the employer, is not always irrevocably held by the apprenticeship contract. If it happens that the apprentice or the employer violates the conditions of the contract, or again, if the economic circumstances become such that the teaching of the trade is no longer possible, the Apprenticeship Commission can then relieve the apprentice and the employer of all obligations fixed by the Apprenticeship Contract.

The Apprenticeship Commission does not require for the present that apprentices who were in a stage of apprenticeship before the 31st of October, 1947 (the date when the Quebec Official Gazette published the notice of the incorporation of the vocational training plan under a Decree relating to the printing trades) sign an apprenticeship contract. Further, it respects for the moment the present classification of these apprentices. But it reserves always the right to revise this

classification later in the light of the vocational training standards which it has established. As for those apprentices who commenced their apprenticeship on or after the 31st of October 1947, the Apprenticeship Commission will ask them shortly to sign an apprenticeship contract. It will not require it, however, until the expiration of the sixth month of their period of probation which is an obligatory one of a year.

The duration of the vocational training is in principle fixed at six years. It can only be reduced under certain conditions — notably if the apprentice has followed courses at the Graphic Arts School. In these cases the remission of the length of training can only be accorded by the Apprenticeship Commission on the express request of the apprentice and must be justified by him.

At the end of the period of vocational training the apprentice should present himself before a jury to submit to examinations consisting of theoretical and practical divisions. If he should pass them with success and if his record is judged satisfactory he receives from the Apprenticeship Commission a certificate of professional qualification which will attest that he is a competent craftsman.

ARBITRATION

WHO MUST ADMINISTER THE OATH TO THE WITNESS

MARIE-LOUIS BEAULIEU

Does the swearing in of witnesses by the registrar render void the arbitration award?

Since arbitration tribunals have existed in the Province it has been the custom for the registrar to swear in the witnesses. Me Marie-Louis Beaulieu in an arbitration where he acted as representative for employees attacks this manner of acting as rendering the testimony illegal and by the same fact asserts the nullity of the judgment given in this case.

We have decided we should reproduce the part of the dissident report which he presented in the arbitration of the dispute between « le Syndicat Catholique des employés de fonderie de Plessisville Inc. » and Forano Ltd. The tribunal was presided over by Mr. Justice Alphonse Garon and Mr. Dollard Huot, C.A., represented the defendant company thereon. Elsewhere the complete arbitration judgment can be read as it was reproduced in the Bulletin of the Department of Labour, number 229, under the date of May 4, 1948.

The point of law raised by Me Beaulieu in the part of his report where he treats of the illegality of the testimony and the invalidity of the award for the reason already mentioned, assumes great importance seeing that it could perhaps justify the attitude of one party in not acknowledging the value of an arbitration sentence.

« The evidence furnished in the brief as well as the depositions which accompanied the documents produced before us are illegal and null

because the witnesses were sworn in by the registrar and not by the president of the arbitrators. In arriving at this conclusion I take my stand on