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Charles E. Thérien

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Article abstract

This article on the Act to assist apprenticeship and the enhancing of human capital has as its aim to remind the reader of some important ideas concerning this Act and its application in the Province of Quebec. The author recalls the principle at the basis of the Act, then emphasizes the moral and social aspect, examines its realizations within the profession itself, and views its future among the problems which it must meet. He concludes by insisting on the necessity of a very close cooperation between the various organizations trusted with the training of youth to form specialized labour.

Apprenticeship Assistance

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Its Principle

In the month of May, 1945 the Hon. Antonio Barrette, Minister of Labour, presented to the Legislative Assembly, the *Act to assist apprenticeship and the enhancing of human capital* which was sanctioned unanimously by the whole assembly, May 24th of the same year.

This act, of which the opportuneness was discussed so much, gives private enterprise by the agency of competent organizations, in the circumstances, parity committees and apprenticeship commissions, the power to establish a system of apprenticeship which is most adapted to its needs. It permits the formation of apprenticeship commissions having the powers to look after the training of young workers and to administrate schools to this end. These commissions may enlist the cooperation of all the organizations which may help the cause of apprenticeship particularly from the point of view of technique, finance and the enhancing of human capital. This act, gives, therefore, to private organizations a wide latitude in the establishment of a system of apprentice-

Thérien, Charles E., B.A., M.Soc. Sc. (Laval), Statistician and Publicist, Apprenticeship Assistance Service, Department of Labour of the Province of Quebec.

ship "adapted to the conditions of the environment and in direct contact with those who are the first to benefit from it i.e. the employees and the employers." ¹

Its Social and Moral Aspect

Through the facility it gives to professions to organize themselves, the Apprenticeship Assistance Act constitutes a forward step in the direction of the promotion of the working class and the complete professional organization. In fact, the apprenticeship commissions, which come from this act, are formed of representatives of employers and employees. These representatives sit around the same table, and are responsible for the administration of the apprenticeship centres and the preparation of the programmes. For those who have studied the apprenticeship systems all over the world, this responsibility given to the representatives of the profession is surprising and, nowhere else does there exist a formula as rich from the professional and democratic point of view .

Because of these same responsibilities given to the representatives of the employers and workers, because of the inevitable study of the multiple problems concerning the enhancing of human capital, a solid education is given within the profession; thus more competent leaders are slowly formed to bring even better solutions to the great problems that are caused by the economic and social evolution of the present day.

Moreover, the Apprenticeship Assistance Act is perhaps the only law that brings out with so much clarity the moral point of view in the preparation of young workers. Section 17 of the Act reads as follows: "Every apprenticeship commission shall make provision for a programme of moral instruction for apprentices, to be prepared and carried out by the Council of Education."

In practice, this formation is given in the form of courses of sociology. These courses in French and in English are published for the use of young workers and are inspired by a concrete and very simple teaching. They cover the principal social questions such as that of the family, the State, labour unions, wages, etc. Study groups permit a valuable exchange of ideas between those participating, and in con-

(1) FERNAND JOLICOEUR, *Compétence et Apprentissage*, "Revue Dominicaine", Oct. 1946.

clusion an expert sets down the great basic principles of the subject discussed.

Thus a double aspect brings out the social value of this Act: the composition of the Apprenticeship Commissions where representatives of the profession and the State sit together and the preparation of the young workers to whom is given at the same time a formation that is technical, moral and social.

Its Realizations within the Profession

In the way of realizations, the Apprenticeship Assistance Act has given wonderful results. Since 1945, fourteen apprenticeship commissions have been formed in the industries of construction, shoes, printing, hair-dressing, watch-making and automobiles.

Furthermore, nearly 17,500 young workers have benefitted from the courses given by the apprenticeship commissions without it costing them a cent.

From a practical point of view, there are two different formulas according to which the apprenticeship commissions operate. In the construction industry, the apprenticeship commissions possess their own schools called apprenticeship centres and look after the organization of a system of apprenticeship for their own industry. There are seven apprenticeship commissions for the building trades and six centres are now in operation in the following cities: Montreal, Québec, Sherbrooke, Hull, Chicoutimi and Joliette.

In the other industries the apprenticeship commissions work in cooperation with the Specialized Schools for the formation of young workers. In this latter case, each commission has provided for a separate agreement with an Arts and Trades school or a Technical school, and the conditions of this agreement are fixed in accordance with the immediate needs of the apprenticeship in that district.

As we have seen above, these two formulas have given results worth mentioning and are without doubt called on to play a great part in the future development of apprenticeship.

Rôle of the Provincial Department of Labour

In the application of this particular system of apprenticeship, the Provincial Department of Labour cooperates very closely with the representatives of capital and labour. From a financial point of view, it

grants to the commissions which operate their own apprenticeship centres, substantial annual subsidies to help them balance their budget. It is necessary to remember, in fact, that a good part of the funds placed at the disposal of the apprenticeship commissions come from parity committees which, themselves get the money from a levy on the employers and employees. It is therefore due to a contribution from three sources, capital, labour and the State that the apprenticeship commissions form young workers.

Moreover, the Department of Labour puts at the disposal of the apprenticeship commissions a Provincial service of assistance to apprenticeship, of which the officers act as liaison agents between the different organizations called upon to cooperate for the success of apprenticeship. This Service has a rôle which is informative, consultative and representative. It is gradually equipping the apprenticeship commissions with sure statistics susceptible to help them settle in a rational manner the apprenticeship of trades.

Type of Formation

Another important factor in the realization of the Apprenticeship Assistance Act is the type of formation that is given to the young in the apprenticeship centres. The fact of granting an incontestable priority to the practical study of trades is in a way a new element in schools of professional formation. The apprentices who go through the apprenticeship centres are called on to work on a job, as they would be obliged to if they were working for a contractor. Furthermore, trade committees see that the training given to these youngsters corresponds exactly with the most modern methods of today's industry.

Importance Attached to Manual Skill

Secondly, the fact of not requiring a diploma of 7th grade or 9th grade shows us that in reality many young men, for one reason or another, do not have a 7th grade diploma. These youth, on the other hand, having natural talents and a very great manual dexterity, become easily exceptional candidates for trade apprenticeship. As the Hon. Antonio Barrette said in a letter addressed to Mr. E. C. Piedalue², dated November 27th, 1951: "Those who call for a diploma for admission to an apprenticeship centre are no doubt well inspired and they

(2) MR. E. C. PIEDALUE, Inspector and organizer of the apprenticeship centres of the Province of Quebec.

are moved by an excellent motive: that of giving all the boys and young men a maximum of education and formation. However, I greatly fear that, if a diploma is insisted upon in every case, a very poor service is done to the population in general, by preventing a good number of young men to take advantage of the apprenticeship centres."

"When it is noted that a young man has the required aptitudes to make a good workman, it is necessary -- in my opinion -- that the equivalent things be taken into account. I am quite willing to have him undergo an examination in order to know what his weakness is, and that this deficiency be corrected as much as possible, but I believe that the superior qualifications that he may have in other things should be taken into account and that he be accepted just as though he had the minimum required for a young man of his age."

"It has come to my knowledge that young boys who have great difficulty in understanding fractions and decimals, understand very quickly the particulars of an ordinary problem when they work with the tools of a craftsman, including a carpenter's rule and a micrometer. And I know even excellent workmen who, a long time ago, began to work very young and who have qualified themselves not only as good craftsmen but also as possessing a fair education that they have managed to acquire by the practice of their trade during the years."

It means, therefore, that if our system of apprenticeship gives good results, this is due to the fact that appropriate methods have been applied in order to render as efficiently as possible the training of the young workers. The results obtained are not an accident but the result of study and research to find solutions to the problems that apprenticeship brings up.

Its Future

After having analyzed the Apprenticeship Assistance Act, its principle, its social and moral aspect, and its realizations within the profession, let us be permitted to look at the future. The professional formation in Québec has at present a problem because of the co-existence of two different formulas aimed at the formation of our young workers. In many circles, the impression is that these two formulas are identical and duplicate each other. We have on one hand the Specialized Schools, about fifty in number, including technical schools, Trades and Arts schools and special schools; on the other hand, we have the Apprenticeship Assistance Act which gives origin to the apprenticeship centres and apprenticeship commissions. Evidently, when there are

already fifty magnificent Specialized Schools in the Province, there cannot be question of having separate apprenticeship centres for the training of youth in the same trades.

However, we could read in a recent report presented to the Council of Education by Rev. Henri Pepin, moral adviser to the Apprenticeship Assistance Service, this correction on the subject of the two formulas:

“Let us remember at the beginning of this report that apprenticeship schools are trade schools,

1. — which are distinct from Specialized Schools. They do not belong to the State but to the trade, following a three-party agreement between the employers, the workers and the State, to which is added the Church by the obligatory moral formation. The Collective Pastoral Letter sees in this a stage toward true corporatism.

2. — which do not duplicate the Specialized Schools. They are meant for a good 25% of the youth of the Province who have not the necessary academic preparation sufficient to follow the courses of the other schools. They receive, therefore, the youth that society too perfectly organized neglects, and which are, more than others, exposed to subsversive ideas and even to juvenile delinquency.”

Rôle of Apprenticeship Centres

From the present organizations, it seems that apprenticeship centres are called on to give a complete apprenticeship, especially to the young workers in the building trades. It must not, however, be thought from this statement that the good effects of the Apprenticeship Assistance Act can be intended for these trades alone. In fact, the apprenticeship commissions for the printing trades, the shoe and automobile industries have rendered and are rendering every day great services to the workers of these industries because of their cooperation with the Specialized Schools.

Furthermore, the apprenticeship commissions are necessary because it is evident that the school alone does not know how to reply adequately to the many difficulties that arise in the apprenticeship of a trade in which the methods are so often revolutionized by new discoveries. Therefore, the apprenticeship commissions may render great services by cooperating with the Specialized Schools and instead of restricting their number, it is a wise policy to multiply them in all the industries of the Province. These commissions could serve as liaison

agents between industry and the Specialized Schools and each could work to establish in a specific industry and district, a rational apprenticeship system constantly adapted.

Conclusion

It is necessary to recall, in fact, that the Apprenticeship Assistance Act does not establish a definite apprenticeship, but has especially as aim to help the competent organizations to establish an apprenticeship system which seems to them to be the best adapted to their needs.

Under the circumstances, the Apprenticeship Commissions and the Specialized Schools are the organizations the best qualified to look after the training of youth and it is by close cooperation between them that we shall be able to form specialized labour able to meet more readily the ever-increasing multiple needs brought about by the rapid industrialization of our Province.
