

Facts

An Apprenticeship Commission in the Building Trades

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Le succès qui a couronné les efforts de la Commission d'apprentissage des métiers du bâtiment de Montréal est un exemple frappant de ce que peut accomplir la collaboration patronale-ouvrière vraiment active, quand les deux parties ont leur mot à dire dans l'affaire.

Il est impossible de louer à sa juste valeur le rôle joué par le travail organisé dans sa contribution au succès du programme d'apprentissage des métiers du bâtiment à Montréal, depuis la fondation de la Commission d'apprentissage, il y a deux ans et demi passés. Grâce surtout à l'aide fournie par les membres ouvriers de la Commission, le pourcentage du salaire d'un ouvrier qualifié accordé aux apprentis au cours de chacune de leurs années d'apprentissage s'est accru de façon notable. Chaque apprenti, à la fin de son cours de six mois de formation initiale, au centre, passe un examen technique et pratique devant des représentants ouvriers, en sachant à l'avance que de bons résultats lui vaudront un raccourcissement dans sa période d'apprentissage. Le rapport accordé entre apprentis et ouvriers qualifiés s'est élevé. Et nous ne mentionnons ici que quelques-unes des concessions que nous n'aurions pu jamais obtenir sans l'appui des organismes ouvriers.

En dépit de certaines prédictions émises dans le passé, l'enrôlement pour une période de formation au centre continue à un rythme satisfaisant, et nous n'avons rencontré aucune difficulté particulière à remplir les vides laissés par les anciens combattants-apprentis qui, à l'heure présente, sont presque entièrement disparus du centre. Les efforts de l'orientation professionnelle dans les

« high schools » catholiques et protestants de la Métropole dirigent vers le centre un flot régulier de jeunes gens intéressés à se faire une carrière dans les métiers du bâtiment.

Le personnel de la Commission, dans ses rapports avec ces jeunes gens, a le constant souci de leur souligner que leur enrôlement au centre signifie beaucoup plus qu'une simple occasion d'apprendre un métier. Chaque apprenti se voit encourager à considérer son enrôlement au centre comme le premier barreau d'une échelle qui peut le mener au faite de l'industrie de la construction, qui vient au tout second rang des industries canadiennes.

Jusqu'ici, les frais encourus par la Commission ont été couverts par des octrois du gouvernement provincial et du Comité conjoint des métiers du bâtiment de Montréal et des allocations « per diem » du gouvernement fédéral pour aider à la formation des anciens combattants.

La Commission a pleine conscience de tout ce qu'elle doit pour sa rapide montée à l'intérêt suivi et à l'influence de l'honorable ministre du Travail.

Si nous pouvons considérer comme un bon critère la réaction de la grande majorité des employeurs qui ont pris à leur service des apprentis formés au centre, nous pouvons être assurés que la Commission d'apprentissage des métiers du bâtiment de Montréal est en voie de réaliser l'idéal qui a présidé à sa création, i.e. la hausse des standards d'efficacité et de productivité dans tous les métiers du bâtiment, pour le bénéfice durable et de l'employeur et de l'employé.

FACTS

AN APPRENTICESHIP COMMISSION IN THE BUILDING TRADES

J. L. E. PRICE

Under the provisions of the Apprenticeship Assistance Act, the « Apprenticeship Commission of the Building and Engineering Constructions Trades of Montreal » was incorporated by order in council in June 1945. Incidentally, for convenience in everyday use, this title has since been shortened to « The Montreal Building Trades Apprenticeship Commission ».

In accordance with the terms of its formal constitution, the Commission, which meets quarterly, is composed of equal representation of

employers and employees, ten of the total of twenty members being nominated by The Builders' Exchange of Montreal to represent employers; the other ten members being nominated to represent labour by labour organizations which are contracting parties to the Montreal Building Trades Joint Committee.

The day-to-day operations of the Commission are controlled by a Board of Management which meets weekly and consists of eight members of the Commission — four representing employers and four representing employees.

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively of the Commission also serve as Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively of the Board of Management.

The Montreal Building Trades Training Centre — the first Centre of its kind to be established in the Province, is located at 2255 Laurier Avenue East, in premises placed at the disposal of the Commission by the Provincial Government, free of charge.

The personnel now (i.e. in February 1948) regularly engaged at the Centre consists of a director, an assistant-director who is a specialist in vocational guidance, a secretary-treasurer, a superintendent, six chief instructors, fourteen instructors, a chief (French speaking) registrar, an assistant (English speaking) registrar, a placement officer, a purchasing agent, four stenographers, a librarian, a switchboard operator, two watchmen and three labourers, making a total of thirty-nine in all.

The first trainees were registered and commenced their training at the Centre in October 1945, which means there is now a record of two and one half years of actual experience to look back on.

During these two and one half years, a total of 463 apprentices have completed the regular six months basic day training course at the Centre and as at February 23rd, 1948, all but three of these apprentices had been placed with employers by the Commission's Placement Officer, to continue their training in the field. Apprentices now following the same six months day course at the Centre and soon to graduate number 160.

The following table shows the classification of all day trainees to date by trades:

	Already graduated	Now in training at the Centre	Totals
Bricklaying	154	34	188
Plastering	38	16	54
Painting	38	13	51
Carpentry	89	43	132
Sheet metal	38	15	53
Plumbing & heating	56	17	73
Electricity	50	22	72
TOTALS	463	160	623

The following table shows the percentage subdivision of the above totals into veteran or non-veteran classifications and language categories:

	Veterans	Civilians	French speaking	English speaking
Apprentices already graduated	70%	30%	66%	34%
Apprentices now in training at Centre	18%	82%	83%	17%

In addition to the foregoing which refers exclusively to day trainees, evening courses are now being given at the Centre to a total of 355 trainees as follows:

	Apprentices seeking advanced training	Tradesmen seeking to improve their skill	Totals
Bricklaying	54		54
Painting	10	55	65
Carpentry	54		54
Sheet metal	46	34	80
Plumbing & heating	73		73
Electricity	29		29
TOTALS	266	89	355

The language classification of these night trainees is as follows:

	French speaking	English speaking	Totals
Apprentices	205	61	266
Tradesmen	74	15	89
TOTALS	279	76	355

The total trainees attending night courses will shortly be substantially increased by the addition of courses in Welding and Plastering. Special short courses will also be provided in the near future in Plan Reading, in Elements in the Strength of Materials and in the use of the Surveyor's Level.

It is of interest to note that with only one exception, the entire personnel at the Training Centre is French Canadian. However, every member of the staff is bilingual.

The fact that all instruction at the Centre is given in both languages is proving highly beneficial in encouraging the French trainee to improve his knowledge of the English language and the English trainee to improve his knowledge of the French language.

Two and a half years of experience have gone to show that no anxiety need any longer exist as to the practicability of making apprentices wards of the Apprenticeship Commission for the duration of their apprenticeship, on completion of their six months of continuous basic day training at the Centre, instead of seeking to have all of them indentured to individual employers, which would in all probability have been utterly impossible in view of the large number of apprentices involved. Every indication to date tends to encourage the belief that in introducing this entirely new system of apprenticeship under the joint control of employer and employee organizations, the Montreal Building Trades Apprenticeship Commission is pointing the way to what will ultimately prove to be the universally accepted means of solving

the apprenticeship training problem in every line of industry. There is ever increasing evidence that top ranking labour leaders are inclining more and more to the view that labour organizations should display greater interest in promoting ways and means of increasing the average efficiency and productivity of labour and it behooves employer organizations everywhere to welcome every sign of this interest. The success which has attended the efforts of the Montreal Building Trades Apprenticeship Commission is a striking example of what can be accomplished through the co-operative action of management and labour, when both have an equal say in things.

It would be impossible to praise too highly the part which organized labour has played in contributing to the success of the building trades apprenticeship programme in Montreal since the inception of the Apprenticeship Commission two and a half years ago. Thanks principally to the help provided by the labour members of the Commission, the percentage of the mechanics' wage rate allowed for apprentices in each year of apprenticeship has been increased substantially; each apprentice is given a practical trade test by labour representatives on completing his six months of initial training at the Centre with the knowledge that good marks will win for him some shortening of the period of his apprenticeship; the allowable ratio of apprentices to mechanics has been increased; to mention only a few of the concessions which would never have been obtained without the support of labour.

In spite of some past predictions to the contrary, enrollment for training at the Centre is continuing at a satisfactory rate and there has

been no particular difficulty in filling the gaps left by the veteran trainees who have now almost entirely disappeared from the scene. Vocational guidance activities in the Catholic and Protestant High Schools throughout the City provide a steady stream of youths interested in seeking careers in the building trades. In dealing with these young men, it is the constant effort of the Commission staff to impress upon them that enrollment at the Centre means much more than just an opportunity to learn a trade. Every trainee is encouraged to regard enrollment at the Centre as the first rung in a ladder which can be made to lead to a place at the top of the construction industry, which is to say in Canada's second largest industry.

Up to this time, the expense incurred by the Commission has been defrayed out of grants from the Provincial Government and the Montreal Building Trades Joint Committee respectively and per diem allowances from the Dominion Government to cover the cost incurred in the training of veterans.

The Commission is ever mindful of the extent to which its progress has been made possible through the unfailing interest and influence of the Minister of Labour.

If the reaction of the great majority of all of the employers who are employing the apprentices coming from the Training Centre is any criterion, there is every assurance that the Montreal Building Trades Apprenticeship Commission is well on the way to accomplishing the purpose for which it was created, this being the raising of the standards of efficiency and productivity in all of the building trades, for the lasting benefit of both the employer and the employee.

REFORMES DE STRUCTURE ET SYNDICALISME

On nous a demandé si les réformes de structure que nous avons envisagées dans de nombreux articles au cours de cette année pouvaient s'accomplir sans les syndicats et si elle ne risquaient pas d'entraîner, peu à peu, mais sûrement, la disparition du syndicalisme. Nous avons l'intention de revenir sur ce sujet. En attendant, voici l'opinion des RR.PP. G. Desbuquois et P. Bigo tel qu'exprimée dans « Les réformes de l'entreprise et la pensée chrétienne », Spes, Paris, page 21:

« De même qu'elle ne peut réussir si elle ne s'intègre à une organisation professionnelle cohérente, la réforme de l'entreprise doit s'appuyer sur un syndicalisme fort. Rien ne serait plus néfaste que de vouloir revenir en arrière sur ce point, comme si la participation du personnel à l'entreprise devait remplacer la défense de ses intérêts sur le plan syndical. L'idée communautaire, qui tend à renouer une solidarité naturelle entre la propriété et le travail, ne s'oppose pas à l'idée syndicale qui groupe les hommes « suivant la situation qu'ils ont sur le marché du travail ». Tout au contraire, les deux idées se complètent et s'équilibrent l'une l'autre. On les trouve toutes deux aussi nettement affirmées dans tout l'enseignement de l'Eglise. Lorsque l'idée syndicale s'estompe, la défense des intérêts

ouvriers s'affaiblit dangereusement. Si l'idée communautaire est négligée, le conflit entre le capital et le travail s'aggrave. Seuls, des hommes aux convictions syndicales à l'abri de tout soupçon pourront mener à bien la transformation de l'entreprise sur des bases communautaires, et les organisations syndicales du personnel devront dans tous les cas y jouer un rôle actif. »

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