

Our Delhi Letter

## Apprenticeship Bill

NORMALLY, when the pace of industrial development is slow, industry could be expected to meet its requirements of skilled labour from its own resources; but, when the pace of industrialisation is speeded up, naturally, special efforts would be necessary to meet this demands which becomes more exacting as industrial development becomes more complex. In this country, however, with hardly any satisfactory training of labour even in organised industries, the need for adequate training programmes has been long felt and, now with the growing requirements of skilled labour along with the planned development of industry the problem has become acute. The importance of training factory labour has been recognised and keenly felt for a long time, but a concrete step towards the solution of this problem was taken only last week when the Lok Sabha approved the Government-sponsored Bill on 'Apprenticeship Training'.

Calculating on the basis of three principal levels of engineers and technicians — graduates, diploma-holders and skilled craftsmen—during the Third Plan period, it is estimated that 51,000 graduates, 100,000 diploma holders and 1,300,000 skilled craftsmen will be required. The requirements of graduates and diploma-holders for the Fourth Plan are estimated at 80,000 and 125,000 respectively. Training of graduates and diploma-holders is directly undertaken by the Government by establishing requisite number of engineering and technical institutes colleges and schools. But the question of training of such a large number of craftsmen can be solved only by the direct and liberal co-operation of the industry; in fact, industry has the main responsibility of imparting practical training.

### Still Mediaeval

Industry, however, in general, has no organised training programme. Only a few establishments in the private sector and Railways and Defence in the public sector have systematic training programmes. By and large, the system of acquiring

skill is still mediaeval—skill passes largely from father to son, brother to brother and so on except in the organised sector of industry, where a major portion of skilled workers and artisans come out of the raw recruits, who join as unskilled workers and gradually acquire skill in the course of their work with the more experienced workers. Even where some form of apprenticeship system is in operation, the situation is far from satisfactory as was revealed by the Central Wage Board for Sugar Industry. The Board found that "apprentices go on working as apprentices without any limit. Instances have been cited where persons were found to be working as apprentices for six, seven, nine, ten, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen years. Obviously they are being used as cheap labour". In this chaotic situation, it is difficult, for authorities to assess the probable extent of supply of skilled workers trained by different methods.

### Voluntary Methods Have Failed

Apprenticeship which is a form of inplant training, is recognised in industrially advanced countries as the best method of training. Need of undertaking a programme of apprenticeship was underlined by a number of expert committees. Thus, acting on the recommendations of Shiva Rao Committee (1952), which suggested that "efforts should be made to encourage employers through voluntary methods to take in apprentices," the Government introduced a "National Apprenticeship Training Scheme". Under the scheme direct financial assistance to the extent of an average of Rs 67 per month per trainer was provided to the employers. However, the scheme proved a failure. Target of 7,100 trainees fixed for the Second Plan had to be brought down to 3,000. Of the 2,700 apprenticeships sanctioned, only 1,200 apprentices underwent training.

Where voluntary action fails, law comes in. And this has happened in this case. Moreover, there are neither any public bodies entrusted with the control of apprenticeships nor are there any collective agreements to that effect. Hence, the

need for legislation on apprenticeship training was first recommended by the Indian Labour Conference in 1951. This was reiterated by the Technical Training Committee of Small Scale Industries Board (1958), National Council for Training in Vocational Trades, Estimates Committee and Working Group on Technical Education and Vocational Training (1959). Even the Shiva Rao Committee recommended that "if, however, voluntary methods do not succeed, the Government may enact necessary legislation", The I L O recommendation concerning apprenticeship also suggests legislation for regulating apprenticeship.

Such legislation exists in most of the industrially advanced countries. In some of them, the introduction of an apprentice training course by an individual factory is left to its discretion, but the terms and conditions of apprenticeship are regulated by legislation the main object being to safeguard apprentices from exploitation by training factories and ensuring a certain standard of training. In some other countries, factories are compelled not only to maintain a certain standard of training but also to maintain a fixed ratio between regular workers and apprentices.

### Legal Compulsion on Employers

The main difference between legislation in other countries and that proposed here is that while elsewhere legislation regulates programmes of apprenticeship training, the bill on the subject proposes to regulate the training of apprentices as well as to compel the employers to take up the training of a certain number of apprentices. The element of compulsion has been found necessary for the Indian entrepreneur has not yet shed his semi-feudal outlook and is not alive to the collective responsibility for long range development.

The apprenticeship bill covers two types of trainees. First, those who are admitted for full length apprenticeship. Second, those trainees who have to undergo compulsory inplant training in industry after

undergoing a course of 18 months training in Industrial Training Institutes, or other institutes and schools recognised by the National Council for Training in Vocational Trades. A course of practical training on the shop floor is absolutely essential to make a skilled craftsman. Already great difficulty is being experienced in arranging this part of the training programme. The problem is going to be more acute when the intake in the Industrial Training Institutes is raised from 42,000 at present to 100,000 at the end of the Third Plan.

### Industries to be Notified

Depending upon the requirements of skilled craftsmen and on the advice of the Central Advisory Apprenticeship Council the Central Government, under the provision of the proposed Act, will notify the areas and industries to which the provisions of the Act shall be applicable. The Act shall apply to both private and public sectors. The ratio of apprentices to workers other than unskilled workers in a designated trade will be laid down by the Central Government on the advice of the Central Apprenticeship Council, which will be formed under the Act. The Council will be composed of representatives of the Central Government, State Governments, employers in the public and private sectors and technical experts. It will advise the Government on all administrative and technical matters. Similar councils will also be constituted at the State level.

The responsibility for imparting theoretical instruction to all apprentices will be that of the Government which will bear the cost for it. For practical training, including basic or preliminary training, the cost will be borne by establishments which have 500 or more workers. For establishments having less than 500 workers, however, the recurring expenditure including cost of stipends during the period of practical training will be shared equally between the Government and the establishment. For imparting basic training to the apprentices of such establishments the Government will set up at its own cost special schools or institutes. Under the Act, the

employer will have the right to make it a condition for the apprentice to serve him on "reasonable remuneration and for a reasonable period". However, the Apprenticeship Adviser will have the powers to alter the terms of remuneration and period in the contract of apprenticeship where, in his opinion, these are *not* reasonable. The bill has been so framed as to ensure that the apprentices consider themselves as learners and not as workmen. That is why apprentices have been kept out from the purview of various labour laws except in matters concerning health, safety and welfare.

The bill makes a beginning in the right direction. With a fairly active trade union movement in the country, it can be assumed that some of the loopholes of the bill, like employers right to make apprentices serve them on "reasonable remuneration and for a reasonable period", will not be abused on a large scale.

### Employment Situation

Recently, the Labour and Employment Division of the Planning Commission compiled a paper on "Unemployment and Employment Trends in Delhi". The paper covers the Second Plan period, and is based on the data supplied by the Employment Market Information (EM 1) and the Employment Exchanges in the area.

During the period under review, "the number of unemployed seeking employment exchange assistance has been showing a gradual upward trend". Monthly average of number on the "Live Register" was 46,924 in 1956-57; 46,865 in 1957-58; 55,128 in 1958-59; 65,524 in 1959-60; 58,381 in 1960-61. Though the Employment Exchange (Compulsory Notification of Vacancies) Act, 1959 was enforced with effect from May, 1960, vacancies notified in 1960-61 were lower than in 1956-57, Monthly averages in these two years were 1,473 and 1,663 respectively. There was a slight improvement in 1960-61 over 1959-60, for which the corresponding figure is 1,113.

"Persons without professional, vocational or previous work experience" constitute 53.7 per cent of the total unemployed registered with the exchanges in March, 1961; "service workers" are 12.7 per cent;

"professional, technical and related workers" are 11 per cent; "clerical" are 8.4 per cent; "craftsmen and production workers" are 8.4 per cent. Among the "white-collar" group, increase in unemployment is very small, as compared with the increase in general unemployment. Among the educated unemployed, however, matriculates, intermedates and "others", as usual, had to face somewhat worsening employment prospects while unemployment in respect of engineers and medical graduates is among the lowest.

The paper reveals that "employment both in the public and private sectors stood at 3.30 lakhs in March, 1961, representing an increase of 0.85 lakhs (34.6 per cent) over the level in March, 1956". The increase in the public sector has been 39.3 per cent, about 0.63 lakhs, while the corresponding figure for lite private sector is 26 per cent or 0.22 lakhs. Further, analysis indicates that in the public sector, out of the total increase of 0.63 lakhs, major portion of additional employment opportunities has been in the Central Government establishments (0.35 lakhs) followed by quasi-Government establishments (0.12 lakhs). In the private sector, out of the total increase of 0.22 lakhs, manufacturing sector accounts for 0.15 lakhs, followed by services 0.04 lakhs.

The EMI studies reveal that out of the total labour force of 10.56 lakhs in the Capital, 8.44 lakhs have some economic activity or other and that 2.12 lakhs is the maximum limit of unemployment in Delhi.

The obvious conclusion of the study, which suffers from serious limitations is that employment opportunities are not being created in sufficient number to take care of additions to the labour force. Another disquieting revelation is that a sizeable number of technically trained personnel belonging to the categories professional, technical, craftsmen and production workers continue to remain without jobs. It is a serious matter both from the point of view of wastage of technical manpower as well as loss of contribution which the latter could have made to the productive capacity of the community