

The Industrial Training Act

WE CONSIDER that the Industrial Training Act is a very valuable step forward in that it focuses the eyes of all employers on the need for training, and attempts to apply a fair method of rewarding efforts put in by those companies who take training seriously.

One of the dangers of the Act and the setting up of Boards is that it could well finish up with a grant system which pays many of those companies continuing with the traditional type of training which applies at the time of formation of the Board. In our opinion an examination of the grant and levy system, as already applied to various industries, shows so much inconsistency that we are sure better and quicker results would have been achieved had the Government applied a grant and levy system effective from the date of the Act, based on some rough yardsticks of measurement, designed only to encourage a greater awareness of the problem, and a penalty for those companies not carrying out any training.

However, the past is the past and we now come to the setting up in 1967 of yet another Board to cater for civil air transport. We feel that this Board also may fail to assess the needs of the industry, may end up by merely expanding the type of training already being done by those companies having the largest representation on the Board, and not take into account the present and future needs of the industry. We assume, and are informed, that the Board will have a strong Corporation and Trade Union flavour and, although it can be argued that the Corporations employ the majority of the staff in civil aviation, it is felt that to allow this dominance to go unchecked would lead to the wrong types of training being given financial support, resulting in the long run to harm to British aviation as a whole.

Our basic idea on the proper approach to training is that the Training Board should, first of all, carry out a complete appraisal of the present trade structure and its applicability to present day requirements and also to cover future developments. In addition, before any training needs can be assessed, a careful job analysis should be carried out in respect of tasks involved in aircraft maintenance. This analysis should be carried out by a team of experts, who are not biased and are not actively employed by the company whose work is being examined.

The following points should also be carefully considered by the Board:—

1. Future training courses should be based on what the operator has to do rather than on what questions he will be asked to answer. He should be taught the best method of doing a job and the reason for doing it.
2. Specialist training, which is perhaps a more logical development in the larger companies but which would be uneconomic in the smaller companies, should be broken down still further so that it becomes the preserve of semi-skilled operators.
3. Apprentices. The syllabus at present is tailored to achieve passes in City and Guilds and HNC or ONC examinations rather than an end product of staff skilled in the techniques of aircraft maintenance.

The Committees responsible for these examinations, and the Colleges giving the theoretical training, do not keep in touch with the rapid development in the aviation industry, consequently instruction is still given on such things as the use of the lathe, surface grinders and other machines, at a time when the whole tendency of aircraft maintenance is towards repair by replacement and the present regulations do not permit a pure maintenance organisation to manufacture aircraft parts. Whilst dealing with Apprentices, it is noted that obsolete systems are frequently used as examples during training, and examination papers look backwards instead of forwards.

Although boys are apprenticed as Aircraft Engineers and pass out full of enthusiasm and keenness, the Air Registration Board does not accept them for Licence examinations and their qualifications are not recognised. This frequently leads to these young men suffering from depression immediately after completion of training and many of them take their talents elsewhere, where they can be appreciated.

Finally, Apprentice training should be of a much broader nature, it should be available to people of all age groups and, by using the spectrum principle, it should be possible to make re-training in new techniques a natural and logical development. At the same time the present non-related certificates and diplomas should be replaced by a national standard recognised by the Air Registration Board.

4. There should be a greater study of the effects that maintenance recording will have on the future pattern, and an awareness that the whole technique of aircraft maintenance has changed completely over the last ten years, and that the rate of change is likely to accelerate.

Conclusions

It is our earnest hope therefore that, before the Board is set up, a proper forum is established for an interchange of information, which will lead to some forward looking objectives being decided in the early stages of the formation of the Board.

The structure of the Board itself should also be so arranged to afford proper protection against the danger of continuing with the present unwieldy training machine using an out of date syllabus.

It is imperative that the correct emphasis is placed on those types of training which will lead to a more efficient civil air transport system in the future.

It is as well to remind people that, in the United Kingdom, the Direct Operating Costs in respect of maintenance are still much higher than those obtaining in the United States, in spite of our lower wage level, and we hope that this letter may lead to something which will emphasise the need for an urgent look at the whole problem before the Board for Civil Aviation is set up.

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