

PRIME MINISTER

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REAL TRAINING, REAL SKILLS, REAL JOBS - VISIT TO THE
CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY TRAINING BOARD

This week, I joined Bryan Nicholson, Head of the Manpower Services Commission, for a visit to the Construction Industry Training Board's (CITB) principal training centre, Bircham Newton, Kings Lynn.

The UK construction industry is diverse, geographically mobile and embraces a wide spectrum of companies from major international concerns to small local businesses. Yet apart from differences of scale, the technology and the necessary skills are largely common. It therefore makes a lot of sense for the construction industry to club together - through a levy system - and undertake training on an industry-wide basis. Since 1966, the vehicle for this has been the CITB which operates training centres at Bircham Newton, Erith, Birmingham and Glasgow.

Faced with the Government's aspiration to launch YTS in the early 1980s, the construction industry and the CITB were ready to be positive, but insisted that real training should provide real skills for real jobs. Fortunately, this sound principle was agreed. Now, about 80% of the CITB's training capacity is dedicated to one year (soon to be two year) YTS courses which provide the construction industry with most of its intake of young recruits.

The results are impressive. This year, nearly 16,000 17/18 year olds will complete the CITB's 1 year YTS courses, thereby demonstrating that they have the aptitude, the inclination and the basic skills to take up real jobs in the construction industry. Over 90% of these young people will move straight into real jobs and later to more advanced stages of training.

Meeting typical YTS trainees at Bircham Newton, one is struck by their motivation and quality; likewise, the training staff who are generally sound practical people with a deep grounding of work experience in the construction industry. Since its foundation about 20 years ago, the CITB has placed increasing emphasis on understanding its market - the training needs of individual UK construction companies. Some 250 CITB staff are continuously in the field, identifying and linking the training requirements of individual companies to the resources deployed by the industry on their behalf.

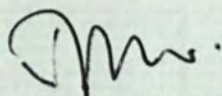
This close attention to the evolving training needs of the industry leads to innovation. For example, the industry is moving away from the attainment of skill qualifications through time serving to standardised objective tests of aptitude and skill. This is raising standards whilst providing a stimulus to the individual trainee who feels the benefits of greater application through his pay packet.

The CITB is also moving, as it were, up market to meet the long neglected training needs of construction industry

management at all levels. Impressive use is being made of modular training packages tailored to individual requirements.

Conclusion

Vocational training for the construction industry is going well on the sound basis of real training to provide real skills for real jobs. The construction industry is making a notable contribution to the YTS scheme. Nearly all those who successfully complete the CITB's YTS courses are going straight into real jobs in the construction industry.



JOHN WYBREW