Where Will Youth Find Jobs?

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FINDING gainful occupations for today's youth of employable age is a formidable problem that requires knowledge of present occupational trends and the ability to visualize and forecast probable job opportunities in the next five, ten, and fifteen years. The efficient dispenser of guidance and placement must not only acquaint himself with such trends and opportunities but he must also learn about the constantly varying shifts in new fields and recessions in long established industries.

■ *One of the purposes of the American Youth Commission has been to study the vocational adjustment of youth. In the accompanying article a staff member of the Commission investigates each of the six major occupational fields and discusses the outlook for youth employment in each. This article suggests reference to that of Dr. Rainey (page 838) which discusses techniques in guidance and placement, and the report of NOC's Occupational Education Tour for School Superintendents (page 833).*

Widespread use of tractors and an ever-increasing variety of improved farm implements has so increased the productive capacity of the agricultural worker that no need for additional man-power on farms seems probable. The ability to consume staple foodstuffs is inelastic, and the fact that we are seemingly well on the way toward an early approximate stabilization of numbers in our population, together with the absence of any prospective foreign market, does not indicate any expansion of demand for these products.

Consequently agriculture might be dismissed as utterly unpromising of augmented employment prospects, except for a rising standard of living which may conceivably enlarge fruit consumption so as to require an expansion in sub-tropical horticulture; and a wider distribution of comfortable subsistence would undoubtedly bring some strengthening of the home market for wool and cotton textiles; but neither of these would have perceptible effect on employment conditions in the great north-central agricultural region.

Competent authorities in rural sociology estimate that from two to three millions of young persons are now "dammed up" on the home farms, seeing no desirable future there. They are unable to migrate to urban centers on account of the absence of employment opportunities. While agricultural pursuits may offer opportunity for a few ingenious persons willing to expand the frontier of luxury production, agriculture as a whole seems to promise no substantial early increase in employment. Instead, the traditional exodus of farm youth, stopped and to some extent reversed by the depression, has been resumed, and bids fair to continue. Youth must look largely to other fields for work.

Mining, lumbering, and fishing have never loomed large in the total employment picture, and the disappearance of

the physical frontier makes any great occupational increase in the field unlikely. The significance of a few relief clients eking out a pitifully precarious existence by panning for precious metals in the mountain streams of the West has been exaggerated. In lumbering, the golden age of free-handed exploitation is over. In the future the work in forests will consist more largely of conservation activities. Opportunities for youth in the profession of forestry and allied occupations constitute a small bright ray in the slowly clearing gloom; but the numbers absorbed in this type of employment will not be large in comparison with the total number seeking employment.

Opportunities in Manufacturing

Light manufacturing industries fabricating consumers' goods held up relatively well during the depression. The heavy machine industries suffered earliest and most, except for automobile manufacturing which was relatively stable because the motor car is more largely a consumer's good than a producers' tool.

In manufacturing industries as a whole, technological aids to mass production and labor-saving continue to make it easy to keep production well ahead of consumptive capacity without requiring any appreciably augmented employment.

Even a much wider and deeper diffusion of purchasing power, though it should ultimately stimulate all manufacturing, would not guarantee many more jobs.

In some instances the offer of modern technology to liberate men from drudgery has been flatly refused, and we have occasionally witnessed the spectacle of a state or municipality hiring a hundred unemployed men to do with picks and shovels and lumbago-producing exertion what half a dozen men and a steam-shovel or ditching machine could do better and more quickly. But such attempts to reverse the hands of the clock do not occur in private industry, for the reason that they are not profitable. We must accept the machine and its consequent reduction of drudgery with good grace, as befits so excellent a boon to humanity.

Reduction of the number of hours of daily and weekly labor will partially offset technological displacement of workers, but this social improvement will come too slowly to open up a large number of new jobs for youth.

There are ample indications that invention and discovery will continue to create new forms of control over nature's forces which will require at least considerable shifts in the army of industrial workers, though they do not seem likely to require wholly new personnel on any large scale. We are already stepping beyond the threshold of vast expansion in the manufacture and use of air-conditioning equipment for all types of public places, homes, and even public and private conveyances. Possibly the prefabrication of homes and other structures may develop into a vast industry. But even in this latter instance it seems probable that the number of new jobs created in manufacturing and assembling would be less than the number of craftsmen in the traditional building trades who would be displaced. And it is to be noted that the building trades have already suffered heavily, due to a ninety-two per cent decline in the total annual investments in new construction between 1928 and 1934.

It seems necessary to conclude, however reluctantly, that neither new industries nor any reduction in working hours now in immediate prospect, nor even the most rosy of industrial booms, promises to ab-

sorb any large proportion of unemployed youth.

Opportunities in Trade

As already observed, wholesale and retail trade in consumers' goods has held up relatively well, and has made an early recovery. No doubt this was aided by the swift increase in buying power among farmers and employees on public works which resulted from federal recovery policies. Such stability seems to preclude any huge immediate expansion. Other important factors lead to the same conclusion. No one knows how many young persons now classified as "working" are in fact only precariously engaged in selling or canvassing on an unsalaried commission basis, producing uncertain earnings generally below the level required for subsistence. The bulk of individual extramural sales effort is of questionable social utility. The same is true of a great deal of current advertising effort. A detached observer might well doubt whether the pouring of millions of dollars into misleading advertising campaigns can continue indefinitely. One possibility is that the whole mass of "high-pressure" pursuits may be due for a deflation roughly similar to that experienced by bond-selling in 1930. It may be hazarded that none of these pursuits offers prospects of economic security to any large number of present-day youth.

There is no intention to cast unwarranted aspersions upon commercial pursuits in general, nor to imply that the distribution of consumers' goods will not long continue to offer many attractive employment opportunities in its many branches. In fact, a rising standard of living and increased urbanization and communal-dwelling, coupled with current trends in the organization and functioning of the family unit, may bring sharp increases in the restaurant, delicatessen, and allied catering trades, as well as in clothing, cleaning and dyeing, sporting goods, cosmetics, and beauty service. Employment in these aspects of trade verges upon the classification of "domestic and personal service."

Futures in Transportation and Communication

The railroads, the backbone of the national transport system, have reduced the number of their employees in the last decade, and would have made much heavier reductions were it not for Federal legislation and administrative orders. Advances in the speed and comfort of passenger service do not seem to promise many additional jobs until the volume of passenger traffic is further increased by additional rate reductions or by a wider distribution of income enabling more persons to adopt this form of travel as a means of culture and recreation. At present the vast bulk of railroad business is in freight traffic, and no vast growth in volume of freight loadings seems imminent, though this business would, of course, increase with a rising level of general prosperity.

Motor trucks and aircraft carry an increasing proportion of lighter freight, and these types of transport offer interesting possibilities of more jobs, for both require a high ratio of employed personnel to material carried. While a small operating crew can transport thousands of tons of goods in a single railroad train, in motor transport the carrying capacity of a similar crew is limited to a few dozen tons, and in air transport, to a few hundred pounds. There is also room for much expansion in the ground facilities and ground personnel for air traffic. Employ-

ment in aeronautics, the dream of many an adolescent youth, may become a reality in more cases than is ordinarily supposed.

Telegraph companies are large employers of young persons, in office and messenger service. Telephone companies employ girls as operators almost exclusively. The radio industry has a limited number of places for youth both on its program and technical sides. How great is the likelihood of many new jobs in any of these communication services? Apparently the prospects are none too bright. The telephone market is practically saturated except in the less prosperous rural regions, and the nature of radio transmission is such that it requires only a relatively small operating personnel at best.

The absence of augmented employment in any of the four great categories of industry thus far discussed leaves only two groups of occupations to scan for roseate signs. Happily, in these the prospect may not be wholly dark.

Professional and Public Service

A growing group of occupations are concerned with rendering personal services of a professional or public character. An important subdivision in this group is that of school teaching and allied educational pursuits such as librarianship and museum service. Another is composed of the several professions and semi-professions concerned with health service and the care of the injured and diseased. Others include the long established professions of theology and the law, and the newer professions of social service, scientific research, and public administration. Included also are the Federal, state, municipal, and other local public officers and employees of every grade. A common characteristic of these occupations is that their expansion depends not wholly upon the initiative of private finance, but largely or entirely upon sufficient public recognition of their desirability to underwrite their costs through collective effort, by means of taxation, cooperative organization, or philanthropy. A public convinced that it needs and is entitled to more services of this type will speedily find a way to provide them. Today, after nearly a decade of unprecedented economic struggle, there is a clearer recognition of the part the professional and public services must play in the next steps toward achievement of the American objective of a fair opportunity for all, with the essentials of a good life denied to none.

The immediate needs caused by depression retrenchment, resulting in overcrowded classrooms, overworked teachers, and a lowered quality of instruction and guidance, point to future opportunities for trained teaching personnel. Lack of facilities for post-graduate high school instruction is being met publicly by about 200 local junior colleges with approximately 85,000 students. But the existing number of public junior colleges should be multiplied at least tenfold, and their enrollment increased by 1,000 per cent. Such a development is likely to occur within the next decade.

Another and even more promising frontier for youthful teachers is the extension of the public school system to include facilities for younger children. Public kindergartens and nursery schools are now far too small in capacity to meet existing needs in the large cities, and are practically absent in smaller towns and rural areas.

Expanded agencies of adult education such as public libraries, museums, art galleries, choral societies, and dramatic clubs point to opportunities for youth. Libraries are now tremendously understaffed, and the other types of adult education agencies

seldom exist as public enterprises except on a meager and wholly inadequate scale in a few large urban centers, and have scarcely begun to be appreciated in most rural counties. Future expansion of this service will more equalize the ratio between thousands of classroom teachers and the present handful of playground supervisors. If music and art are given a place such that they will be created by many and appreciated by all, if great public parks with facilities for enjoyment of nature's beauties and participation in health-building sports are established, thousands of young men and women may find careers in the profession of recreational leadership, which ramifies into hundreds of specialties.

No immediate and sensational calamity in public health has as yet accompanied the economic depression, but few thoughtful persons doubt that the mental anguish and physical privations of the last decade have taken a dreadful toll from the nation's collective vitality and sanity. The burden of this toll falls heaviest upon children, and its evil consequences thus will be projected far into the future.

Everywhere we admit the logic of preventive medicine, yet probably nine-tenths of us never obtain a really comprehensive physical and health inventory until we fall ill, and often not then. The most elementary step in a realistic preventive program would be an annual complete examination for every individual. This service alone (127,000,000 examinations annually) would mean a vast increase in consumption of the services of physicians and laboratory technicians. We need a system of nationally comparable records of the incidence and duration of illnesses and injuries among the total population. Advances by the medical profession against the degenerative and disintegrative diseases of middle life should be subsidized.

The findings of a national survey of public health nursing in 1931 disclosed that 1,618 of the 3,072 counties in the United States had no public nursing service whatever, and that 375 additional counties had such service available in only part of their areas. Woefully inadequate nursing service, coupled with unemployment among nurses, exists simultaneously with long hours and overtime for those fortunate enough to be employed. All who believe in humanity and progress will agree that the various health services are due for an eventual great increase in magnitude and comprehensiveness. It may be confidently hazarded that the great variety of work connected with public health, from hospital orderly to medical researcher, and from record clerk to vital statistician, will offer satisfying careers to an increasing number of young persons.

Where Opportunities Lie

The invasion of an ever-growing variety of professions and other occupations by American women carries far-reaching implications for the future of domestic service as a means of livelihood. In the lower economic levels the daily absence of the wage-earning wife from the home is often the result of sheer financial necessity. Among the more comfortable classes women enter remunerative pursuits often as a matter of personal choice, feeling that the right to develop talents other than the domestic virtues is no longer an exclusive prerogative of the male. Despite evidence of prejudice against the employment of married women outside the home, sharply accentuated by general economic stress and unemployment among able-bodied adult men, the march of women into remunerative occupations cannot be stemmed.

Owing to the persistence of the pioneer tradition in America there has been but little effective demand for skilled domestic service, and even less development of a competent and self-respecting servant class. Except in the wealthiest families, hired domestics usually are unattached young girls who hope to escape soon from such work by marrying or getting a different job. A class of competent career servants, possessing an occupational *esprit de corps,* is nearly non-existent. Equally absent is a generally accepted code of proper relationships between employer and employee in this field, and hence the work is not only ill-paid but often intolerable in other respects. But all this is likely to undergo beneficial change.

The growth of communal living, as evidenced by apartment-dwellings, family hotels, and low-cost housing units, tends to elevate domestic work to the status of community service, and to remove the necessity of conforming it constantly to the sometimes unreasonable whims of a single employer. Hotel, restaurant, and apartment work calls for a range of skills from the simplest mechanical tasks to the intricacies of accountancy and business administration; the personnel required is of every grade from bus-boy to professional dietitian. Opportunities in these fields quickly appear whenever there is an appreciable rise in the standard of living.

Such personal service trades as those of the barber, beauty operator, and public valet are for the most part already somewhat better organized and regulated than is domestic service. Unionization of barbers has produced a generally uniform and reasonable standard scale of fees and working hours, and many states have begun to make this occupation a licensed one, for which every aspirant must undergo an examination to prove his knowledge of the chemical and sanitary aspects of the work. No doubt beauty operators soon will be placed generally on a similar basis. These services bear an intimate relation to the public morale as well as to the public health, and consumption of them on a hitherto unprecedented scale would undoubtedly be a characteristic of the better culture toward which it is to be hoped, if not confidently predicted, we shall progress speedily. Even in the darkest days of the depression the United States Employment Service made an encouraging number of placements of young persons in domestic and personal service—far more than in any other occupational group. It is likely that these occupations will not only require more personnel, but also rise in prestige in future years.

It seems therefore that new jobs in the near future will be in those occupations rendering direct professional, public, domestic, or personal services rather than in occupations that contribute directly to the production of material goods. The chief reason supporting this assumption is that machines can displace human labor in the production and handling of *goods,* but cannot so successfully substitute for the human brain and hand in the ministration of *services* directly to other human beings or to society. Happily, the increased leisure for which the machine liberates the producers of *goods* naturally creates additional demand for the work of those who offer *services*—professional, public, domestic and personal. As soon as an economic adjustment to this change is made, it is doubtless reasonable to expect that youth need not longer endure the curse of unemployment.