

# OCCUPATIONS

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## Exploring for Vocations

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The term exploration—exploring for vocations—is a good one. When I go from here to Chattanooga I am not exploring. There is a road already built, and I am going on that road. If we are to do significant work in finding vocations for men, it will be through exploration. We will have to go through untracked country ourselves and find ways. When we stop to get a perspective, we realize that public works here under the TVA cannot be maintained indefinitely at the present rate. Even if we should have the most favorable national administrations for some years to come, a time would arrive when the construction work that we

have in mind would, in the larger part, be finished. Our share of national resources would have been poured into this region, so far as construction work is concerned. From time to time everyone of us must think of what is to happen to our construction forces and our other forces when that construction program begins to diminish. That question was in my mind even before we began construction.

In many parts of the United States there are areas and communities in which there once was a great deal of activity for a brief period, when much money was in circulation, and when there was a stimulus to living on a high plane of activity. Some day we shall work out an economy which will enable that level to continue indefinitely, and for most of our population. There never has been a period in America, except during war time, when there was not personnel available for a much greater degree of indus-

*This informal but highly suggestive article originated as a talk given by Dr. Morgan at a TVA Personnel Conference. We agree that "exploring for vocations" is not only a good phrase—it is also a good idea. The plan here described is one that holds promise for the development of a new technique in American life.*

trial and economic activity than actually occurred. Never has there been a peacetime period, even in our boom days, when there were not hundreds and thousands of communities with a great amount of productive labor not fully utilized. Eventually we shall achieve an economy which will make it possible for anyone who so desires to make the maximum use of his productive capacities.

## II

There are great differences among American communities in degrees of productiveness. There are parts of our country where a fairly high level of economic activity has been achieved, such as certain areas of Pennsylvania. Perhaps Ohio is an outstanding example; for in that state industry, commerce, and agriculture are highly developed and pretty well adjusted to one another. Through a long period of years, Ohio has maintained as high an average level of economic activity as any part of the United States. Yet even in Ohio there is nearly always a large amount of labor only partially occupied. The mountain regions of the South represent an extreme contrast to Ohio. Here is a large population, the greater part of which would like to be active on an intensive scale, and yet is not so occupied.

The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania recently made a study of regions of low income in the United States, and found, I think, that the largest area of low income in the United States is this territory about us—the Southern Highlands. Here is a great reservoir of people, a very considerable proportion of them intelligent, anxious to work, and ambitious, who have very little occupation. Agriculture does not furnish an adequate outlet. These people have been manning our construction jobs to a large extent, but they cannot indefinitely con-

tinue to man those jobs. I think that the TVA will have neglected one of its important opportunities if it does not help in finding permanent occupations for some of these people. We cannot at once make a great change, and yet I believe that one of the important undertakings of the Authority should be an effort to find vocations, occupations, and places of occupation for some of the able men who are working for us and who have no stable future in view.

When we undertake such a job we are truly exploring. I know of no place or occasion where an effective and adequate attempt has been made in this direction and under such circumstances, at least in America. For many years I have been interested in visiting small communities. I have observed that even in rather dull times for business and industry there are always some economic functions inadequately supplied. I think this tends to be so especially during periods of readjustment when modern technical developments are spreading through the communities. In my belief, it is within the range of possibility to make a study of the conditions actually existing in many localities in our southern highlands to see what opportunities for productive living there are of which full advantage has not been taken, what occupations are not fully developed, and to try to fill those gaps. No one knows what the possibilities are, but I am sure that a careful study of our Southern Highlands, community by community, might be revealing if made by people who have not only a statistical bent but also some knowledge of the possible range of occupations. If in addition we could make a study of our working forces to see what special abilities we have among our men, and find men who would fit into such openings, we might be able to bring

together the opportunity and the right man. In the course of two or three years we might settle a few hundred men in various communities in occupations where they could have a stable living.

We have a great development of rural electrification; unless there is a quick reversal of public policy, it will continue. We are going to have many towns in this region and in other parts of the country where rural electrification will be a fact. Recently I was talking with Representative Rankin of Mississippi who is a rural electrification enthusiast. He described one community where rural electrification had become a reality for more than 100 families. All but two or three families had supplied themselves with refrigerators; others had supplied themselves with pumps and other farm equipment. Our Electricity Department tells us that they could place a number of men who would be equipped to maintain the electrical services of a community. I do not know how many such openings there might be. We should not train a large number of men for these openings until we have a rough quantitative idea of the places to be filled.

About the time that the TVA was organized, I looked into the use of electrical appliances. I was told that not more than 30 per cent of certain types of appliances which had been purchased were actually in use. For example I learned that only about a third of the electric irons which had been purchased were in usable condition. As long as such a situation exists, full value is not being received from rural or village electrification. Through a study of communities in the Tennessee Valley and surrounding region, possibilities might be discovered for well trained men to serve the community in servicing such equipment. A man might run a small electrical shop. If we can

qualify men to maintain electrical equipment, we shall have a better chance to spread rural electrification.

Perhaps some of you think that this would be a limited career, but there seem to be few desirable openings for many of the men who are working for us now. These keen and able men have been earning \$1.00 an hour, which is more than many of them have earned before. In electrical repair work they might average only 50 cents an hour throughout the year. Yet if a man serves a community with an occupation that will grow through the years, and gradually gathers about himself some of the belongings of a man with a home, his hourly income may not be so large as that of a construction man, but in ten years his resources may be greater than if he trusted to construction jobs, followed them wherever they went, and was unemployed between jobs.

### III

I think an occupational survey could be profitably made, but I would not begin with a survey of just a single occupation. If we could explore this territory, community by community, with a variety of occupations in mind, to see how a person might make a satisfactory living in a town, and take a census of economic possibilities, we might discover a considerable variety of opportunities. We would get hints from some people in the towns, though others will lack imagination. Not all people will suggest; they will only repeat what others have observed.

We would probably find many communities where there is no good automobile repair shop and where there is a lack of capability in this field. In such a community there might be a place for an automobile mechanic, trained in keeping a budget, in labor relations, and in personnel selection, so that in his absence his

business could be run by a competent assistant. If we could develop a rudimentary business course to include such training, it would be very helpful. A survey might reveal fifty places in this area where good automobile repair shops are needed.

Another possible calling is that of general repair mechanic. We have communities that cannot afford an automobile repair man, a pipe fitter, a plumber, a welder, an electrical mechanic, but which could afford a community mechanic—a good all-round man who is able to meet most of the local needs. If we could give some promising young men a course of training in the repairing of automobiles and electrical equipment, in electrical wiring, in simple plumbing and welding, each man might set up a shop in a rural community and serve a region within a radius of ten or twenty miles. We would need to train such men not only in the mechanical processes, but we would need to impress them with the necessity of selecting labor, management, keeping books—in being business men on a small scale.

Here and there you will find people of more than routine capacity. We could teach them to be on the lookout to make something for the community. A man in Georgia started out some years ago to meet the agricultural equipment needs of his community. Farm machinery as made by the big manufacturers is not always properly designed for conditions in the hills. The man studied these conditions and tried to get the plowshare shaped so that it would turn the soil in the hills without clay sticking to the blade. He attempted to adjust the equipment to meet the needs of the community. Many parts of the United States are lacking in agricultural equipment that meets local requirements.

In a mature economy we would have

large industries filling the nation's greatest needs, and we would also have a considerable number of local industries operated by men who have studied the local conditions and who are filling those needs in a personal, individual, and effective manner. The fact that a man starts out in a little repair shop doing wiring and repair work does not mean that he must stop there. If he has it in him to develop competence and management, and if he has the spirit of inquiry and of exploration he will find a way to enter the productive economy of the country. This process of intelligently serving peculiar local needs is one of the soundest ways in which industry may become decentralized.

We have a man in the TVA who is studying tree crops, and I believe that he is on the track of certain other ways by which some of our men may make a living. On a visit to New York I asked people at one of the fruit stands what they had, and told them about the Chinese persimmons raised near Knoxville. I asked them if they could sell the persimmons if we sent the fruit to them. They replied that they would have a sale. The kind we raise around here came originally from China and have not yet found a market. By exploring the tree-crop situation further, and by searching our own staff until we found men who would be interested, we might discover a number of new vocations.

#### IV

I have ventured over the field and suggested these few things. There are other types of agriculture we could investigate. You can go North at Christmas and find much holly on sale. I have been wondering about holly farms; I don't think they exist. People just go into the woods and cut branches off the trees. A man might

take the sour soil on which holly and trailing arbutus grow and achieve an income for life. The raising of trailing arbutus has not been developed in this country. It might take an intelligent man five years to perfect the technic of raising it, but in the meantime he could make a living by collecting and shipping plants from wild areas. It might be possible for a man to raise holly trees and grow trailing arbutus underneath them, since they thrive on the same soil.

The management of fishing streams is another type of occupation that is possible for this territory. Many of the mountain streams have been fished out. It might be possible to organize cooperatives along ten miles of a promising mountain stream. If all the owners of the land along the stream for ten or fifteen miles should organize a cooperative, they could get a manager (possibly one of our men interested in that field) to look after breeding places for fish, police the streams, build little dams for hatcheries, kill the water snakes that are so destructive of small fish, and perhaps build and operate a lodge where men could come to angle. Such management represents an opportunity for perhaps 100 men. Once I visited an estate owned by a member of the English nobility who had experienced bad times. Almost the largest return from that estate was from fishing rights along a stream which ran through the land. I am told that four miles along the Neversink River in New Jersey bring an income of \$10,000 from fishing rights. For the right person the management of such a business would yield a definite income, and we might have a considerable industry here.

Another agricultural opportunity may be mentioned. Those of you who live in Knoxville know that fresh vegetables are scarce during the latter part of the sum-

mer; we had a poor supply during the drought. We seldom have a season when rain is distributed as we need it. Up-and-coming farmers might pick out places where they could pump water and irrigate land near our cities and thus largely free themselves from drought. These farmers would have a dependable crop season regardless of whether it rains or not. A dozen competent men, with the help of our engineers, might locate bottom land that could be irrigated by pumps and these men could begin a type of truck farming that does not now thrive in this area.

There is still another field in which the people of this region could secure occupational opportunity and financial profit. In New England recreation is a great industry. In the Lake Country of northern England recreation is the dominant industry. I am told that in Wisconsin recreation is the second largest industry. When a boy I visited Colorado and saw two cities, Pueblo and Colorado Springs. The mines were in operation and Pueblo was riding high; it looked with disdain on Colorado Springs, which was only a recreation town. Today Colorado Springs has no less stability than Pueblo with all its steel plants, for the smelters have passed away and the mining town is gone. When our great dams in the Tennessee Valley are finished, we shall have 3,000 miles of lake shore and we already have some of the most wonderful natural scenery in eastern America. Our Land Planning Division has been making a study of the striking scenery in this section. There is one waterfall that is much higher than Niagara, though its existence is scarcely known. No doubt it would be feasible to have a line of tourist camps beginning at the Ohio and following the highways to this section. If we could find some of our people who

have management ability to take care of such a development, we might establish cooperative tourist camps with such standards that when a traveler saw that cooperative sign he would be assured of cleanliness, decent food, and comfortable quarters. If we could standardize a chain of tourist camps through the region so that the sign would be a sign of quality, I think we could greatly increase our tourist trade. We would have tourists coming during the rhododendron and laurel season and in the fall when the autumn colors are beautiful. This would be one of the greatest recreational regions in America. This recreation might be associated with the fishing streams.

I have thought of community recreation. There might be enough public sentiment and regard for children in towns of 3,000 or 5,000 to open community centers where otherwise there would be only commercial amusement halls. Perhaps it would be feasible to charge families \$5.00 a month for taking care of their children in these centers where they would be provided with games, music, and a wholesome good

time, instead of being allowed to grow up in the streets.

## V

The fact that there *are* possibilities—I have mentioned only a few—is significant. Paralleling a survey made of the communities in this region to build up an inventory of possible vocations, I should like to see a survey made of our staff so that the most promising men could receive some training in small-scale business administration to fit them for these vocations. In the course of a few years, if we could place a few hundred men in this way, we would have improved the quality of the communities in which they live. If by experiment we could establish and develop such process, it might become a new technique in American life—that of helping people to find callings and of getting them ready to handle economic ventures of their own. The process that we have now fits them for General Motors, American Telephone and Telegraph, or United States Steel. We are not preparing them for the more individualistic places that add color and variety to our everyday living.