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# FACILITATING OCCUPATIONAL ADJUSTMENT OF PEOPLE THROUGH TESTING, PLACEMENT, AND JOB INFORMATION

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Mobility is one of the distinguished—indeed one of the unique—characteristics of American workers and American families. In no other industrialized country is moving about so common or so generally accepted. It is true of city workers, of farm workers. It is, in fact, a national asset, for without this tradition we could not have developed a new country or won two World Wars in the twentieth century.

Today we are concerned with a particular phase of this problem—facilitating the job adjustment of farm workers and rural residents who are no longer able to find jobs on farms and who must seek employment in nonfarm occupations.

This farm to city movement is not new. It has been going on for a century. In the last twenty years alone, farm employment has declined by almost 4 million, and in addition, millions of other members of farm families have found nonfarm jobs. This has been accomplished largely by individual initiative, through our vast complex of existing facilities, by what we can only describe as lack of method. But on the whole, we have done an extraordinary job of it. The American economy, with all of its flexibility and with the extraordinarily rapid rate of expansion and movement of people and industry which has characterized the war and postwar years, has accomplished with little fanfare a job which in most countries would have been insurmountable. What is new is that we have only now come to a point where we talk out loud about the problem of personal adjustment of the farm population. This is certainly a constructive development. I do not mean to imply that past adjustments have been easy or smooth or sound, nor that we should continue to let matters take their course. The machinery has certainly not worked without creaking. More than that, the changes which cause occupational dislocation appear to be taking place at a faster rate.

In considering ways and means to help effect a job adjustment—and often relocation—the problem of labor mobility off the farm needs to be recognized as not one, but many problems. It varies by regions and with the people involved—with their age, their training, their education, their adaptability, and the resources available

to effect a transition. It is one thing for a son or daughter of an Iowa farm family, trained in a good high school, perhaps with some college training, to seek a job in another occupation than farming. It is quite another for a son or daughter of an illiterate farmer in the Southeast, who himself may not have completed the eighth grade and who has had no opportunity for industrial experience or training, to find a job in American industry. It is still another matter for an elderly farm couple to try to make their living in any other way. Fortunately, the coverage of farmers by the Social Security system has enabled many older farm couples to retire and to adjust to a new life with a degree of independence which a decade ago would not have been possible.

From the point of view of the Extension Service, in aiding job adjustment, a first task in every state should be to study the problem geographically. Where are the areas in which loss of agricultural opportunities is likely to be most acute; and among what groups of people are the labor surpluses likely to grow most rapidly? State authorities need, then, to set their sights to deal with these problems even if these problems are tough. For example, look at the problem which will affect some areas with the further mechanization of cotton picking, or of bean picking and other fruit and vegetable harvesting. These developments will throw out of work unskilled, itinerant, ill-educated laborers who can find little place in modern industry. Yet they will be in search of jobs at the very time when opportunities for unskilled labor are declining, at least relatively and in some cases absolutely, and when the level of education required by industry is rising. Thus, we have not one point of attack, but several.

I think we are all agreed that the U. S. can improve the functioning of the labor market; can enlarge and expand services for helping people to find the right kinds of jobs, suited to their capabilities—jobs in which they can use their talents and perform with satisfaction. This involves many processes—determining the individual's capabilities; guidance of that individual for proper education, training, or retraining for that class of jobs; and assistance in finding a job.

Now, the fact is, Americans select their occupations and find their jobs largely on their own initiative. Most young Americans experiment a while before they settle down. Many of them drift into an occupation; only a few—we hope a growing number—receive professional counseling. United States Employment Service surveys show that most people find their jobs through friends or relatives, or by calling on employers who hire direct; fewer find

them through schools or through employment services. This varies greatly, of course, by occupation.

### **JOB INFORMATION**

These facts of life underline, first, the importance of having information readily available in every city and every high school about the outlook for occupations, nationally and for particular areas; about the requirements in education and training and in personal aptitudes for various occupations. One of the first things which the Extension Service can do most usefully to help rural adjustment, as I have said to many of you before, is to urge that rural school systems—if not individual schools, then groups of schools—establish libraries of occupational information, such as the city school guidance counselors have. This information should be made available to students and to their parents, so that they may learn the requirements for jobs and what kinds of jobs are available, and steer their educational course, or their search for more experience, in these directions. Working libraries of this kind of information can be assembled at fairly modest cost, and in my view, no high school, and particularly no rural high school, should be without this information. The public Employment Service offices usually have such libraries.

A good library would include the Occupational Outlook Handbook and its supplements in the Occupational Quarterly, published by the Department of Labor; the many leaflets of interest to women and girls issued by the Labor Department's Women's Bureau; the BES's "Job Guide for Young Workers"; your own "Helping Rural Youth Choose Careers"; some of the many commercial publications in the vocational guidance field; the New York Life Insurance Company's "Life Adjustment Series," etc. For government, the Civil Commission's job series and the Occupational Outlook Handbooks of the Armed Services are useful.

In many states, notably California, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, the State Employment Service has developed job information for the state and for certain areas. They also have leaflets for particular groups of occupations, for example, the apprenticeable occupations or the skilled occupations or the clerical occupations, as they apply to the state and to the locality. These are especially valuable because they are right at home.

### **JOB ADJUSTMENT FACILITIES**

The major sets of machinery available for job adjustment are the local and state school systems, including vocational education and

the State Employment Services, with, I should hope, a large assist from the Extension Service.

Some eighteen hundred public employment offices in the United States operated by State Employment Security agencies and financed by the Federal Government with the appropriation of funds collected through the unemployment insurance tax system and reappropriated. The Department of Labor, through its Bureau of Employment Security, has the general responsibility for this program. It establishes policies and programs but each state, in fact, operates within the prescribed standards in its own way. You can and should deal directly with your State Employment Service in seeking to strengthen the services which are important for improving labor mobility in rural areas. The programs of these states will differ widely.

These State Employment Services operate, first of all, a placement service. They also supply testing services, counseling, and information about available jobs. In the fiscal year which just closed, for example, the 1,425 employment offices equipped for testing gave tests to a total of 1,760,000 individuals.

This testing and counseling service has been greatly expanded, but it is still far from adequate.

The employment offices made over 6 million nonfarm placements in fiscal 1960. In many cases, of course, an individual was placed more than once. These placements range from unskilled to professional, and occupations in short supply, such as machinists, draftsmen, and engineers are cleared through an intercity and interstate system.

These State Employment Services have, as you know, special programs for agricultural workers—the Farm Placement Service; for veterans; for the handicapped, all by Congressional enactment. They also have developed special techniques for working with certain groups such as youth and older workers.

All large cities have offices, but many smaller centers such as county seats also have offices, which are in a position to and do serve rural areas.

### **Testing**

The tests administered by the Employment Service—and not all small offices are equipped to handle these tests—take several forms: (1) proficiency tests, such as a typing test to see how many words per minute an applicant can type; (2) specific tests of apti-

tudes for particular jobs—for example, for a machinist, and (3) a group of tests known as the “general aptitude test battery,” designed to test general capacities to do various kinds of jobs. The general aptitude tests are of two kinds: paper and pencil tests and apparatus tests. The first group, familiar to us all, includes tests of general learning ability, verbal aptitude, numerical aptitude, and spatial aptitude (e.g., ability to visualize objects of three dimensions). The apparatus tests are for determining finger dexterity and manual dexterity.

The scores on these tests have been correlated with performance in various kinds of jobs, and standard scores have been developed which in combination indicate general ability, or lack of it, in a particular area. This is used by counselors in indicating types of occupations, grouped into “job families,” in which the individual might do well, or might have difficulty. These tests need to be administered and interpreted by trained people, and like all other tests, should be used in combination with all the other pertinent information about the individual through combined forces of the schools and the Employment Service.

The general aptitude test battery is given to adults in the employment offices, but it has been most systematically used with young people—seniors in high school—for use in counseling those who wish to get jobs and whom the Employment Service will try to place.

Experimental work is now underway, however, on an adaptation of this test battery to ninth graders, in order to give them better guidelines in high school for selecting a career and training for it. Tentative norms have been established, but experimentation is still under way.

The U. S. Employment Service offices have continually increased their coverage of high schools in which these tests are given, from 8,300 in the school year 1957-58, to 9,300 for the class which graduated in June 1959. In 1959 they worked with 41 percent of the high schools, as compared with 36 percent in the school year 1958. Unfortunately, we do not know what proportion of these schools were in rural areas. We know only that it is small. By and large, these tests are given in schools which have guidance counselors—where the school authorities are interested in the program.

A total of about 288,000 seniors were tested with the general aptitude test battery in 1959—an increase of about 30 percent in a year.

## **Counseling**

In connection with these tests, as well as with placement in general, counseling interviews are given by the Employment Service. In the school series, counseling interviews were held with over 300,000 seniors last year—an increase of nearly 25 percent over the number counseled in the previous school year.

In counseling students, the local offices of the Employment Service are equipped with a variety of information, much as school guidance counselors are. It includes the background information on the longer range occupational outlook and general job opportunities which I described earlier, and reports on jobs immediately available in the area. Counseling and guidance in the schools needs to be greatly strengthened. One important factor is lack of public understanding of the importance of good counseling and of good vocational guidance in the public schools. An important service which the Extension Services can render is to stress the importance of vocational information at an early stage in school. They should stress that this is important and not a frill or a casual job to be undertaken by whoever happens to have spare time.

The National Defense Education Act of 1958 can give a good deal of impetus to improvement of vocational guidance and counseling in the public schools. On the basis of an approved state plan, grants are given for training of personnel from the public schools in testing and counseling, with an allowance for living while training. I understand that this past summer some 80 different institutions gave courses in counseling and guidance for public school personnel under this Act.

The act also provided for the purchase of publications for counseling and guidance and for testing materials. This should give a good deal of impetus throughout the country to an enlarged participation by public schools. If your people press for improved activity on the part of your own State Department of Education, this may go a long way toward meeting needs in rural areas.

## **Placement**

The principal function of the Employment Service is placement.

In the same high school service, the employment offices placed a total of 115,000 seniors from the class of 1959, or more than 30,000 more than they had placed in the previous year. Some of these, of course, were summer jobs; and not all of them were full-time placements, but the number was sizable. Thus the Employment Service

is rapidly expanding its school service to reach young people going into the labor market directly out of high school.

### **HOW TO SERVE RURAL AREAS**

The problem here under discussion is how to organize to make such services available to young people in the rural schools where it is not now generally available. This is part of the whole problem of making the Employment Service complex more generally available in rural areas, and of improving and making more effective the training and guidance functions of rural schools. I have stressed the problem of young people because, as you know, their numbers will increase so rapidly in the mid-1960's. Moreover, they are the more mobile part of the working population. We will come to the problems of adults a bit later.

Itinerant or mobile units of the Employment Service might be established for testing in the schools, counseling, and taking applications for jobs in much the same way in which office hours are now scheduled for traveling representatives of the Bureau of Employment Security in taking unemployment compensation claims in small towns and rural areas where maintaining daily service would be uneconomical. Also, county-wide groups, including several rural school districts, might be organized, not just for a career night now and then on a one-shot basis, but with opportunities for more sustained counseling work with individual students, in which schools and the Employment Service could join.

The problem of placement is more difficult. If a young person has decided that he or she wishes to undertake a given occupation—for example, machinist—and no employment opportunity is available in the immediate area, how is that young person to find a job? One of the first possibilities is to refer possible job seekers to the local employment office in the nearest town. If the student's skill is a scarce one, openings may be available at other offices listed, or the Employment Service may actually be recruiting in various areas. The Employment Service seeks to find suitable jobs, but no office can create jobs where they do not exist. To me, this whole phase of job placement and the functioning of the labor market most urgently needs further development.

### **EXPERIMENTAL RURAL PROGRAMS**

For over a year and a half the Employment Service of the Department of Labor and the Extension Service have been working together in four states on an experimental rural area program to determine how the Employment Service could be helpful in the



employment aspects of the rural development program, looking toward economic readjustment of these areas. This involves the extension and adaptation of regular Employment Service activities—the promotion of nonfarm job placement, testing, and counseling. This program illustrates the role of these activities in another setting, largely with adults.

Economic development presents an added problem, going far beyond job readjustment in a diversified and prosperous area. By definition, the rural development program is for low-income areas with surplus labor, greatly in need of a broadened economic base. This is a promotional job. However, it has a valuable by-product; it illustrates the types of procedures which can be used in other rural counties.

These experimental rural area programs have been conducted in one area each in four states selected by the two federal agencies together with the Employment Services and the Extension Services of these states. They are: Batesville, Arkansas (four counties); Columbia (Adair County), Kentucky; Rutledge (Grainger County), Tennessee; and Phillips (Price County), Wisconsin.

The general procedure was this: Following initial meetings with local leaders by representatives of the Employment Service and the Extension Service to introduce the program and secure local interest and cooperation, the first step by the Employment Service was to conduct a house-to-house sample manpower survey to obtain current data on the number and personal characteristics of the population, labor force status, continuity of employment over a period of years, and the various kinds of jobs each respondent and family member had held. Second, an intensive campaign was conducted using a specially designed procedure for applicant registration, testing, and counseling, to identify and inventory the occupational potentials of the labor force. These surveys were staged for the temporary local employment offices which were set up in each area, while operations—testing and interviewing of applicants—were carried out in schools, churches, and public buildings in many communities throughout the counties. Literally thousands of people were interviewed and their applications taken.

In the Arkansas project, for example, in the four counties of Izard, Stone, Sharp, and Independence, some 5,600 applications were taken from December 1959 to May 1960; some 3,500 people were given counseling-type interviews, and nearly 4,900 were given the general aptitude test battery. Here two new industrial plants are opening up.

In Columbia, Kentucky, nearly 1,400 applications were taken, with 1,100 counseling-type interviews, and 950 general aptitude battery tests were given. In this area, the manpower inventory proved to be very useful in inducing a garment factory to come into the area, because it demonstrated the availability of a suitable labor force. In consequence, employment has risen substantially since that time.

In Rutledge, Tennessee, some 1,300 applications were taken, with nearly 900 counseling-type interviews, and over 900 aptitude test batteries being given.

In Wisconsin, where the project started somewhat later than the others, nearly a thousand applications had been taken. Some 825 counseling-type interviews and nearly 400 aptitude test batteries had been given.

The placements which followed these interviews and counseling tests were limited, of course, because the object of the whole exercise was to develop economic or industrial potential in the area and to make evident the availability of an adequate labor supply. The economic base studies are now being completed for use by communities in actively pursuing efforts to attract new industry to the areas, working with state development commissions and other development groups.

However, a number of placements were made in communities within commuting distance, and more should follow as the programs continue. The counseling interviews appear to have given many people a greater realization of their own aptitudes and secondary skills, which some of them, at least, will develop and use on their own initiative.

A working group from the four participating states, which has been evaluating this program, is of the opinion that: (1) The Employment Service definitely has both the responsibility and the capability to provide services to residents of rural areas. (2) Direct applicant services and community employment planning services are sorely needed in rural low-income areas, and could be provided on a selected basis without excessive cost. (3) Operating and research techniques can be developed based upon these initial studies, including the "Handbook for Experimental Rural Program," which should be updated and kept available for use if circumstances warrant it. (4) Each State Employment Security Agency should ultimately be staffed to provide needed services in rural low-income areas in accordance with their administrative setup, either through

a team of specialists operating out of the state central office, or area representatives which cover a number of rural counties.

The implementation of such a program is quite another matter. Time, money, and staff, not presently budgeted, would be required.

For the immediate future: A follow-through in this fiscal year on the four pilot studies already underway is expected. Hopes are also that one or two additional State Employment Security agencies will undertake such an experimental program and that one state may begin some work to assist underemployed rural workers to obtain jobs in its cities.

However, these experimental surveys show that in providing employment services, areas with economic potential should be differentiated from those which do not have that potential. In the case of the latter, ways need to be developed for assisting placement of applicants in other communities beyond commuting distance. This may well meet with local resistance; no area likes to lose population. No new techniques were worked out in the course of these experimental surveys for that purpose. Also, additional experience must be gained in a variety of areas, including areas that have population with varying social and educational backgrounds.

Ultimately, each state will tackle this problem in its own way. But the sooner a coordinated approach is made at the state level by the Extension Service, which knows the rural areas, the State Employment Service, the State Department of Education, and the state development commission (if the state has one), the better. Imagination and a willingness to experiment—plus a large measure of dedication—are required to do this job. The enthusiastic co-operation of civic organizations is essential. They can do much to generate interest in seeking community adjustments, as well as in providing information about the problem and in assisting rural areas to redevelop and to seek better opportunities for their citizens, especially their young people.