

TRAINING THE HARD-CORE UNEMPLOYED

*some of the problems
and experiences*

The United States Government estimates that one million hard-core unemployed exist within the United States. Half of these men and women live in our fifty largest cities. These people have either never held a job or have held one only from time to time and are, therefore, unable to cope with the difficulties of holding and performing a job. A basic lack of education always exists in this group resulting in a lack of skills and sometimes the education needed to learn these skills.

NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF BUSINESSMEN

Many individuals and organizations, public and private, see a need for training the hard-core disadvantaged. The primary goal among these groups is providing every man the opportunity to earn a regular paycheck at decent pay. With this goal in mind, President Johnson organized the National Alliance of Businessmen. Top businessmen around the country have assumed the responsibility for finding productive and rewarding jobs for the hard-core unemployed. In conjunction with this program the Government will pay approximately \$3500 per man to any company willing to train a man considered to be unemployable.¹ This outlay in most cases is enough to cover the cost of making a man ready physically and mentally to enter training in a particular skill. This money is not meant to cover the actual training in a skill or job, for this expense would be incurred by the company for any new employee. It is, however, meant to cover the extra amount needed to make the potential employee "employable."

The Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders shows that government expenditure for manpower development and training was \$60 million in 1963. In 1968, government spent \$1.6 billion, and there is another \$2.1 billion proposed for 1969 to provide training, work experiences, and supportive education.

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PROBLEMS AND OBJECTIVES

Many unsolved problems exist in this attempt to train and hire the hard-core poor. There are also varied objectives. The businessman sees a potential answer to the growing labor shortage problem. American citizens see a potential productive alternative to welfare payments and a potential answer to the civil unrest which plagues many of America's large cities. The achievement of either objective does not necessarily preclude the success of the other. The answer to one, however, is not necessarily the answer to the other. The short supply of labor is most likely not a permanent condition of our economy. Also it is a condition which moves from industry to industry and job to job. The newly-trained must be trained well enough to move to other jobs and other companies. They must understand that they are now acceptable as a productive unit of the working force and are therefore capable of finding and holding jobs with other companies. They must not be mentally dependent on the company that trains them.

MOTIVATING THE UNEMPLOYED

The key to training the hard-core unemployed is motivation. This is not easy to instill in a person, especially someone who feels that he can never attain a higher social status. In the President's Report on Civil Disorders, the Commissioner points out that many training projects fail because the hard-core trainee feels he is being trained for a "dead-end" job. The trainee must realize that if he performs satisfactorily he will be considered for raises in pay and promotion just like other employees. The trainee must be made to recognize his potential and must be prompted to use it fully.

Goals are necessary to motivate the trainee. The trainee must see these goals as attainable. If some chance of reaching these goals exists, he will work to reach them. If, however, the

trainee perceives the goals as unattainable, he will give up before he ever gets started.

SPECIAL TRAINING

The Commissioner points out that hard-core training must be provided by specially-trained instructors. They must be able to deal with special problems, psychological and physical. They must be able to teach the prospective employee to be reliable, neat, and punctual. They must provide education in reading and arithmetic, if necessary, and usually health education. People who are out of work are frequently in trouble with the police. The training supervisor must sometimes teach the moral obligations of citizenship. The trainee must be shown that he can succeed through his own effort and ability without stealing from others. Empathy plays an invaluable part in training the hard-core unemployed. Recognizing and understanding his problems are the first steps in learning how to train him.

MEDICAL CARE AND TRANSPORTATION

The company must be willing to provide medical care and transportation when necessary. Many who enter the training program are not in good health. This can be due to poor diet, slum condition environments, or sometimes to an operation which is postponed because of a lack of money. These people must be given medical care before they can perform satisfactorily.

Sometimes a trainee is unable to obtain his own transportation. The company must have some way of providing transportation, if nothing more than bus fare. Furnishing transportation, especially a special car or bus which the trainee must meet at a particular time, provides incentive to attend classes and be punctual. For most hard-core unemployed, the training program marks the first time they are expected to be at a particular place

at a particular time. The training program represents a new and unique responsibility.²

PREPARING THE TRAINEE MENTALLY

When an unemployable is first accepted for training he is afraid and distrustful. He sees the supervisor and the company as a threat to his normal way of life. He does not know what is expected of him or even what his rewards will be. For this reason, it is important to hold open discussions between instructors and trainees. The instructor must explain to the trainee exactly what is expected of him and exactly how far and how fast he can expect to advance within the company. Open discussions help the instructor in recognizing fears and weaknesses of the group. Group discussions also help the trainee in expressing himself, something he probably has had little chance to do. In this way the discussion stimulates the beginning of work and thus progress toward teaching the disadvantaged to earn a living.

REPRESENTATIVE COMPANIES

Many companies have already started using this method of hiring. Most of these companies are enjoying the benefits of hiring in this manner, and they report very few irreparable problems.

Lockheed. U. S. News and World Report shows that Lockheed is using this type of hiring extensively. Lockheed's hard-core training program requires the prospective employee to meet four of the five following requirements before he is considered for training:

1. Grammar school or high school dropout
2. Unemployed or no consistent work record
3. Annual family income of \$3000 or less
4. Percentage of trainees with arrest records

5. Percentage of trainees drawn from a minority group

Lockheed tried three training programs — one at their Georgia plant and two at the Sunnyvale plant. Lockheed of Georgia entered ninety-eight trainees in their twelve-week program. They paid each trainee \$20 to \$30 a week plus \$5 for each dependent and allowances to cover transportation. At the end of the twelve weeks, eighteen of the original ninety-eight had quit and ten more were fired. Out of the seventy finishing the program, forty-three were hired. Most of the trainees not hired by Lockheed were hired by other companies.

The Sunnyvale plant tried two training programs. One of the programs paid a training allowance. The other program put the trainee on the payroll the day he started training. Out of 108 trainees, five quit, four were fired, and one was convicted of a felony. Lockheed found the dropout ratio higher in the training program paying an allowance than in the program where the trainee received a wage.

Lockheed encountered a few problems they had not envisioned, but most of them were expected, and intensive training in these areas had already been incorporated in the program. One of the greatest problems was a lack of communication between the supervisor and the trainee. To help in this area, Lockheed supervisors instituted "role playing" where a trainee pretends to be a counselor, a worker having trouble, or a successful worker. From this Lockheed supervisors could better understand how the trainee felt about himself. Lockheed stressed punctuality and care and maintenance of tools and machinery as the most important training points. They also emphasized close supervision and personal attention, especially during the early training stages. Lockheed found that personal attention to the needs and problems of the "hard-core" trainee sometimes leads to ill feelings among other employees. However, providing enough

personal attention during the training period is important so that later the trainee can operate on his own. Lockheed stresses flexibility in training programs and special consideration and accommodations.

Lockheed found that the quality and quantity of the work done by a hard-core trainee is as good as the work done by a traditional trainee. The addition of these employees to the work force has not hurt production, nor has it increased employee turnover. The training program at Lockheed is recognized to be so successful that Lockheed has had two job offers from other companies for every man Lockheed can not hire after training.

Auto Manufacturers - After the Detroit riot in the summer of 1967 a group of businessmen, Negro militants and nationalists under the leadership of Mr. Frederic Donner, and Mr. James Roche, then Chairman of the Board and President of General Motors, met for the purpose of finding more jobs for Negroes. In order to hire the unemployables, the three big motor manufacturers relaxed their employment policies. They also sent recruiters to the ghetto to find the hard-core unemployed, to influence them to find a job, and to hire them after an interview and physical examination.

The January 13, 1968 issue of *The Economist* reported that Chrysler responded to this program by eliminating written tests and substituting oral exams, and by hiring 100 unemployables. Ford set up a hiring and training center to find jobs for some 1900 Negroes. They first trained the interviewer on how to evaluate the Negro applicant's manner, appearance, and language. Ford also bought bus tickets to distribute and arranged for credit to be given at the cafeteria. General Motor's Fisher Body plant established a "buddy system" type of training program for the disadvantaged. In this way the trainee could learn by watching a trained worker on the job. Not only did he pick up valuable job skills,

but also he learned the behavior that was expected of him.

Southern Bell - In the summer of 1968 Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company joined with other American businesses in an effort to solve the problem of the hard-core unemployed. Southern Bell feels that despite inherent problems in hiring and training the disadvantaged, unemployables can be made acceptable in terms of normal company performance standards by designing a careful program of recruitment and on-the-job training. Southern Bell defines the hard-core unemployed, for selection purposes, as poor persons who do not have suitable employment and are school dropouts, under twenty-two years of age, over forty-five, handicapped, or subject to certain obstacles to employment.³

International Harvester - For the second time International Harvester has started a New Start Program. The first program, begun two years ago to hire school dropouts, was a bad investment for International Harvester. Only six of the fifty new workers remained with the company. However, the new program administered in conjunction with the National Alliance of Businessmen's effort seems to be enjoying wide success. *Business Week* reports that International Harvester has pledged to train 260 hard-core unemployed. The company has divided the training program into two phases: four weeks of pre-job training and eight weeks of on-the-job training. International Harvester learned that flexibility is mandatory for success in this type of training. The pre-job training provides an opportunity for the trainee to learn the things which up to this time have made him unemployable. The people at International Harvester realize that this is not an easy task. There are many different reasons why a person might be considered unemployable. The supervisor must meet these obstacles head on. He must accept the man as he is and change the training program to meet the trainee's needs.

One of the first problems that International Harvester encountered was absenteeism. To help avoid this, the company arranged for checking the whereabouts of absentees on Monday morning. They served milk, coffee, and rolls to trainees the first week to get them in the habit of eating breakfast. Cleanliness, safety, discipline, and mental and physical health were emphasized strongly. Several hours were spent each day on personal hygiene, buying on credit, the relationship between labor and management, the use of time clocks, and other pertinent topics. In the last week of training, the trainee is assigned a volunteer buddy who is responsible for introducing the trainee to co-workers, seeing that he gets to and from work, and generally showing him the ropes at the plant. International Harvester is enthusiastic about the results of their training effort. They report that New Start graduates have better relations with management and better attendance records than employees hired in the conventional manner.

CONCLUSION

In today's society, welfare is a keyword and one which is extremely controversial. There are many alternative solutions to this problem, but none seems to offer as large a return on the taxpayer's investment as training the hard-core unemployed. This solution offers numerous advantages, some of the more important of which are summarized below:

1. Partial elimination of the dependence on state and federal welfare rolls.
2. Increased personal satisfaction on the part of individuals who can support themselves and their families without government support.
3. Decrease in police protection and less damage to personal property.

There will probably always be people who will not work. The majority of Americans have already accepted the responsibility of feeding and clothing

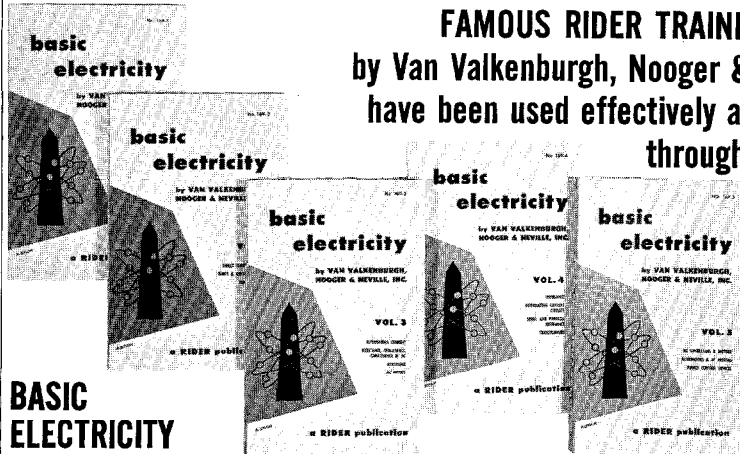
them. Now Americans must accept the responsibility of training and educating those people who are willing to work, but because of a lack of education and other reasons are at this time unemployable. This is a more difficult task and a more time consuming one, but its rewards are much greater for both the tax recipient and the taxpayer.

REFERENCES

1. U. S. Department of Labor, Nov. 1968.
2. *U. S. News and World Report*, July 1, 1968, p. 54.
3. "Management Information Bulletin," Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company, Vol. 1091, July 3, 1968.

**No doubt about it—
these texts TRAIN!**

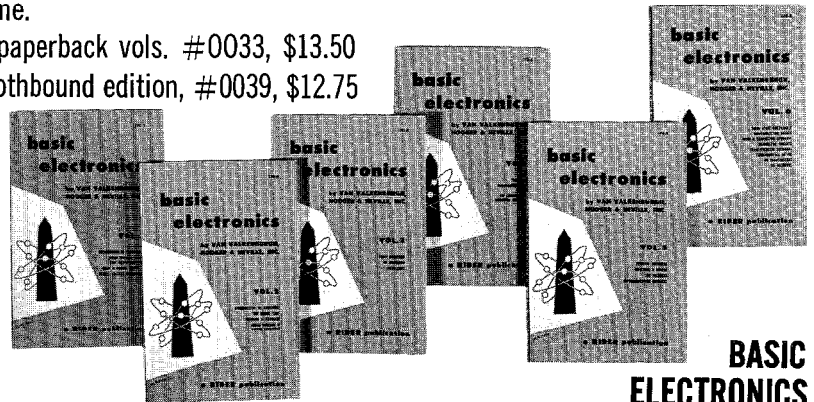
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