

Attitudes Part of Unemployment

FEW self-contradictory situations are as puzzling as unemployment when newspapers are publishing pages of "help wanted" ads.

It would seem that jobs advertised would gobble up the unemployed, or else workers would fill the jobs offered. How can we have a surplus of jobs and workers at the same time?

Attitudes toward work offer at least a partial explanation. Unemployed people don't want to do the kind of work offered or they may not feel suited by attitude or training to do it.

It has been estimated that 80 per cent of existing jobs do not require a college degree. But education or lack of it often are hindrances to employment.

Jobs for the unskilled are reported to be going begging all across the country. Restaurants, service stations and warehouses have continual turnover, while homeowners complain they can't get houseworkers, repairmen or yard workers.

One explanation is that many young people regard such work as

"demeaning" or lacking in status. Even so, many of today's successful businessmen began their careers by sweeping sidewalks or washing dishes. They made their jobs respectable and moved on to better ones.

A common problem is that many high school graduates and dropouts can't read well enough to follow instructions and cannot do simple arithmetic problems, or even count money well.

A job placement supervisor in another state says: "Today the teen-agers we get seem to be more selective, more demanding, less willing to put forth a little bit of effort."

At the other end of the education scale are the "intellectual unemployed," university-trained young people who will not accept positions they deem unworthy of themselves.

From these and other unemployed come the "job jumpers," those who work awhile, then quit or get themselves fired to enjoy their earnings and probably unemployment pay.

The U.S. Labor Department estimates that 26.6 million youths will be in the labor force by July, many of them just graduated from high school or college. Oklahoma City area high schools graduated about 13,000 students, and colleges thousands more.

"Modern WPA programs" to provide federally paid make-work will be only a drop in the bucket. One plan expected to provide 600,000 jobs "directly or indirectly" will cost \$4 billion, an average of \$6,666 per job. One costing \$1.5 billion to provide 200,000 jobs for young people averages \$7,500 per job.

There may be serious question as to whether employment on make-work projects has a plus value. Such jobs may be of no use whatever in improving attitudes toward work, and this may be the greatest underlying cause of our unemployment paradox.

Until young people learn that any honest work is respectable if it leads to a livelihood and happiness, we are likely to have people who "don't want that kind of job."