

More Jobs Small Aid to Inflation Fight

IF and when the economy gets into balance, it is likely to be just in passing. It doesn't stay that way.

The employment situation is much improved and inflation is getting worse. Economists warn that high employment may have already reached the inflation danger zone.

The United States work force appears to be somewhere around 100 million people and in June the government estimated that 94.3 percent of them had jobs. This is pretty good.

In Oklahoma, the job situation is tighter. Stating the employment picture positively, instead of negatively as is done officially, 95.8 percent of the working force had jobs in June. In the Oklahoma City area, the proportion was 96.2 percent.

That's about as high as it can go. Under the best of conditions, economists seem to agree, at least three percent of available workers always will be looking for their first jobs, changing jobs, or otherwise temporarily out of work.

Demand for workers is increas-

ing. A survey by Dun & Bradstreet, Inc., shows that more than one-fourth of companies contacted intend to add to their payrolls, a proportion equaled only twice and not surpassed in 30 years.

During the second quarter of this year, inflation was calculated at 10 percent, the worst in three years.

Many people consider excessive government spending to be the prime force that keeps inflation going. A Gallup Poll shows that three times as many people think inflation is the nation's most serious problem as regard unemployment in that position.

It speaks well for American workers that the percentage holding jobs is as high as it is, considering the various forms of government aid available to the unemployed.

"The discomfort of being unemployed — that's clearly less than it was before," said Arnold H. Packer, assistant secretary of labor, in a recent interview. For some, unemployment might not be uncomfortable at

all. It might suit them better than working.

An indication of the tight labor market in the Oklahoma City area is the frequency of "Help Wanted" signs at filling stations and food service places during summer vacation. Teens who are willing workers and willing to learn can find jobs.

But full employment does boost prices. It brings less productive workers onto production lines, either at the increased minimum wage rates or at higher contract pay scales. This boosts per-item costs for cars, foods, furniture and clothing.

Thus, victory in our battle for more jobs doesn't help us much in our skirmishes with inflation.

"A booming job market sends inflation skyrocketing, but declining employment leads to only small gains in holding prices down," says an article in Business Week magazine.

Still, it's better to have plenty of jobs available.