

Youth Not Learning to Make Living

OBSTACLES on the road to success are numerous. The American way is to dig in and overcome them.

That is what most teenaged youngsters and their parents are trying to do, with considerable progress shown. Yet problems involving young people continue to grow. For example:

The American Assembly, a liberal affiliate of Columbia University, blames public education for failure to provide job training for 2.5 million youth who drop out of school annually.

Military services are falling short of authorized levels because young Americans cannot meet enlistment requirements.

It is estimated that the average child, by the time he or she is graduated from high school, will have seen 15,000 hours of television, compared to about 11,000 hours spent in school.

The crime rate in Oklahoma is highest since statehood, when this country was part of the wild and woolly West. Juveniles and young

adults account for a high proportion of crimes committed.

Is there a connection between these circumstances?

Officials sometimes blame discrimination because of race or age for unemployment of youth. More likely, the real "discrimination" is that many have neither job skills nor a willingness to learn.

Poor attitudes toward work and lack of training often may be attributed to homes where welfare provides income and irresponsible parents switch partners at will. Moral or religious training may be absent and motivation to become self-reliant is scant.

Beyond that, homes and schools often come up short in providing competent counselling in lower grades that will help direct children's abilities toward appropriate training for jobs, careers and professions.

In earlier times, children usually had opportunities to observe and help parents or neighbors work at various occupations.

Few have such chances today,

perhaps accounting for slowness to realize that career training is needed.

Not all youngsters are destined for college, for various reasons. There are millions of essential jobs that can be and are filled by people who never went beyond high school, but there are few kinds of work that do not require basic training.

Often, this may be provided by vocational and technical schools. It may be assumed that Oklahoma's system of vo-tech schools is an important reason why unemployment of youth is less of a problem in this state than elsewhere. But it is bad enough here.

Mammoth appropriations to provide subsidized "pay for play" jobs, or lowering of standards and minimum wages in order that unqualified youngsters may be put on payrolls are not the answer.

The only real solution to the circumstances recounted above is to increase job training opportunities, so that every child may learn how to make a living, and be motivated to do so!