

SEP 15 1981

Job Burnout May Be Plain Laziness

SINCE striking air traffic controllers have talked about "job burnout" as though it were an exclusive characteristic of that particular branch of aviation, much has been written about "job stress."

People in many other professions also experience job stress. Teachers, salesmen, doctors, nurses, assembly-line workers and policemen are among those claimed to be subject to job stress and possibly job burnout. The question has been raised as to what kind of job does not result in stress at times.

A good deal of the alleged stress might be attributed to individuals and their attitudes toward work. It is notable that experts writing on the subject don't mention plain laziness and aversion to work as causes of job burnout.

Clyde A. Bower, administrative assistant in the state Department of Agriculture, needed some help while doing field work in southern Oklahoma some years ago. He found a likely prospect on the streets of a nearby small town and asked him if he wanted a temporary job.

"I sure do," the muscular youth replied. "I'm not happy when I'm not working."

Bower told him: "Well, you meet me here on this corner at 1:30 and I'll sure make you happy this afternoon." The prospective worker may have been a victim of "premature job burnout," because Bower says he wasn't there and he hasn't seen him to this day.

President Reagan wants Congress to enact "workfare" legislation that could require as many as 800,000 able-bodied welfare recipients to work at minimum wage rates for benefits they receive.

State and local officials aren't anxious to take on the responsibilities because where workfare has been attempted only 15 percent of those signed up ever appear on the job. They may have a work phobia that results in "antecedent job burnout."

The truth is that a person who doesn't experience stress may be too indifferent to do his work well. Workers employed at challenging tasks should have no reason for job

burnout.

There is such a thing as physical exhaustion, of course, and there may be a limit to the amount of stress some individuals are able to take. But how much of the alleged job burnout problem is due to employees wanting to get off to engage in other undertakings that they expect to find more pleasurable than work?

Work formulas stated by successful men aren't concerned with stress and job burnout. Thomas A. Edison, the inventor, said: "Don't mind the clock, but keep at it, and let nature indicate the necessity of rest." Repetitive laboratory tests didn't burn him out.

A noted insurance executive declared: "If I were to suggest a general rule for happiness, I would say, work a little harder, work a little longer. Work!"

Money is an essential element of work and a just reward, but those who expect to derive satisfaction solely from cash income, rather than from a good job well done, are likely to be disappointed.