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Nothing's New in Changing Careers

POLITICIANS and social reformers speak of career changing as if it were a new phenomenon. Actually, it is a reversion to a way of life of long ago that never was abandoned entirely.

Successful people usually have knowledge in more than one field and skills to undertake a number of tasks. Even in arts and sciences that require high degrees of concentration it would seem that a broad understanding of life would be helpful.

A major snag in retraining and employment is an attitude that a person ought not be required to accept a job that would involve retraining and perhaps a lower starting wage.

A tragedy of our economy is that child labor laws, federal minimum wage laws, union rules and business practices create circumstances that deprive boys and girls of work experience.

In the past children began working at early ages, most often helping on the farm, in the father's business, hiring out to a neighborhood for chores, or running errands for near-

by merchants. They had opportunities to observe a number of businesses and occupations.

Today's youngsters may know only that father works in a factory and mother in an office, somewhere. They often have almost no first hand association upon which to base a choice of career.

Advancing technology and changing times always have made careers obsolete but new opportunities have opened up for those willing to train for them.

When demand for wagons and buggies declined skilled people found work in automobile factories. Their sons may have gone into aviation when that industry blossomed. Since World War II electronics has produced fabulous opportunities.

Alert workers have advanced into better jobs at higher pay. Those unwilling to adapt to new situations frequently have been forced to exist on unemployment pay, funds produced by others.

Industrial robots are expected to take over thousands of factory jobs but it is estimated that more than

two million Americans will have jobs programming, monitoring and repairing robots.

By the year 2000 manufacturing work is expected to require only 11 percent of the nation's work force. But service employment is anticipated to increase from 62 per cent to 86 per cent. New careers are opening up in health, technical occupations, energy, and communications. New skills may be needed for older jobs.

Years ago a smart executive said he figured he always had two jobs to learn: His own and the one ahead of him. That might be the pattern for ambitious workers in the '80s and '90s. Futurists insist that workers will change careers at least once or twice in a lifetime, some as often as every 10 years.

Besides higher incomes, experts predict that work weeks may be reduced to 30 to 32 hours by 2000. Many people likely will utilize the additional leisure to train for challenging new careers. Others will just concentrate on fun while their jobs disappear.