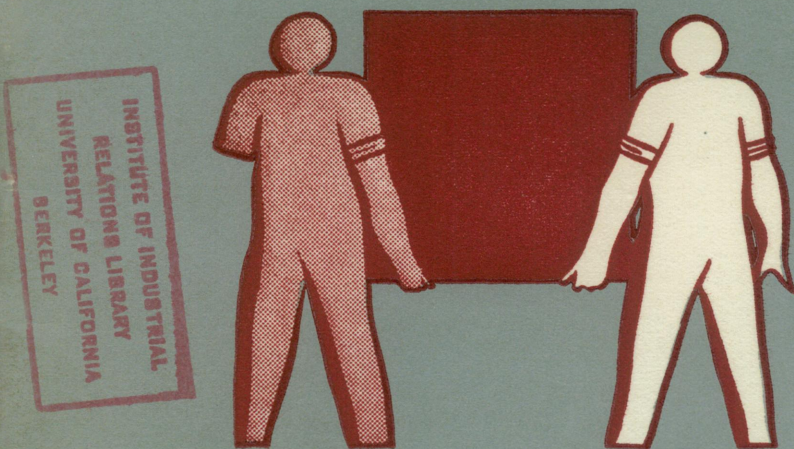


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EMPLOYING THE Seriously Impaired



BY ROBERT D. MELCHER

(Popular Pamphlet)

INSTITUTE OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA (LOS ANGELES)

25c

INSTITUTE OF
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

MAY 24 1951

Employing the Seriously Impaired

EMPLOYING THE SERIOUSLY IMPAIRED

BY

ROBERT D. MELCHER

Edited by Irving Bernstein

Illustrations by Bernard Seaman

INSTITUTE OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

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Employing the Seriously Impaired, by Robert D. Melcher

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Foreword

THE INSTITUTE OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS of the University of California was created by the California Legislature for the purpose, among others, of conducting research in industrial relations. Effective research requires not alone scholarship but an audience to receive it as well. Hence the Institute seeks through this series of popular pamphlets to disseminate its research beyond the professional academic group. Pamphlets like this one are designed for the use of labor organizations, management, government officials, schools and universities, and the general public. Those pamphlets already published (a list appears on the preceding page) have achieved a wide distribution among these groups.

With the nation moving to a higher level of defense production, the need for more workers has become acute. The probability of tight labor markets emphasizes that the problem of employing the seriously impaired is not merely a social question. It is economic as well. The seriously impaired form a large pool of useful citizens whose productive value to industry and the nation is inestimable. Hence we must turn to them for assistance in times of crisis.

As Mr. Melcher points out, all members of the labor force are "impaired" in one manner or another with re-

spect to the requirements of specific jobs. In placement, therefore, the employer should apply to seriously impaired workers the same standards that he uses for those who are not seriously impaired. The former should be evaluated for what they can do rather than for what they cannot do. This pamphlet is an example, for the author, Robert Melcher, is himself a seriously impaired veteran.

Professor Robert Tannenbaum of the School of Business Administration, University of California, Los Angeles, stimulated the writing of the pamphlet. The constructive suggestions of Dr. George A. Pettitt, Assistant to the President of the University; Dean Neil H. Jacoby of the School of Business Administration, Los Angeles; Mr. Z. L. Gullledge of the California State Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation, and Mr. Harry I. Friedman of the Los Angeles Committee for Employment of the Handicapped are gratefully acknowledged. Mrs. Anne P. Cook assisted with editing the manuscript. The viewpoint expressed is that of the author and may not necessarily be that of the Institute.

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I. The Problem

1. DEFINITIONS

EVERY INDIVIDUAL who is handicapped or disabled for one specific task is impaired; yet an individual who is so impaired need not be handicapped or disabled for many other jobs. To clarify this statement, the words "handicapped," "disabled," and "impaired" must be defined.

If an individual is able to perform a task, but only with some degree of difficulty, he is *handicapped* for that specific duty.

A person is *disabled* for a task if he has an impairment which makes it impossible for him to accomplish it.

An individual is *impaired*, regardless of what he is doing, if he has any characteristic which would handicap or disable him with respect to anything he might want to do or be called upon to do at any time.

This means that everyone is physically, mentally, or emotionally impaired in one degree or another. The range is from relatively minor to very serious impairments.

Anyone who is not seriously impaired is therefore *slightly* or *less seriously* impaired.

An impairment is considered *serious* if it makes it more difficult for an individual to secure employer acceptance, requires special consideration to prevent jeopardizing his or

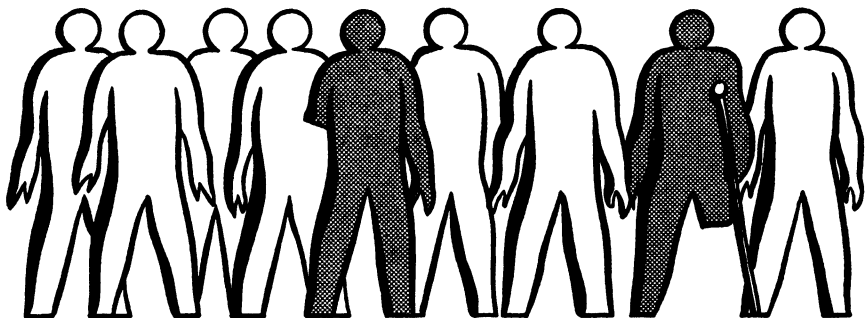
others' health, or requires him to modify or change his occupation.

Example: An expert watch repairman has lost the use of his legs. He is able to maneuver with orthopedic appliances but only with a great amount of effort. His only job requirement is to sit at a bench and repair watches. For that specific job, although he is seriously impaired, he is neither handicapped nor disabled. If the job is expanded so that he must also walk around the display cases in order to meet customers, he would then be handicapped for that task due to his difficulty in maneuvering. Yet he would not be disabled for the job. If he had to climb a small stepladder and was not able to do so, he would be disabled for this particular duty.

Jobs have many requirements besides the physical ones—skill, experience, intelligence, interest, and education. If a person cannot meet any of these, he is commonly referred to as being “occupationally” handicapped or disabled. Actually the word “occupationally” need not be used. For if an individual cannot meet any of the requirements for a specific job, his impairment becomes a disability.

Example: A man with a low I.Q. must add a column of numbers without the aid of an adding machine. No time limit is set. He can add the column without difficulty in two minutes. For this job he is neither handicapped nor disabled. When the time limit is set at one minute, he can accomplish the task only with considerable concen-

trated effort. Due to his low I.Q. and the time limitation, he is handicapped for this particular job. If the time is reduced to thirty seconds, he finds it impossible to accomplish the task and, therefore, is disabled for the job. In all three instances, he is impaired.



2. NUMBER OF SERIOUSLY IMPAIRED

No one knows exactly how many people are seriously impaired either within or outside the labor force. There is no doubt, however, that the number is very large.

Prior to World War II, the U. S. Public Health Service estimated that there were approximately 23,000,000 persons in the United States with a chronic disease or physical impairment. Of this group, about 6,500,000 were male, between 15 and 64 years of age, who normally would be considered breadwinners. In addition, war casualties have added approximately 1,500,000 males. Finally, there is an annual increment of perhaps 250,000

men and women who are seriously impaired because of disease, accident, or congenital causes. Hence, possibly as much as 12 percent of our labor force has a serious impairment. It is not possible to separate this group into those who are actively employed, searching for work, or disqualified from entering the labor market.

As already indicated, these figures do not represent the total number of seriously impaired. For each individual whose impairment is known, there are others who are either unaware of their impairment or who fear disqualification from the labor market by disclosing it. As a result, many workers have been improperly placed. In turn, this has given rise to more accidents, greater turnover, and lower productivity.

This situation presents a challenge which can be met by placement of the seriously impaired in suitable jobs. Achievement of this objective depends upon (1) greater understanding of the seriously impaired, (2) their vocational rehabilitation, and (3) a wider realization that, properly placed, they make excellent employees.

II. The Individual

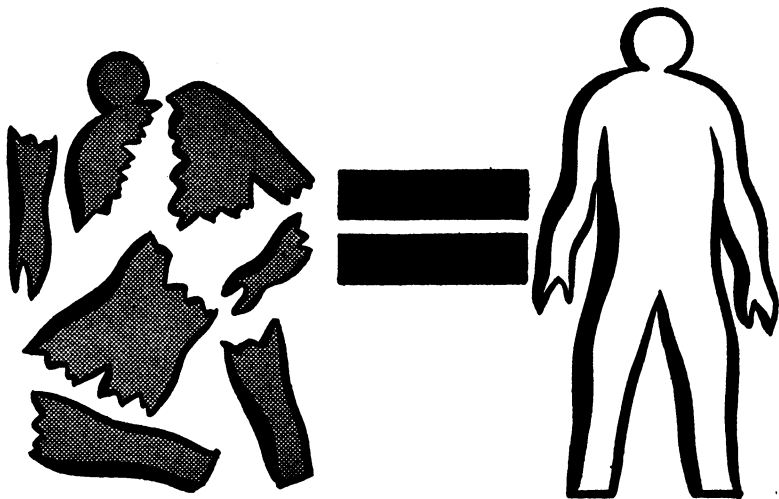
1. PROBLEMS OF ADJUSTMENT

OBVIOUSLY, a serious impairment is a barrier which either prevents or impedes the attainment of one's goal in life. It may involve learning a new way of living, a new job, new recreations, new attitudes, and new ways of thinking about oneself. The extent to which a person is able to adjust will depend largely upon his adaptability. If, in the past, he has depended upon his own resources when confronted with difficulties rather than upon someone else, his adjustment to serious impairment will be easier.

An impairment which causes physical frustration, as Irvin L. Child has observed, is often the source of social frustration as well. The person who is unable to hear the warning noise of traffic is also prevented from hearing the conversation of friends. The sightlessness that prevents an individual from seeing the curbstone hinders him from recognizing his friends. Some of these frustrations can be reduced or eliminated by the use of artificial appliances, and some by the development of new skills. The blind learn to know friends by the sound of their voices, and the deaf learn to read lips.

But does the wearing of an artificial leg or the use of a hearing aid solve the social problem? Although an

individual may maneuver comfortably with an artificial appliance, his success in simulating normal movements has a great deal to do with whether or not he is thought of as normal or is considered different.



Here the problem of relieving frustration is one of changing the behavior either of the individual himself or of the people with whom he associates. The person who is unwilling to talk about his condition deprives himself of an opportunity to release tensions and to inform others how he feels about his impairment. Anxious overprotection of family and friends, furthermore, may drive him to deny his impairment and thus encourage regression. At the other extreme, indifference can provoke the same result.

Social frustration may be reduced by acquiring new habits which allow the person to adjust satisfactorily to different conditions. The learning of new social skills, such as ping-pong, cards, or photography instead of baseball, tennis, or golf, can help to rechannel energy.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF NEW JOB SKILLS

An insecure individual who doubts his own capacity may well seize upon a serious impairment as an excuse for being unemployed, even if that is not the reason. On the other hand, a person who is willing to assume responsibility may be little discouraged by even a severe impairment.

Nearly everyone has undeveloped vocational potentialities. The impaired person needs to exploit his latent skills and capacities through physical, mental, and emotional restoration, as well as vocational training to the point of economic usefulness. Yet, it is not enough merely to be willing. Men and women who lose their jobs as the result of injury or disease seldom know how to go about the process of readjustment and rehabilitation.

During a period of less than full employment the seriously impaired worker is likely to have difficulty finding a job due to employer prejudice. To search for employment without preparation and planning may well result in discouragement to the job seeker and confirmation in the mind of the employer of his prejudice.

To give the seriously impaired an equal opportunity to compete for jobs with the less seriously impaired, two types of action are vital. First, the federal-state program of vocational rehabilitation must be expanded. At the present time more persons are becoming seriously impaired than are being rehabilitated. Second, the seriously impaired worker must be given the chance to demonstrate that, by change of occupation, he can perform as well as the worker without a serious impairment.

III. Vocational Rehabilitation

AS ONE ANSWER to the problem of serious impairment, the Congress has provided a national system of vocational rehabilitation. Each of the states and territories operates a program in cooperation with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation of the Federal Security Agency. California has a Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation in its Department of Education, with local offices throughout the state.

1. PRINCIPLES

The primary goal of vocational rehabilitation is the placement on self-supporting jobs of all seriously impaired persons who desire to work and who, through treatment and training, can be fitted for employment.

The first principle of this program is that every individual has the right to work at his capacity and to achieve the maximum benefits from such work. In other words, a democratic society demands equal opportunity for all citizens, including the seriously impaired.

The second principle is that it is wise economy to make individuals tax producers rather than tax consumers and to extract from them their maximum potential output. Most seriously impaired persons can work productively if prepared for jobs compatible with their ability. It is

far more economical to make them self-supporting than to take care of them through public assistance programs at the expense of the less seriously impaired.

2. SERVICES

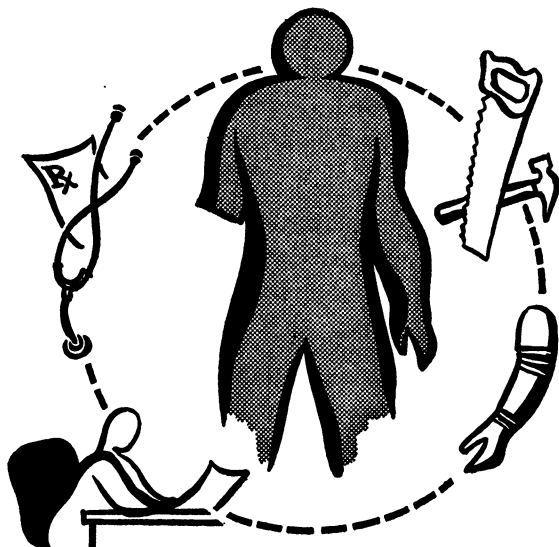
If these individuals are to become self-sufficient, they must have something definite to offer the prospective employer: adequate preparation for the position to be filled. In most instances seriously impaired persons will receive one or more of the following services, as part of an integrated plan worked out with the counselor in the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation before attempting to place the person in a working situation.

- 1) Medical examination
- 2) Expert counseling
- 3) Medical, surgical, psychiatric, and hospital care
- 4) Artificial appliances
- 5) Supervised training
- 6) Maintenance and transportation (when essential to some other service)
- 7) Occupational tools, equipment, and licenses
- 8) Judicious placement
- 9) Follow-up after placement

These services need not be rendered in the order listed, and several may be given at the same time. Some persons may require the entire range, while others may need only one or two. The extent of assistance is deter-

mined by a careful analysis of the individual's needs with reference to the final objective of proper job placement.

No rehabilitation case is closed until the seriously impaired person is in employment consistent with the original plan worked out for him.



3. COST VS. VALUE

In 1943, according to the Federal Security Agency, approximately \$6,000,000 was spent on rehabilitation programs, as contrasted with over \$30,000,000 in 1949. The number of rehabilitations has jumped from approximately 9,000 in 1943 to more than 60,000 during 1949.

The economic value of these programs is shown by FSA figures for one fiscal year: Before rehabilitation, the total annual earnings of 41,925 seriously impaired workers were \$12,074,400, or an average of \$24 a month per worker. After rehabilitation, monthly earnings averaged \$147 per worker, or a total of \$73,855,700 annually.

The FSA has pointed out that for every federal dollar spent for rehabilitation, the government gets \$10 back in income taxes. Moreover, the financial return is only one of many benefits derived from transforming dependency into self-support. The value of rehabilitation can also be measured in terms of individual morale and a strengthened community.

The average cost for maintenance of a seriously impaired person at public expense is approximately \$500 per year. Vocational rehabilitation costs about the same per case, but this expense is paid only once while the cost of dependency goes on year after year.

From the public's standpoint the problem is not how many seriously impaired we can afford to restore to useful citizenship, but rather how many we can afford *not* to rehabilitate.

IV. Employer Experience

DO THE DOUBTS AND PREJUDICES that many employers harbor against seriously impaired persons have a valid basis, or are they based upon hearsay and bias? If the seriously impaired employee cannot compete successfully with the slightly impaired worker, the former's employment is questionable. If, however, he can perform the job as well, his impairment ceases to be a valid ground for excluding him from employment. What, then, are the objections of employers to hiring seriously impaired workers, and do they have any foundation?

1. INJURIES ON THE JOB

One of the major hurdles confronting the seriously impaired is the belief held by many employers that they are more prone to accidents than the slightly impaired.

In 1948, the Bureau of Labor Statistics published the results of a two-year study of actual work records of 11,000 physically impaired workers matched with 18,000 "unimpaired" workers performing identical tasks. This study divided work injuries into nondisabling and disabling categories. The former was defined as an injury at work which did not result in permanent impairment or loss of time beyond the day or shift of its occurrence.

Nondisabling injuries occurred with identical fre-

quency in both the seriously impaired and slightly impaired groups matched on identical jobs and exposed to the same hazards. Furthermore, workers with serious impairments did not tax plant medical facilities because of injuries or illnesses not related to the job.

With regard to disabling injuries, the seriously impaired workers made a more favorable record than "unimpaired" workers exposed to identical hazards. When a seriously impaired worker was intelligently placed, the study revealed that:

- 1) The probability of a disabling injury superimposed on an existing impairment was slight.
- 2) The seriously impaired worker was no more likely, and perhaps a little less likely, to experience a disabling work injury than the slightly impaired worker. (This may be due to more careful placement or to the seriously impaired worker being more safety conscious.)
- 3) The seriously impaired worker was not a hazard to his fellow workers.
- 4) The average time lost as the result of disabling injuries was less among seriously impaired workers than among their slightly impaired co-workers. (They are more careful.)

2. INSURANCE RATES

It has often been assumed that seriously impaired workers have more accidents, thus leading to higher workmen's compensation rates and increased liability for compensable injuries, particularly where a second

injury occurs. Actually, neither assumption is correct.

Workmen's compensation insurance rates are based upon the experience of the class of business, modified in some cases by individual plant experience, rather than upon the type of employee. The Association of Casualty and Surety Companies has stated that "there is no provision in workmen's compensation insurance policies or rates that penalizes an employer for hiring handicapped workers. . . . The formulae for determining the premium rates make no consideration of the kind of personnel hired." Further, the merit rating of the firm is determined by its accident experience, and the evidence, as noted above, is that seriously impaired workers have no more mishaps than other workers.

Although a second injury increasing the disability occurs infrequently, the fear of liability for permanent total disability has prevented many employers from hiring seriously impaired workers. If employers are held liable in such cases and their insurance carriers are thus required to pay for total disability, the carriers' rates will naturally be higher.

Two means of removing this barrier have been tried. One is the use of waivers, under which the seriously impaired worker relinquishes his rights under the workmen's compensation law. However, it has been the experience of the insurance companies that these waivers are not a significant factor affecting injury costs in those states where they have been in effect.

The other device to protect employers from additional risk, used in many states, is legislation providing for second injury funds. The main purpose of these statutes has been to allay an employer's fear that if he hires a man who has already lost an eye, hand, foot, arm, or leg, he may, in event of another injury, be charged with the cost of a permanent total disability. Under this arrangement, the employer's carrier pays only for the specific injury and the fund pays the difference due the worker for the total disability. California has such a second injury law.

3. OUTPUT

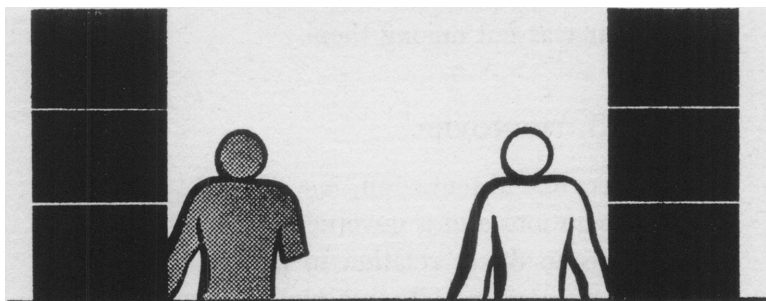
Employers often assume that seriously impaired workers produce less than the slightly impaired, thereby increasing the cost of production.

For the purpose of obtaining a cross section of management thinking with respect to employment of the seriously impaired, the U. S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers undertook a spot check of their members during 1949. The NAM surveyed manufacturing, while the Chamber confined its inquiries to merchants, banks, insurance companies, utilities, railroads, and other industrial divisions. These employers generally expressed satisfaction with the job performance of the seriously impaired and in a number of instances cited them for outstanding work.

A spokesman for an office equipment company typi-

cally reported, "Persons with physical handicaps are above average in performing their duties because of their . . . desire to justify their employment by fine performance."

The Bureau of Labor Statistics study cited above revealed that seriously impaired workers slightly surpassed



the "unimpaired" with respect to the volume of production. This, of course, does not imply that every seriously impaired worker produced at a higher rate than the worker with whom he was matched. Individual differences are as common among the former as among the latter. There were poor, fair, good, and excellent workers in both groups, with approximately the same distribution for each.

4. ABSENTEEISM

Many employers believe that a higher absenteeism rate exists among seriously impaired workers because

they are considered more susceptible to illness and the weather. Yet the BLS report revealed that the seriously impaired were only slightly more prone than the "unimpaired" to irregular work attendance. The difference was not regarded as statistically significant. The BLS concluded that the factors which produce absenteeism affected both groups in the same way and that physical impairment was not among them.

5. TURNOVER

Turnover, like absenteeism, is a normal factor in industrial operations and is governed by many conditions which have no direct relation to physical, mental, or emotional impairment. The experience of rehabilitation agencies indicates that most of the seriously impaired are determined to make good on the job and hence to stay with it.

Various studies have concluded that seriously impaired workers have a lower turnover rate than slightly impaired workers. The BLS study, however, found that the voluntary quit rate of the former was moderately higher than the rate of the latter. It cast doubt on the statistical significance of the difference. More of the seriously impaired moved because of health reasons. The number who quit because of dissatisfaction with the job was identical in both groups.

The seriously impaired had a higher rate of termina-

tions due to separation initiated by the employer than did the slightly impaired. Reductions in force were basically responsible for this difference. In most instances, seriously impaired workers were the last to be hired. Consequently, they had the least seniority and were the first to be laid off.

It should be remembered that the BLS survey was conducted shortly after World War II in a period of general instability. While both seriously and slightly impaired veterans had many personal adjustments to make, the seriously impaired were presumably faced with more difficult problems and hence may have tended to be more unstable.

6. SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

The belief by employers that the seriously impaired require special consideration is not infrequently an obstacle to their employment. Modification of a job to suit their needs, such as altered machines, special ramps, help in arriving and leaving, and other changes, would, of course, involve additional cost to management. In most industrial plants, however, such special consideration is usually unnecessary, and the seriously impaired do not expect these "favors."

In a U. S. Civil Service Commission study, made in 1943, of 2,858 seriously impaired matched with 5,523 slightly impaired workers employed in 43 establishments operated by the War and Navy Departments, it was

found that only 19.7 percent of the former required minor changes on the job or job tailoring in placement. It is significant that 90.3 percent of such workers received no special consideration at all with regard to transportation, lunch and rest periods, hours of work, and methods of remuneration or reporting time.

Many employers believe that seriously impaired workers can perform only a limited number of jobs, with a resultant inflexibility of personnel. While these workers are somewhat limited in their job assignments, the immobility is one of degree and depends upon the nature of the impairment and the requirements of the job. In a given plant there may be scores of jobs a person with a specific serious impairment can perform, and he can readily be transferred among these jobs. Mobility, then, is an operating problem peculiar to the individual plant.

7. CONCLUSION

On the basis of these findings, it seems fair to conclude that the reluctance of many employers to hire seriously impaired workers is based upon misinformation concerning their ability and value as employees. As the BLS study puts it, "No matter how different these physically impaired persons may have been in other respects, on the job they were just another group of workers able to meet their unimpaired fellow workers on an equal competitive footing."

V. Organized Labor's Attitude

WHATEVER DIVERGENT VIEWS unions take on other issues, they are in agreement on a policy toward the treatment of seriously impaired workers.

1. CIO POSITION

In 1948, Philip Murray, president of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, urged the nation's employers to provide more jobs for the seriously impaired. Expressing concern over discrimination against them, he emphasized that until permanent and creative occupations were obtained by all persons able to work, "any claim to the achievement of 'Full Employment' is an empty mockery." He asked every member of the CIO to interest himself in the welfare of his seriously impaired co-workers and to encourage employers to cooperate with the community and local unions in their behalf.

2. AFL POLICY

In 1948, the American Federation of Labor urged its member unions to establish through collective bargaining union-management programs to assure continued employment in suitable work for employees who became

seriously impaired and to provide new jobs for other seriously impaired persons. The Federation's program contains four major points:

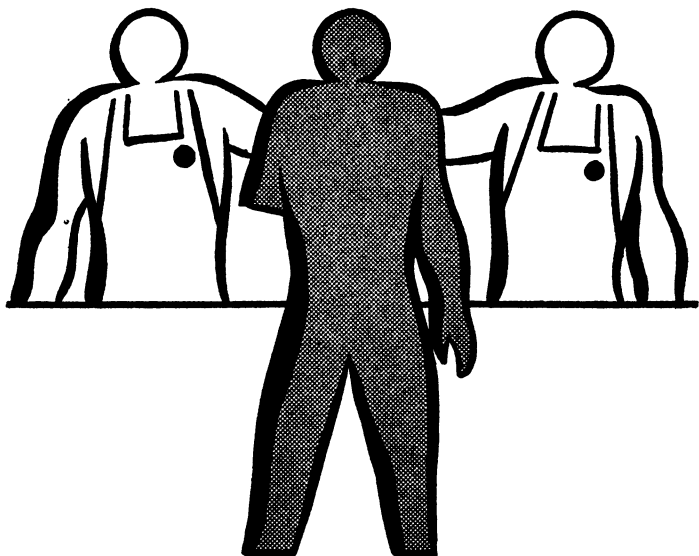
- 1) The use of every practical means to insure the employment of seriously impaired veterans and other seriously impaired workers.
- 2) The negotiation of specific provisions in collective bargaining contracts for the employment and treatment of seriously impaired workers.
- 3) Limitation of pre-employment physical examinations solely to the determination of suitability of the job for the worker.
- 4) The extension of second-injury legislation to all states and improvement of existing acts.

3. PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS

Unions often oppose physical examinations as a condition of employment, as indicated by a resolution adopted at the Seventh National Conference on Labor Legislation in 1940. There are two possible advantages to pre-employment physical examinations, namely, proper job placement and safeguarding the health of employees. Disadvantages are possible use of the examinations to deny employment or rights under workmen's compensation laws. Labor is inclined to feel that, unless specific steps are taken to avoid them, the dangers of misuse outweigh the advantages.

4. WAGE DIFFERENTIALS AND FAVORS

Organized labor is strongly opposed to differentially low wages and special favors for seriously impaired workers. Unions agree that temporary advantages may



be gained by low-wage competition, but in the long run the standard of wages for everyone may be cut. Special hiring, layoffs, and promotions may also serve the temporary needs of the seriously impaired, but eventually the system of seniority which guarantees job protection to all wage earners may be destroyed. Harvey Brown, for-

mer president of the International Association of Machinists, has pointed out that labor's aim of employment for all without discrimination cannot be achieved "if our vision is limited, if our activities are confined, to the petty tasks of maintaining our own competitive positions in the economic world. . . ."

5. CONCLUSION

On the record American unions are united in asking that the seriously impaired be given fair treatment, equal to but neither superior nor inferior to that accorded other workers. Very little is known about the actual execution of this policy in collective bargaining. Since, under most contracts, the employer retains the hiring function, unions in those cases probably have little influence in determining whether or not the seriously impaired are employed. No studies are available which reveal how unions themselves act where they control hiring, as under the closed shop and hiring hall arrangements.

VI. Solving the Problem

DISCRIMINATION, prejudice, and ignorance are harsh words. But what words are more appropriate if a seriously impaired person, who is neither handicapped nor disabled for a specific job, is not hired solely because of his impairment?

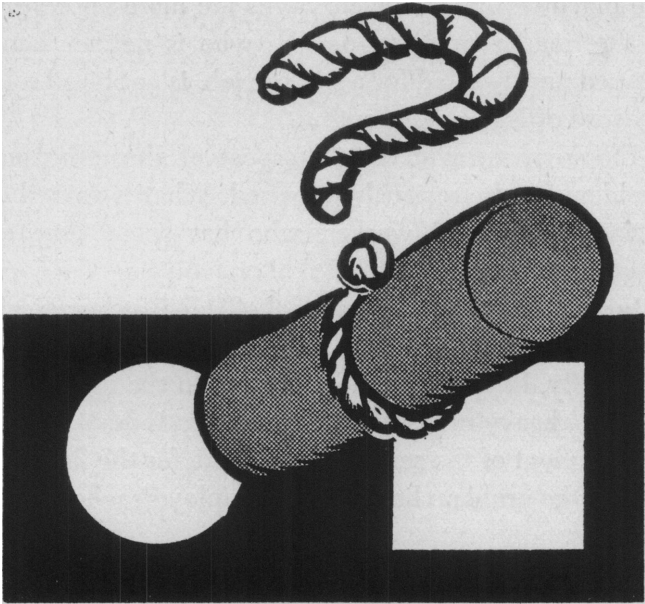
Employment is a crucial aspect of the adjustment problem for the seriously impaired. What is gained if a seriously impaired worker, who has spent time and energy in relearning his old skill or acquiring a new one, is turned away at the personnel office? Psychologically, he will become a dejected and insecure individual. Economically, he will become a burden to the community. Hence a heavy responsibility rests upon industry for the employment of the seriously impaired, for the final solution of the problem lies with the employers who provide the jobs.

1. IMPORTANCE OF JOB PLACEMENT

It is not enough for employers to "give" a seriously impaired worker a chance to "prove his worth," if he is directed to a job in a hit-or-miss manner. Through no fault of his own, he may be placed at such a disadvantage that he will be a failure from the start.

Careful planning is an essential prerequisite to the

employment of any individual, whether seriously or slightly impaired. Successful job placement requires an analysis of the job and a knowledge of the man who is to fill it. Its guiding principles are: (1) the worker must



be able to meet the physical requirements of the job, (2) he must not be a hazard to himself or to others, and (3) the work must not aggravate his impairment. If these conditions are met and if prejudice is eliminated, a serious impairment will disappear as a factor in the employment of any worker.

For the most part, the techniques used for intelligent

placement of "able-bodied" workers are all that need be brought into play for effective placement of the seriously impaired. The essential addition is that the nature of the impairment and the requirements of the job be clearly understood by all concerned.

2. THE PLACEMENT PROGRAM

The steps involved in carrying out such a placement program are essentially a refinement of techniques now in use by departmental supervisors and personnel officers.

First, the exact physical, mental, and emotional requirements of the job must be determined by a competent job analyst. It is not enough to state that "moderate" lifting, "very little" climbing, or "some" addition of numbers is required. Specific information must be given about the various elements of a job a worker is required to do. The job specification sheet should state that the worker be able to lift "forty" pounds of equipment four hours a day; climb "thirty" steps three times a day; add a specified number of figures in a given amount of time.

Second, the professional examiner, often the company physician or psychologist, must determine the physical, mental, and emotional qualifications of the worker—what he *can* do—how much he can lift, climb, and add, for example. Personnel officers should be concerned with the positive side of the worker's abilities, not with the

diagnosis of his impairment. It is the physician's or psychologist's job to translate the negative findings into affirmative terms, to determine the worker's capacities and state them specifically and meaningfully.

Third, the placement officer has the responsibility for matching the demands of the job with the specific abilities of the seriously or slightly impaired individual worker.

The final step in establishing a successful placement program is continuing evaluation of the procedure. It must be statistically demonstrated that a significant saving of money or improvement of job performance has resulted. General, subjective opinions about the efficacy of the plan will not suffice.

3. ATTITUDE OF SUPERVISORS

The supervisors' treatment of seriously impaired workers often affects the attitudes and, hence, the morale and efficiency of these employees. In a case study conducted at Lockheed Aircraft Corporation toward the end of World War II, it was found that foremen, at times, resented the presence of seriously impaired workers in their departments. Their feeling was usually evident to these employees and was reflected in poorer work. Other foremen and supervisors attempted to protect the seriously impaired and thereby built unwholesome dependencies. The best results were obtained in departments

where foremen and supervisors had an objective understanding of the problems of these workers, yet treated them on the same basis as their co-workers.

4. EQUALITY, NOT FAVORS

There have been a variety of methods proposed to include the seriously impaired on an equal basis with the slightly impaired in the labor force. Some have gone so far as to suggest legislation to compel employers to hire a designated quota of seriously impaired persons. Even if it were possible, however, to separate the seriously impaired from the slightly impaired, it is unlikely that the former would desire such special favors.

If employers would offer equal opportunity to both groups by intelligently utilizing selective placement procedures and stressing capabilities rather than disabilities, we would be well on the way to solving the employment problem of the seriously impaired today.

VII. Concluding Remarks

A GREAT DEAL has been written regarding the advantages to industry of a policy of carefully matching workers to jobs. Earl Bunting, managing director of the National Association of Manufacturers, for example, has stated that "any company which pursues a policy of fitting people to jobs will automatically make it pay off in cash." By instituting a selective placement program, in two years the company of which he had been president reduced a relatively high accident frequency to one continuous period of 275,000 direct labor hours without a lost-time accident. As a result, the company obtained a reduction of \$17,000 in its compensation rate.

Although in most instances the returns to employers cannot be measured in such concrete terms, it is clear that definite benefits are realized when seriously impaired workers are properly placed. The experience of employers has demonstrated that their job performance records compare favorably with those of the slightly impaired in respect to production, accident rates, turnover, and absenteeism. In addition, the presence of employees with obvious serious impairments tends to be an incentive to higher morale on the part of the slightly impaired. But even more important is the fact that the employer wins the loyalty of an employee who is appreciative of the opportunity to demonstrate his abilities.

Society, similarly, gains from rehabilitation of the seriously impaired worker. He is no longer a financial burden to the community; the social benefits can be measured in dollars and cents. No longer need the social worker knock at his door.

It is often difficult, and sometimes impossible, for a person who is not seriously impaired to understand the feeling of insecurity of a seriously impaired individual when he is searching for a job. If he is fortunate enough to start the long and tedious road of rehabilitation, his outlook slowly changes from one of despair to hopefulness. Gradually he begins to feel secure in the knowledge that he has acquired new skills and is prepared to shoulder his share of responsibility. But if he is turned away from one job after another, not because he cannot meet the job requirements but due solely to prejudice and ignorance, his goals of security and independence swiftly fade. The hopes and ambitions that he once may have had turn to despair.

The great majority of the seriously impaired are not looking for charity or for handouts. All they ask is an opportunity to demonstrate what they can do when they are properly placed. They deserve the same right to live a normal life and to support themselves as do their fellow human beings.

VIII. Suggestions for Further Reading

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