

PART II: IMPACT ON DISPLACED WORKERS

To cushion the impact on the workers of closing defense installations, the Department of Defense has guaranteed a job offer to each permanent civil service employee who is displaced. The offer, however, would not necessarily be in the same community or even at the same rate of pay. While not eliminating the psychological problems arising from the need to transfer job and sometimes home surroundings, these workers at least have the security of knowing that other jobs are available for them. This opportunity to transfer is of course totally different from the threat of unemployment which may face workers displaced by the closing of a private manufacturing facility. The transfer system has thus benefited the displaced workers who have on the whole shown a marked preference for continuing in government employment even if moving is necessary. It has also benefited the Department of Defense by providing a pool of skilled workers for installations with expanding needs under the pressures of the Vietnam buildup.

COMPUTERIZED TRANSFER SYSTEM

On November 20, 1964, Secretary of Defense McNamara announced that each permanent civil service worker displaced by a defense installation closing would be entitled to the offer of one job within the Department. At that time, he imposed a temporary freeze on hiring new blue collar workers within the Department but this general freeze was soon replaced by a relatively sophisticated system of selective freezes. These provided that all suitable openings be made available to displaced workers without restricting hiring of other personnel for jobs which displaced workers could not or would not fill.

An integral part of this nationwide clearinghouse system is the computerized location of job openings. Every 2 weeks the computer prepares a "stopper sheet" for any installation in which a displaced worker has indicated interest. The installation is then required to review displaced candidates with appropriate skills before being free to promote from within the base or hire in the local labor market.

For the worker, participation in the centralized referral system is purely voluntary. If, however, he chooses not to participate or unduly limits the locations to which he would move, he sacrifices his guarantee of a job offer. Still, every effort is made to find an opening that meets his desires.

Each worker receives job counseling designed to explain the alternatives and to aid him in making the best use of the transfer system if he decides to participate. The counseling provides a description of installations with skill needs where suitable openings will probably occur. Once a worker designates a location as satisfactory, he is expected under normal circumstances to accept an appropriate job there. If the worker refuses one offer—all he is guaranteed—he is given a lower priority rating and the hiring installation is allowed to fill the vacancy by promoting from within. If the worker refuses a second offer, his name is dropped from the clearinghouse system.

Although this method may seem harsh, hiring at installations where workers are needed cannot be delayed indefinitely. In fact, displaced workers have refused 36 percent of the jobs offered and thus many have