

Nathan arrived at Arrowood from Virginia he was regarded as "flighty and unstable." But not anymore. Bob Sloan, the editor of the *Press* has taken some flak for his consistent support of the Job Corps. He is one of many unsung heroes in this regard.

I talked to Richard Kruger, white, of Garrison, North Dakota, at Standing Indian Campground where he was laying pipe. He wanted to get into the Army and was rejected. Physically he was O.K. but he couldn't read. He felt bad "They told me to go into the back room and be a man," he told me. "And here I am." He is still aiming for an Army career and intends to get it.

Harold Hughes, white, of California, has been in North Carolina 19 months. "I intend to stay here," he told me. "I like the country and the people. I aim to be the best plumber in western North Carolina." He was working on a campground lavatory the day I talked to him.

They have desire. But it has to be kindled and nourished. One boy told us he hopes to graduate to another Camp near a big city in New Jersey. Their machinist training and equipment are more sophisticated than in North Carolina, he said. Rangers admitted that specialized vocational training is better at some of the big city camps than in the forest-oriented camps. They quickly add that Conservation Centers teach better work habits and better social adjustment. At the same time I couldn't help thinking our forests are serving one of their highest uses as their subtle influences help to remold some of these boys. And as Honeycup, Murphy and Wills told us, "You don't get to fight forest fires in no big city, man!"

Wherever possible, effort is made to have the boys' school schedules dovetail with their work schedules. National Forests are big farms in many ways and practically all kinds of work has to be done. The boys take well to their conservation assignments. All told, a total of 7,120 acres of trees have been planted. They are carrying on range improvement, fence construction, improvement of fish and game habitat, construction of fire breaks, streambank stabilization and watershed restoration. There is more than enough to be done on the National Forests for many years to come, the rangers say. When job crews encounter old C.C.C. camp construction or tree planting projects the rangers make sure the boys are told that story.

Hamre told me the Forest Service is "well pleased with the community relations climate at the majority of Job Corps Centers." A visitor comes to the conclusion that people of western North Carolina deserve a lot of credit. True, they occasionally gripe about the ratio of white and negro boys at the camps. They had been told the ratio would be the same as in their own communities, or about 70 percent white and 30 percent negro. The opposite has proven true. Negro boys seem to thrive in the camps in the main. Fewer white boys from the poverty pockets in rural areas come and those who do are often the first to leave.

At the same time, the gripping impresses one as more academic than real. The truth is the North Carolina people work well with the boys and encourage them. One can't escape the conclusion they really understand negroes better than northerners. Their fairness impresses a person. "Sure, there have been some fusses" one Asheville citizen told me. "But at least one of them was started by our own Asheville boys." Another Asheville citizen volunteered the information that the boys had cleaned up three decrepit cemeteries on their own time.

No one would deny the Job Corps costs money. Our professionals have failed with some of the boys. They have succeeded with more. In the main, the boys look up to the rangers and they like the woods. It boils down to the question—what is a boy worth? Most members of The American Forestry Association would say he is worth a lot and deserves his chance. On a dollar and cents basis it probably costs society less to train boys in a Job Corps camp than risk having them run wild in their ghettos. While Job Corps camps cost plenty, crime costs even more. Then too, there's the other side of it. Week after week in our church pews we are all told that Christians should help the unfortunate and particularly unfortunate negroes. We are told we should tear down the Iron Curtains that separate our suburbs and the cities proper and really practice what we profess to believe. From the standpoint of society, the Job Corps approach and similar approaches are probably the most economical approaches viewed on the long term. We *know* it is the *right* approach as viewed from the pulpit and in terms of "Am I My Brother's Keeper?"

All Americans of course, reserve the right to criticize. They reserve the right to ask questions that deserve sober answers. Most Americans also like to see youth programs succeed and in their hearts they know the Job Corps is one of the best things the Administration has done. The Job Corps *is* succeeding, on a