

2758 ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ACT AMENDMENTS OF 1967

young people enrolled in public secondary schools in Ohio were taking a college-preparatory program.

The statistics further showed that 3.1 percent were enrolled in trade and industrial courses, 2.1 percent in vocational agriculture, 12.5 percent in office occupations, and only 1.3 percent in retail sales training.

But Ohio's needs were then and now quite different from what its educationists were providing. The requirements:

Craftsmen and technicians—42.2 percent. Farm agriculturists—3.7 percent. Off-farm agriculturists—5.3 percent. Clerical workers—14.4 percent. Retail sales personnel—14.7 percent.

PARENTS, STUDENTS SURVEYED

A 1964 survey of students and parents throughout this Midwestern state disclosed that 75 percent wanted vocational-technical training at the high-school level, 21 percent desired a totally academic or pre-college program, and 4 percent were undecided.

Yet in Ohio, as in the rest of the United States, the schools have been concentrating excessively on academics. The federal Office of Education estimates that less than 20 percent of all the teachers, texts, and equipment in American schools is vocationally oriented. Estimates also place most of the vocational equipment and course offerings in the outmoded or obsolete category.

While the employment need is for skilled craftsmen and technicians, the high schools have been counseling more than 80 percent of all students to take pre-college programs, although they have been able to place only one out of every six graduates in college.

The other five? They enter the world of work with no marketable skill, a poor estimate of the grandeur and nobility of manual labor, and an even poorer estimate of themselves.

QUESTION PUT BLUNTLY

A New Mexico vocational educator of Spanish descent put it this way:

"What kind of a job can a boy get here in northern New Mexico with a high-school major in history?"

A check of the "help wanted" section of any city newspaper today discloses a persistent need for automobile mechanics, plumbers, electricians, pipe fitters, laboratory technicians, toolmakers, maintenance men, appliance repairmen, clerk typists, secretaries, hairdressers, and key punch operators.

The United States has approximately 74 million working people. More than half of these should be skilled craftsmen, but the Bureau of Labor estimates that only 13 percent can be so classified.

PROGRESS SHOWING

Fortunately, things are stirring today in vocational education. A recent trip across the United States and into Canada provided encouraging evidence of progress. As I visited vocational and technical schools, witnessed programs in action, talked with educators, and read reports, I became increasingly impressed with the innovations now taking place.

Much remains to be done. But more and more school officials and systems have been responding realistically to the need to do it. In this sense, the state of vocational education has never been healthier.

Federal money has been a boon. So have better relationships among labor unions, management, and vocational educators.

Advisers from business and industry have spent countless hours helping schools upgrade their programs. Thousands of dollars in equipment have been donated to schools. Men and women from industry have given up high-paying jobs to teach high-school students a trade.

In Las Vegas, Nev., the new vocational-technical center has wall-to-wall carpeting, the latest in equipment, and a very fine esprit de corps.

In Allentown, Pa., every shop has a typewriter and all the boys learn to type out their reports.

In Ohio's Penta-County area vocational school, one-way mirrors permit viewing of the nursery school prior to actual work with the children.

In Northern New Mexico State Vocational School, the boys learning carpentry build complete houses and learn to be the Jacks-of-all-trades they will need to be in that rural area.