

2760 ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ACT AMENDMENTS OF 1967

The other half is composed of boys who want to terminate their education after completing grade 12, and who want to move immediately into a semiskilled job or an apprentice program with one of Portland's many unions. These boys may even be a little below average in their reading scores but must show some aptitude, too, in both math and science.

DISCIPLINE PAYS OFF

Contrary to much public opinion, a boy does not need to have a college degree to get a good job in business. Industry is looking hard for the boys who have learned to discipline themselves, who can follow orders, are eager to learn new skills, and want to lead satisfactory work lives.

Thousands of boys across the United States, quite uninspired by academic pursuits, are not given a vocational education relevant to their desires and present abilities. This puts them on the streets of large cities and causes sociologists to label them "social dynamite."

Portland's vocational-school program is designed to avert this problem.

Young Oregonians consider it an honor, then, and not a disgrace, to graduate from Benson. I witnessed this sense of pride when I registered at my downtown hotel. The young desk clerk asked:

"What's The Christian Science Monitor doing way out here in Portland?"

"Visiting the Benson Polytechnic High School," I answered.

He looked startled for just a moment then recovered himself saying, "Well, I graduated from Benson and I'm mighty proud of it."

MORE THAN 100 BOYS TURNED DOWN

Last September more than 100 boys were refused admission because there was no more room in this free, selective, public high school for grades 9 to 12. Almost half of the boys have part-time work during weekends and vacations related to the vocational and technical work they are doing in school.

And many of the college-bound enter universities, institutes of technology, and four-year colleges with advanced standing due to the superior work they have done in math and science at Benson. Benson is a no-nonsense school. As Aki Nishimura, vice-principal explained: "I guess you might call us old-fashioned here. We don't allow the boys to wear outlandish hair or clothes, and we keep a pretty tight rein on the activities."

The prescribed courses of study reflect this attitude, too. Every freshman must spend two of the eight periods each day in shop work. For 12 weeks these ninth graders learn practical machine technology, for 12 weeks they concentrate on industrial and communication electronics, and the internal-combustion engine takes up 12 more weeks.

TEACHERS AID SELECTION

Essentially the freshman work is orientation. But it is also an opportunity for the shop men to get to know the boys. For these shop teachers, in conjunction with the guidance counselors, will help these freshmen when they become sophomores decide just what their major course of study will be.

A student may flunk out of Benson, at which point he is reassigned to another one of Portland's high schools. For those who make it to the sophomore year, the difference between the courses for the vocation and college bound begins to widen. For example, all sophomores take a course in drawing. The technical students devote only 43 minutes a day to this essential skill; the vocational students 86 minutes.

The precollege students, even though their later work is not going to call on them to use shop tools, nevertheless are taught the basics in such skills as pattern-making, plumbing, carpentry, and welding. The same shop teachers who guide the college bound, also work closely with the job bound to make employable craftsmen of them upon graduation from Benson.

MARKET NEEDS KNOWN

The shop teachers are expected to know the local employment market so well that boys will be sure of placement prior to graduation. Benson's record, for many years, has been 100 percent. All the boys are either in college, in the armed services, or employed full time.

For vocational students, placement in a job is as important as placement in a college to a technical student. Since Benson's shop teachers also are guidance counselors for their students, job placement is on a person-to-person basis.