

It won't surprise you that we have had problems as we have sought to help these so-called unemployable youngsters adjust to our work environment. For example, we encountered difficulties in instilling in these employees an appreciation for the importance of punctuality and attendance, for many of these youngsters came from homes in which there were no established routines, often no one to see that they left mornings on time or at all. In some cases they were actually being criticized at home and by their friends for attempting to hold down a regular job. In some instances we faced the problem of poor attitudes, "chips-on-the-shoulder," and in most instances our usual performance standards were not met on the normal time schedules with normal training routines.

But, thanks to a specially selected group of sensitive and understanding supervisors, by 1962 and 1963 we began to appreciate and combat the pressures these youngsters were encountering. We decided special counseling help was necessary for many of the youngsters, and we were able to secure the services of a young man on work-leave from the Union Theological Seminary, who gave support and guidance to them. Between 1962 and 1965 we used three such counselors for a year each, all from Union.

But, along with the problems we encountered we also had our successes. By late 1956, we still had 18 of a total of 82 dropouts with us. In view of some of the difficulties they encountered, this turnover rate of about 77% does not compare unfavorably with the turnover rate we have generally averaged over recent years with the rest of our younger employee population.

Several of our former unemployables have advanced to second and third level jobs and have assumed supervisory responsibility for younger, newer employees. It is our hope that with increased experience and training, some will move to technical or supervisory level jobs. We are also encouraged by the fact that several returned to evening school in an effort to retrace their steps and pick up the high school diploma they had missed.

In late 1966, contrary to our earlier thinking but building upon our experience, we decided to include a requirement for supplemental education aimed at preparing a group of newly hired dropouts, through formal classroom preparation, for their high school equivalency diplomas. It was our plan to select 20 young men from a larger number who were to be screened and referred to us by J.O.I.N. (Job Orientation in Neighborhoods), an agency of the City of New York which works primarily with dropouts. At the same time we entered into an agreement with the Board for Fundamental Education, a non-profit organization chartered by Congress to provide education and training for the disadvantaged, which called for them to provide a curriculum, instructors, and materials to prepare this group, through formal classroom instruction, to pass the New York State Equivalency Tests. We understand that we are the first employer in American industry to offer this opportunity.

On October 13, 1966 we had 20 young men scheduled to begin work on regular, full-time jobs with the understanding that they would be attending class on their own time for two hours each night, four nights a week, for about one year. It was surprising to us, and here perhaps there is a lesson to be learned, that in spite of three screenings—by J.O.I.N., to determine the extent of their interest in getting their equivalency diplomas, as well as general suitability for the work which the Equitable had to offer, by the Board for Fundamental Education, to again gauge their level of motivation and importantly to determine the extent of their verbal and arithmetic skills so that the curriculum could be tailored to the group, and by the equitable for the standard pre-employment interview,—three of the 20 young men did not appear on their first day of employment. We later determined that one young man received his induction notice and chose not to report, one decided he needed a job which paid more money (the group was starting at \$58 per week), and one literally disappeared and we were unable, after repeated tries, to locate him. We continued to interview and screen applicants in the weeks to follow, had two early terminations, and 30 days after the original group began we closed the program to new entrants with 17 young men at work and attending class.

We are encouraged by the fact that the course of study these young men are pursuing will be completed in three-quarters of the time we expected, or about eight to nine months rather than one year.

The method used by the Board for Fundamental Education is geared toward having those in a class who pick up a subject first share their grasp of it with their classmates. The fact that the course will be completed ahead of schedule is attributed by the B.F.E. instructors to this sharing and a general climate of cooperative learning that existed. In addition, we have already had one young