

How Men Are Hired

WORKERS WANTED: *A Study of Employers' Hiring Policies, Preferences, and Practices.* By E. William Noland and E. Wight Bakke. New York: Harper & Bros. 233 pp. \$3.

JOB HORIZONS: *A Study of Job Satisfaction and Labor Mobility.* By Lloyd G. Reynolds and Joseph Shister. The same. 102 pp. \$2.25.

Reviewed by HERBERT R. NORTHRUP

THESE two books represent the first fruits of the investigations of how men are employed which is currently being made by the Labor and Management Center of Yale University. Noland and Bakke studied employers' hiring policies, preferences, and practices in New Haven, Connecticut, and Charlotte, N. C. Reynolds and Shister examined the "labor market of a medium-sized New England manufacturing center" in order to discover "the patterns of labor mobility, the wage structure of the area, the relations between mobility and wage structure, and the attitudes and practices of workers and employers which account for the observed results." Both studies are based upon extensive interviews with employers, workers, and union officials.

Noting that in twentieth-century America four out of five persons are employees, and therefore these four can only find employment if the fifth person "considers he can use their contributions to his own advantage," Noland and Bakke attempted to discover what this fifth person—the employer—wants in an employee. In general, their findings are neither startling nor encouraging. As a rule, employers want competent, steady, intelligent, alert, honest, imaginative, energetic, and self-reliant workers. Unfortunately, they are very likely to believe that the attitudes are most likely possessed by white, Christian Americans who attend church. Noland and Bakke found many variations, of course, and this summary does not do justice to the opinions of many employers. The study makes quite clear, however, that irrelevant characteristics figure strongly in employer selection of manpower.

Noland and Bakke are most interesting when they analyze the motivations of employers. Among other factors, they note that employers strive to reduce the risks of business. This involves doing as little as possible to upset the *status quo* in the shop if things are running smoothly. And one way to keep things running smoothly, employers believe, is to

maintain a homogenous work force according to custom. If, for example, Negroes are employed, custom decrees that they shall be utilized in unskilled jobs where they are not considered a threat, and hence will not be upsetting, to the white workers.

Another reason why employers fear to alter the status quo is that socially they are members of a group which includes other employers who might disapprove of variation from the accepted pattern. Fear of such disapproval by social companions is always a strong factor in presenting "odd" behavior.

Of course, in the long run, the decision to employ "like" people may yield the opposite of the peace and calm desired by employers. By refusing "unlike" persons the opportunity to demonstrate their capacities, employers can destroy the community solidarity which they deem essential to conduct their business. Such hiring policies also invite the government to step in and to reduce employer prerogatives. Four states, for example, have already established fair employment practice commissions. Present employer policies will probably encourage this trend.

Looking at the employment problem from the workers' side, Reynolds and Shister reveal the facts behind the quest of a job. The average worker obtains his first job more or less by accident. Usually, it is a blind-alley occupation from which he presently escapes. Generally, he quits one job which is unsatisfactory before he takes another. When unemployed, he accepts the first satisfactory job, not the best

available, mainly because he has no way of canvassing all prospects. And he depends much more on word of mouth and information from his union than on either public or private employment agencies.

When a worker is employed, he ranks working conditions (seniority, pleasantness of the job, agreeableness of supervision) as extremely important job attributes. Union members tend to regard union membership as a real asset.

When the worker is unemployed, however, he is likely to judge a new job almost solely on the basis of the wage rate. And that makes sense. For anyone who has ever worked in a plant knows that it is impossible to judge working conditions from the outside looking in. You have to be there to know how conditions really are.

Workers make one possible exception to this rule. Union men generally try to seek work in unionized shops, believing that the union will tend to insure reasonable conditions. Even here, however, variation in working conditions is expected to some extent, and the wage is usually given prime consideration.

The Yale Labor and Management Center terms these books "preliminary reports." In many ways they are much more, for they are aiding the development of a realistic theory of how men seek and find jobs. In so doing, they help to explain to layman and social scientist alike what the motivations are which guide the employer and the worker.

Herbert R. Northrup teaches industrial relations at Columbia University's New York School of Social Work.

Death of the Old Man

By Joseph Joel Keith

PEACE has settled like a warm cat in the lap.
The old man's gone and there is no complaint,
no old fist pounded, no loud voice shouting doom
making a battlefield of the peaceful room.
Now every sound is a sound of mute and saint.

Peace is lilacs; and the old pipe's fading smoke.
The old man's gone; no papers mar the floor.
I sit with friends, and the quiet hour is spent,
soft as a zither, without bass argument
by one gone now, too long the visitor.

Peace is waking in the silent house; no voice
shouts high alarm at seven; morning's old
when youth walks slowly down the quiet stair,
and no one shouts hello and no one's there;
then even summer's youthful blood runs cold.

IT'S THE ENGLISH IN US

(Continued from page 8)

Woodrow Wilson in 1914 sincerely believed that neutrality, not only in deed, but in word and thought, was the right course for the United States to pursue. There is abundant evidence that he made desperate efforts to pursue it. He was not English; he was of a Scottish family that had lived for generations in Ireland. He was not an enthusiast, but an historian, trained in critical examination of evidence. He was not a traditionalist; on the contrary, ever since he attacked the eating clubs at Princeton, before he entered politics, he had been known as a great iconoclast. So when the First World War broke, for a time he could hold aloof, but that was the utmost of which he was capable. It was as impossible for him to accept the German concept of the all-inclusive state as it was for him to change the color of his eyes. All the weight of English tradition was against it, and in the end it thrust him, as well as the great mass of his fellow-citizens, into the English side of the fight.

PRESIDENT of the United States or patrolman pounding a beat, all Americans are under the pressure of that tradition and are shaped and moulded by it. Americans of the first generation are probably more acutely conscious of it than those of the tenth; but they are all moved by it. Some rejoice in it and some, as far as their rational processes go, resist it; but it exists and there is no understanding America without taking it into account. Nor should anyone think he has taken account of it when he attributes it to some slight and transitory cause—bribery or threats or snobbery or deceit.

It is a curious fact that some of the people who have most completely misunderstood the nature of this influence have been visiting Englishmen. They make the mistake of assuming that the force whose existence they recognize has its source in the organized state named England, which is the capital and nerve-center of the British Empire; and when they discover that American enthusiasm for that state is, in fact, quite languid, they are puzzled and sometimes exasperated. In the other direction, German observers, including diplomatic agents, observing this lack of enthusiasm for the government of the Crown, have twice mistaken it for a deep anti-English feeling, and twice the mistake has led to the ruin of Germany.

The England that still holds a

powerful grip upon the thoughts and acts of the American people, including those of non-English origin, is nothing definable in materialistic terms. It is a story, partly history, partly legend, largely poetry and drama. It is the struggle of a thousand years through which the common Englishman was transformed from the crook-backed serf who was sold with the land into the labor leader who stands before the King as his Prime Minister and whose will the King cannot gainsay.

The never-ending struggle has always and everywhere the same objective. It is simply to place the common man in a position where he may call his soul his own. But while the struggle is the same, it has been carried on against opponents of various types at various times and in various places. Autocrats, theocrats, aristocrats, plutocrats have fought it and demagogues have betrayed it, so the story is never exactly the same in any two nations.

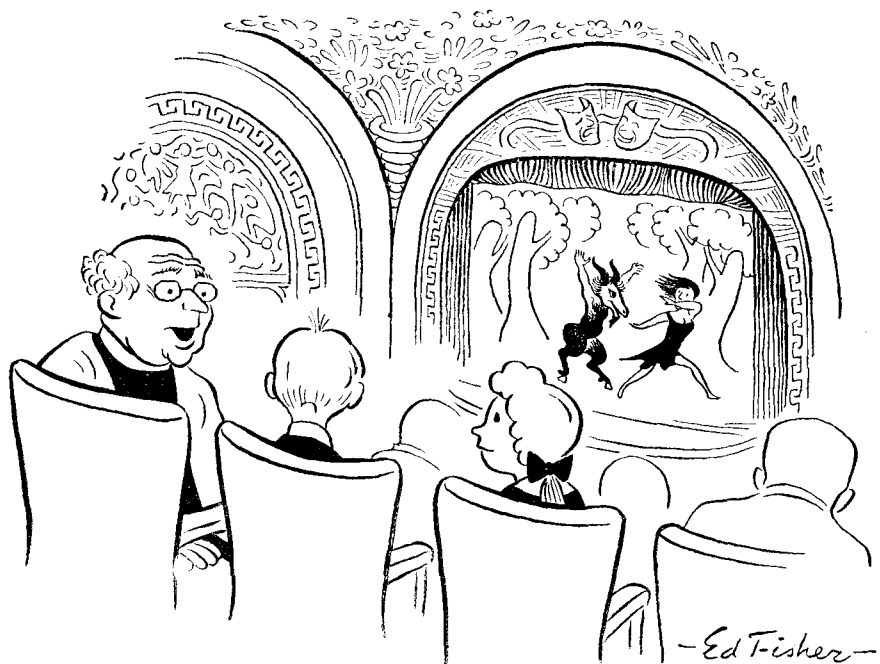
One of the conspicuous characteristics of the English version is gradualism. In England there have been no such sudden surges forward as were represented by the French and Russian revolutions, not any such backward thrust as the Thirty Years' War in Germany, or the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in France. The English story is bloody enough, but the blood has usually been shed drop by drop, rather than in torrents. As a rule English martyrs to liberty met

death singly. As a rule, liberty advanced in England step by step and not in leaps and bounds.

This gradualism is so conspicuously a part of the American story that, although we have been under democratic rule continuously for a longer period than any other great nation, we are at this moment politically the most conservative of the great nations. We have outdone the English themselves in the matter of proceeding with caution.

PERHAPS because the enlargement of English liberty proceeded for a thousand years so slowly that the effect of one step could be measured before the next was taken, it has developed in the nation a strong belief in fair play. In politics fair play is justifiable only on the theory that the opposition may be partly right. That idea is utterly rejected by partisan campaigners, as the assailants of every strong President abundantly prove, but it has never been abandoned by the mass of the voters, who have always taken fervid partisans somewhat humorously.

It must never be forgotten that what is now the United States remained part of the realm of the English King through the 170 critical years that saw the transition of the monarchy from Tudor to Hanover. These years included the English Civil War with all the tremendous emphasis it laid upon the dignity of the individual. They included a vast amount of experimentation and cogitation in government; and they included also the discovery, in the course of this experimentation, that no political reform is ever exactly



"The meaning of the ballet is—ah—vague at this point."