

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.

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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.

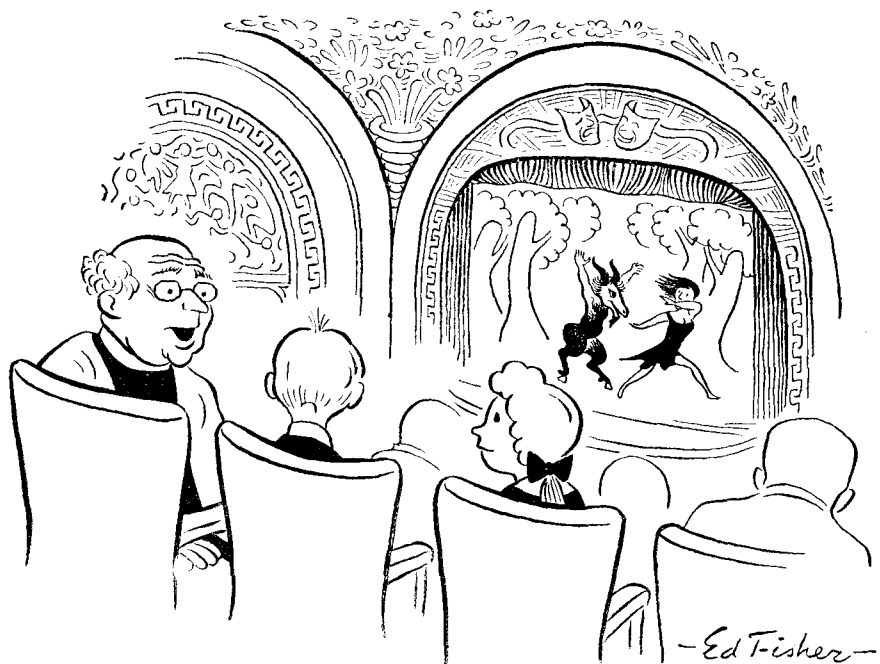
One of the conspicuous characteristics of the English version is gradualism. In England there have been no such sudden surges forward as were represented by the French and Russian revolutions, not any such backward thrust as the Thirty Years' War in Germany, or the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 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."

right. Reformers, being human, invariably either overshoot or undershoot the mark, which means that the initial success must always be followed by precise adjustments to correct errors.

This knowledge was not passed on to the Americans. It was acquired by them along with the English when they were still a part of the English political system. But it is part of the influence that the English have exerted upon American life. Upon it is based the American principle that the ballot as a political instrument is always preferable to the bullet, because your opponent of today may be a useful supporter tomorrow, if he is alive, but can be of no possible further use once he is dead.

THE American valuation of the capable man also has in it more of English tradition than we sometimes think. We like to believe, and Frederick Jackson Turner and his followers have strengthened the belief, that the frontier, not the English, taught us that skill and energy yield precedence only to honesty among the human qualities that command respect; and we have not always given first place even to honesty.

But the idea had begun to permeate English society as far back as the reign of Elizabeth. The seaman Francis Drake was knighted by a Queen who coolly ignored the scions of many noble houses. He had skill and energy, so he became Sir Francis while barons' sons went untitled.

With such an idea in their heads the English settlers could find a certain reasonableness in the granite law of the frontier that crushed all but the able in body and mind; and finding it not without reason could adapt themselves to it with better grace than men trained in the belief that there was a certain divinity in blue blood for which ability was no equivalent. From this it was a short step to the theory that a combination of brains and character constitutes the only genuine superiority, which theory is the foundation of democracy.

Finally, "a nation of shopkeepers" unquestionably had something to do with implanting in us the belief that the producer and trader is the true conquistador. This inheritance has its sordid side, as no candid man can deny. We have never been able to make a clear distinction between the commercial instinct and the acquisitive instinct, so we have failed many times to differentiate the man who makes money from the man who grabs money. The result is that over and over again we have followed the leadership of Gadarene swine who repeatedly—as in 1873 and in 1893 and in 1929—"ran violently down a

steep place into the sea . . . and were choked."

But civilization has made a step forward in any community when it makes up its collective mind that the way to deal with an intruding stranger is to cheat him and not to shoot him. Civilization has made not a step but a long stride forward when it is decided to make a fair deal with the stranger. A fair deal presupposes a profit at both ends; and while it is true of late years that there are extremists who equate "profit motive" with all evil, it is nevertheless much preferable to the homicidal motive. The English taught us to exalt the trader, and while it is a teaching not without flaws it has unquestionably tended to soften manners and restrain manslaughter. Incidentally, it has built up an economic power that is now the most formidable in existence.

Locke's empiricism, Hobbs's materialism, and Spencer's eclecticism are elements of English philosophy that have agitated American schools and still furnish matter for gentle and joyous debate among the learned doctors. But most of the people never heard of any of them, and if they heard would promptly forget. The English philosophy that still sways the thoughts and acts of the millions who never saw the inside of a college is none of these. It is English faith in gradualism linked with compromise, English faith in ability as at least equal to heredity, and English faith in commerce as a better instrument of conquest than war.

The pattern that the English set is not perfect. In many ways it has proved to be so imperfect that it had to be abandoned and a new pattern

devised. Many English ideas have given way to ideas brought from some other country because the non-English idea was superior.

England probably never sent more than four or five millions of her people to this country; other countries have sent more than thirty millions; yet the English pattern survives. It is true that the English, coming first, multiplied so prodigiously that the millions pouring in later could not overwhelm them. Nevertheless, the impact of thirty million aliens is a terrific test of any culture. The English pattern had to be good, very good, to survive that test. It is hard to think of any other except the Chinese that has stood up under an equivalent strain, and the eventual triumph of Chinese culture was very much slower. The English pattern in America has not been subverted even temporarily. Many times its end has been announced, but the announcement has always been premature.

It is possible that it is nearing its end now. It is being assailed with tremendous vigor by what is probably the oldest concept of government in existence. This is what we are in the habit of calling the Fascist-Communist concept, or totalitarianism. But only the name is new; totalitarianism is simply despotism "writ large." The despot may claim his authority by the grace of God, or by the grace of "the leadership principle," or by the grace of the proletariat, but he is a despot still. He has had more names than Proteus had shapes, but only one nature. As Nero he was not essentially different from Genghis, as Caligula he was basically Hitler, and as Attila, as Abdul, as Bonaparte, as

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

| Title and Author | Crime, Place, and Sleuth | Summing Up | Verdict |
|--|---|--|----------------------|
| THE LEATHER DUKE Frank Gruber (Rinehart: \$2.50) | Book salesman Fletcher and Cragg, broke as usual, hitch stars to Chicago leather factory, find embarrased corpse—and fun begins. | Close to, if not best, Fletcher-Cragg story to date. Hair-triggered action by hare-brained duo keeps things moving presto. | Extra good tough 'un |
| WHERE THE SNOW WAS RED Hugh Pentecost (Dodd, Mead: \$2.50) | Vermont village murders of returning war hero and local lush unobtrusively solved by small, gray, visiting psychiatrist John Smith. | Background, characters, crimes, suspense, sleuth, and build-up entirely satisfactory. Pay-off, while no let-down, may irritate tender sensibilities. | Above average |
| ROGUES COAT Theodora Du Bois (Crime Club: \$2.25) | Florida Keys scene of much violent action involving valuable shells, torrent of gems, tough characters, and anomalous hero. | Swiftly-paced thriller with hard-bitten cast of bad actors whose activities are curbed, and gal won, by doughty Czech protagonist. | Exciting |