

# Helping Displaced Workers Prepare For New Jobs

**William H. Metzler**

In 1950, Arizona cotton growers used approximately 40,000 hand pickers at the peak of the cotton harvest. In the fall of 1963, they needed only a small fraction of that number. In a few years, they will need no hand workers, either for the harvest or for spring chopping and weeding.

Many of the hand pickers are, or should be, shifting to other productive employment. This is only part of the shift that is needed. Mechanization is also reducing the need for workers in alfalfa, potatoes, lettuce, carrots, and other Arizona crops. Marginal farm operators are also among the displaced farm people. There were 10,412 farms in the state in 1949 and only 7,229 in 1959.

It has been traditional among our people to provide new opportunities for citizens who have lost their foothold in the economy. Some of us are in America because our ancestors were offered free passage and free land. Some of us are in the West because of generous offers of land on the frontier.

The results of such offers have exceeded all expectations. When the supply of good farmland was eventually exhausted, our ex-soldiers, following World War II, were offered special vocational and professional training. This was in line with the new area of opportunity.

## **Aiding Displaced Workers**

Today, displaced farmers and farmworkers move to the cities only to find they must compete with other types of displaced workers, whose

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skills are increasingly less in demand. They also must compete against youth who are attempting to enter the economy. Displacement comes about through natural causes, but gaining a new foothold now calls for informal and expensive effort.

Belatedly, we are beginning to do something about this situation. The Manpower Development and Training Act, enacted by the Congress in 1962, provided for additional programs to train workers in new skills. Thousands are enrolled in courses in electronics, auto mechanics, welding, accounting, stenography, nursing, and other skills which are now in demand. While this is still a small effort when compared to the several hundred thousand workers who are displaced by mechanization or automation each year, it is a start in the right direction.

Yet, for many people, vocational training is not enough. To transfer people with simple and sometimes primitive living habits, into congested city areas, intensifies rather than solves their problems. Such people also need training in how to live successfully in an urban environment.

## **Experiment in Readjustment**

An outstanding experiment in the comprehensive adjustment of a stranded group of people was started at the request of the Navajo Indians. When they returned to their reservation after World War II they found that it was overcrowded. The Bureau of Indian Affairs was requested to give assistance to some of their people in getting a start in Denver, Los Angeles, Phoenix, or Salt Lake City.

In 1956 this program was extended to all the major reservations and to eight other cities. It was labeled the "relocation" program and was designed to assist qualified Indians in making a transition to industrial employment and urban life. Procedures under the program have been constantly revised and now can be very useful in setting up courses of action for other stranded groups.

During the early years of the program, the relocatee was merely pro-

vided with transportation to a selected city and with subsistence until he received his first pay check. That proved to be insufficient, and by 1958 the needs of the relocatee were met more fully. Transportation and subsistence allowances were made for all members of the family, and additional allowances were provided for the transportation or purchase of household goods, furniture, tools, and equipment. Relocates were also provided with medical and hospital insurance for one year.

## **Meeting Relocation Problems**

The Indians, however, have special problems which must be met. Many are not culturally prepared to make their way in urban employment. They become frustrated and confused rather than helped. Such people are screened at the reservation. Those who are accepted are met at their destination by relocation officers who steer them to friendly boarding homes away from slum areas and cheap rooming houses. During their first days they are appraised for placement or for special training. They are instructed as to how to obtain a job, and are told of suitable job openings. When training is needed, it is arranged for at established trade or business schools. Subsistence grants are continued through the training period.

Indians are encouraged to enroll in a weekly class in family budgeting. Wives are invited to participate with their husbands. Budgets are developed, based on their weekly pay checks and on their existing expenses for housing, groceries, clothes and other items. Relocates are advised to put the first six percent of each pay check in the bank. This leads them to cash their pay checks at the bank rather than elsewhere.

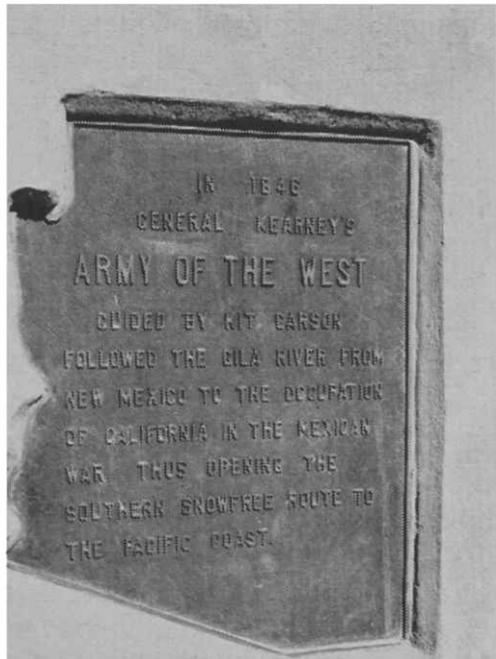
Indians are made acquainted with local churches and other organizations which would be helpful to them. Their new landlords are asked to take a personal interest in them, and to help them feel at home in their new environment.

Without these special efforts, the relocation program would simply add to the problems of in-migrants. To steer relocatees away from the common urban pitfalls is as important as to develop in them the abilities needed in our changing economy.

## **Relocation Program Pays Off**

The relocation program is an investment in people. Public expenditures  
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George P. Wene



*Rich in recent history, Arizona is dotted with historical plaques and monuments. Where is this one, and what does it signify? For the answer, turn to Page 15.*

Some larvae were feeding on the few undevoured leaves of puncture vine remaining in the field.

Most larvae, at an average density of six per square foot, were observed migrating across the dirt road, across a cement irrigation ditch, and into the cotton field. The edge of the cotton field bordering the road required insecticidal treatment over an area 25 feet wide because of the heavy beet armyworm infestation.

No beet armyworm egg masses were observed in the cotton field, which was free from careless weeds. It was apparent that the moths had laid their eggs on careless weeds in the adjacent field in preference to the cotton foliage. That careless weed is a preferred host was also demonstrated in nearby weedy cotton fields. We observed that beet armyworm eggs were first deposited on careless weeds and that oviposition on cotton began only after the careless weeds had been largely destroyed by larval feeding.

This might indicate the importance of careless weed control along ditch-banks and other uncultivated areas adjacent to cotton fields.

Although the beet armyworm is a common pest of cotton and other crops grown in the Southwest, few observations have been reported on larval migration from one host plant to another. Damaging larval infestations have usually been observed to develop from egg masses laid on the particular host crop attacked. The following observation is, therefore, believed to be of interest:

On August 30, 1963, near Florence, Ariz., beet armyworms were observed migrating in large numbers into a cotton field from a nearby uncultivated field of 40 acres containing a heavy growth of careless weed over about one-fourth of its area, particularly on one side bordering a dirt road.

The careless weed had been largely defoliated by a heavy infestation of beet armyworms and practically all larvae, second instar or larger, had dropped to the ground to migrate.

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have averaged \$154 for single individuals and \$597 for families. Yet the beginning wage for the relocatees averages \$1.75 per hour. They soon become producers, consumers and taxpayers, and add to the national wealth rather than continuing as non-producers. This investment is similar to that which is made in college youth. It is meager in proportion to the total return.

The more stable relocatees are buying homes on an installment basis. They consult with relocation officials in regard to methods of buying a home, and the size of installment payments their budgets will allow. On the other hand, a small proportion drift to the slum areas and curtail their prospects for their best development.

Some relocatees, however, are not able to make a successful adjustment. Youths with too little education and too great a cultural handicap sometimes get through the screening process and find that the changes required are too great. Day-after-day work

on a routine job is contrary to their free way of life. Some eventually fail to report for work and may return to their home area. Others have to be placed several times before they find a job with which they can stay.

More than 35,000 Indians have been relocated in the United States. A majority may have returned to their reservation at least once. They tend to relocate again, or to go out again on their own funds. Employers in cities close to the reservation find that returned relocatees are much more adaptable than those who have not been away. Those who return to their reservations tend to become leaders among these people.

### Applying It To Others

The necessity to retrain workers who no longer fit into the economy is becoming increasingly evident. If ways are not developed to bring such persons back into productive employment, they may remain on a casual labor-public welfare basis indefinitely. The necessity for basic cultural training has come to our attention even more recently. Ghettos of the

unadjusted are not new, but they are spreading rapidly in our cities, pointing up the need for positive programs of adjustment.

The American ideal is for the individual to make his own adjustments. It is necessary in order to promote individual responsibility and self-reliance. The choice of the individual, however, should be an informed and intelligent one. Responsibility, plus skill and knowledge, builds the type of person needed in our complex social and economic structure.

Unwise choices may mean a lifetime of low productivity and low purchasing power; and for the nation a slower rate of economic growth, a lower rate of economic activity, and a lower level of cultural development. If the ill-informed drop farther and farther behind and form an underprivileged class, it is because the people with social and economic know-how have not made well-designed programs available to them.