

Temp agencies see increase in business

Some workers angered by low pay and little security

By Stephanie Mencimer
Emerald Reporter

Picture in your mind a Kelly Girl: A bright, perky young woman, perhaps a college student or recent graduate who is ready to fill in for a sick secretary or vacationing data processor in a local business.

The office manager is grateful to have someone able to fill in on a moment's notice and even offers to help the Kelly Girl find a permanent job in her field. The arrangement works out well for everyone involved.

Now picture this:

In early 1988, Maurice Ray applied for a job as a meter reader at the Eugene Water and Electric Board. While Ray was waiting for an opening, the supervisor from the EWEB landscaping department needed a temporary worker and called Ray in because of his past experience with the state park service.

Ray worked in the landscape department for six months on the EWEB payroll, and the policy at EWEB is to provide insurance and vacation benefits for any employee who has worked there for six months.

But rather than pay benefits

to Ray, EWEB laid him off on paper overnight and the next morning put him on the payroll of a local Manpower Temporary Services agency.

Ray worked for another six months with the EWEB landscape crew, although technically he was employed by Manpower. At the end of six months, EWEB transferred Ray back onto its own payroll.

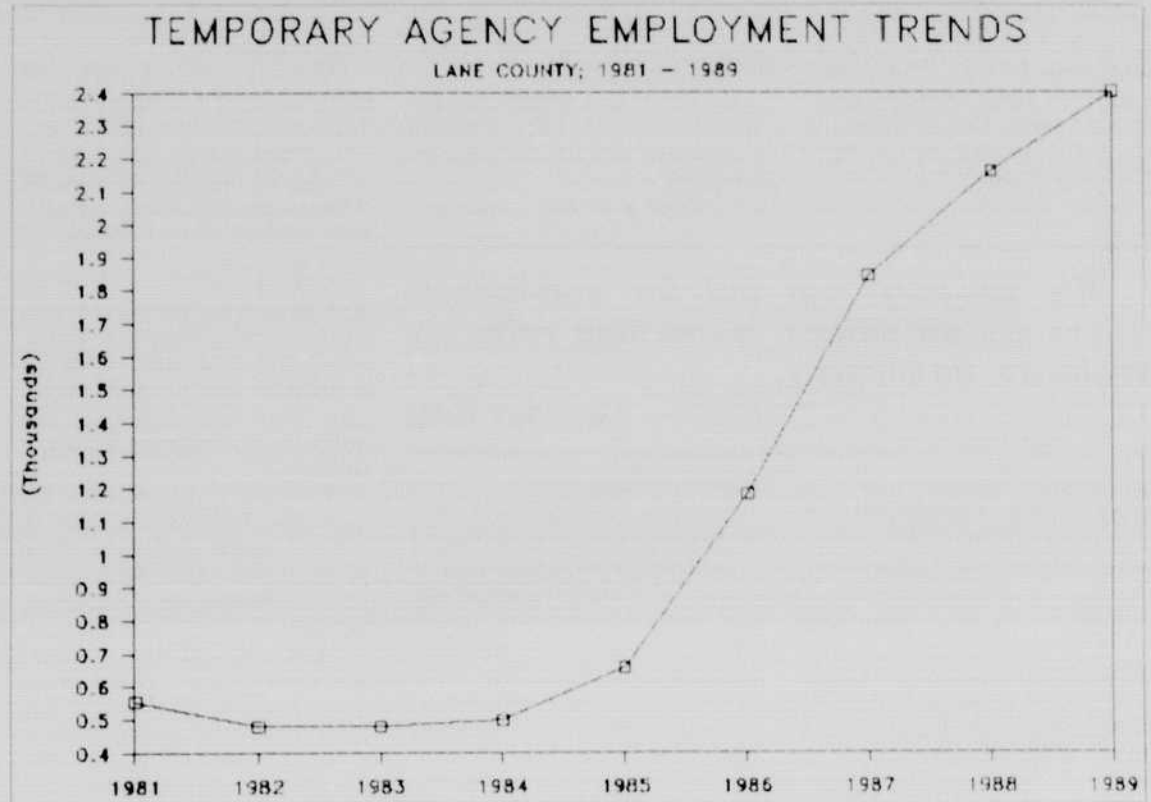
Once again, after six months, EWEB's personnel department laid off Ray and rehired him through Manpower the next day. Then after another three months and one week, making a total of 21 months, EWEB told Manpower Ray's services were no longer required and he was out of work for good.

To this day, Ray has never set foot in a Manpower office.

The temporary employment agency is not what it used to be.

Temporary employment is one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy. In Lane County alone, temporary agencies jumped from employing 553 people in 1981 to employing 2400 in 1989, with the steepest increase between 1985 and 1989.

In the month of March, three-



fifths of the total service sector growth came from temp agencies. At the same time, the average employee pay has plummeted from 1981 high of \$12,710 annually to \$9,583 in 1989, according to statistics compiled by the State of Oregon Employment Division.

Ken Rocco, the regional economist for the State of Oregon

Employment Division, said the drop in pay may be due to a change in the temporary employment business since the early '80s. He said he believes the agencies may have placed more full-time employees in the past than they do now, and the increase in part-time workers has reduced the annual average pay.

But the temporary employment agency should not be confused with an employment agency whose primary function is to find permanent jobs for people looking for work.

A temp agency works by screening and hiring people then contracting them out to

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