

AGENCIES

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employers who have a specific need. The employer pays the agency which then pays the employee. The agency frequently charges an exorbitant amount of money to employers who wish to hire a temporary employee away from the agency for a permanent position. At the Express Temporary agency, the fee is \$1,500.

Often, the temporary employ-

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— Maurice Ray

ee is payed half or one-third what a permanent employee in the same position will make, according to June Miller at the Bureau of Labor and Industry.

Miller said one man who filed a complaint with the bureau reported that he was making \$4.50 an hour working in a wood products factory as a temp while the man next to him who was a permanent employee made \$12 an hour.

Ray reported a similar situation at EWEB. Ray started out at the entry level wage at of \$6.76 an hour. After six months he had secured a step increase in his wages to just over seven dollars an hour. However, while he was getting a few cents an hour wage increase, Ray believes EWEB was paying Manpower \$14 an hour for his services, and he did not receive any benefits from either EWEB or Manpower.

But Beth Eldrige from the EWEB personnel department said although she knew temp agencies were expensive, she

said she would be surprised if EWEB was paying that much for temporary workers.

Jan Cox, office manager for Manpower in Eugene, said her agency provides payroll accounting as a customer service, and an employer such as EWEB does not pay much of a markup on the regular employee wage for those services.

However, Cox would not reveal how much of a markup Manpower charged for payroll services.

"I don't give away trade se-

crets," she said.

But it is true, Cox said, that because the agency takes less of a profit from providing such a service that Manpower can not give out any benefits as it would to its regular employees.

Ray said he never knew Manpower offered any benefits to its employees. He sees the temp agency as a loophole for employers to cut costs at the expense of employees.

"It's an easy cop out for employers," Ray said. "There are no unions, no written rules on seniority, no security."

Ray's case is not all that unusual. Enough temporary workers are employed at EWEB for long-term assignments between six months and two years that Bruce Manclark, himself a temporary worker in the EWEB conservation department, has started contracting out employees through his energy conservation company Delta-T.

Ray said Manclark realized that temp agencies were not providing much in the way of

benefits to employees so he decided to set up a program that would be more generous to the long-term temporary workers.

However, Manclark said his company is not a temp agency in the traditional sense. His primary service is providing energy auditors and inspectors to local utilities.

Manclark said utilities will ask him to put a temp on Delta-T's payroll "if they think a contract employee is going to be around for awhile" because he offers more benefits to temporary workers than most of the local agencies.

"I think EWEB wants to be able to provide security with a job when they offer it to someone," Manclark said. He added that EWEB may use temp agencies when they feel they can not provide long-term job security.

This kind of use of temporary agencies is not unique to EWEB. Rocco said some local mills in the area staff whole shifts entirely by temporary workers.

"The mill will hire a temporary crew for three months then get rid of the whole crew and bring in another one for another three months," Rocco said. Manclark confirmed this statement.

Rocco said temp agencies are

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good for employers because they provide a contingent labor pool and cut down on the employers' overhead costs by providing all the payroll services and benefits.

In the past, Rocco said the mills may have hired and

trained people for a seasonal project but now they may contract through an agency for the workers. Rocco said using a temp agency can give employers flexibility in adapting to a volatile wood products market.

However, he said the situation can definitely be exploited

sources available to people in terms of health insurance and the wage structure.

Rocco said temporary employment confounds statistics compiled about growth and productivity in the economy because mill workers employed through a temp agency are tab-

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by businesses and the temp agencies.

"The temp agency isn't doing this for the goodness of the soul," Rocco said.

Manpower is one of the few agencies in the Eugene area that offers any kind of benefits. Out of 11 agencies surveyed, only four offered health benefits, and at three of those, the employee had to pay for the full cost of the insurance. Agencies that specialize in industrial temporary employment tend to be the most likely not to provide benefits.

One employee from the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Indus-

ulated into statistics on the service rather than industrial sector. As a result, the reports on the high productivity and growth of the service industry do not accurately reflect the health of the economy.

The official from the Bureau of Labor and Industry thinks some regulation should exist for temporary employment to prevent exploitation. Rocco said the Bureau of Labor could probably set up some standards, but said as long as employers are paying above the minimum wage, they are not going to attract much attention to the problem, and the law does not require businesses to provide health insurance.

On a more positive note, Eldridge said EWEB is currently revising its policy on temporary employment to make it more equitable.

Unfortunately, this change in policy is a little too late for Maurice Ray. As a result of working for nearly two years at EWEB hoping to get a permanent position, Ray has lost the seniority he earned working seasonally for the park service where he returned after leaving EWEB.

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