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SPECIAL WASHINGTON REPORT

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM IN ACTION

By James J. Reynolds Assistant Secretary of Labor

Today, nearly one million Americans between ages 16 and 21 are out of school and unsuccessfully looking for jobs. This bleak picture reflects a youth unemployment rate more than twice as severe as the rate for older workers. While the hardest hit among our young people are Negro male high school dropouts in big city slums, the unemployment problem also affects all but the most economically secure and highly educated of our young citizens.

Because of technological changes and the decreasing demand for workers in unskilled and JAMES J. REYNOLDS

semiskilled job categories, the plight of the unskilled young workers will, if left to itself, reach near-disaster proportions by 1970. Of the 26 million young people who will be eligible for the work force during the sixties, 71/2 million will not have finished high school if present dropout rates continue. They will find fewer jobs in the years to come as the demand for greater training and skill increases.

What has brought about this vexing special problem in the midst of a dynamic economy and a society famed for its concern for its young?

The family, business and industry, the professions, labor unions, civic and religious groups school systems, public and private employment agencies, Federal, State, and local agencies are all part of this comples problem, as well as of the solution. There is no single cause and there is no single, simpla easy remedy.

Some progress has been made in trying to solve the pressing problems of youth unemployment. Many companies and unions have joined hands to help the young in getting started; a



number of youth-serving agencies, and some States and entire communities, have exerted eforts in behalf of their job-seeking youth. Teachers, school administrators, and guidance counselors are seeking to cope with the problem. The mass media are stepping up their efforts to alert our citizens to the situa-

Our Federal Government is also providing leadership where public remedial action is necessary. President Kennedy's Administration has already taken direct action and is planning even more. The Department of Labor has expanded its staff to work on youth employment problems through the U.S. Employment Service, and has initiated community demonstration projects in St. Louis and Newark to promote and facilitate youth

employment. Recent passage of the Manpower Development and Training Act supports use by youth of existing vocational training programs, methods, and facilities. Presently before Congress is the Administration's Youth Employment Opportunities Bill, which provides employment programs for youngsters in the public-service and publicwork areas, and authorizes the establishment of a Youth Conservation Corps for young males for the next three years.

Perhaps the most far-reaching example of President Kennedy's concern for our unemployed youth was his establishment last November of the President's Committee on Youth Employment. Under the Chairmanship of Secretary of Labor Goldberg, this body, consisting of 33 of the Nation's most respected business, labor, governmental, educational, and civic leaders, is focusing public attention on youth employment and recommending action programs to the President.

Americans owe it to themselves to provide employment opportunities to all of their children. Young people out of work can cause great social unrest; they are a source of delinquent gangs; they are even prey for communism and other alien

To permit our boys and girls to be wasted with the dry-rot of idleness would be inexcusable under any circumstances. All Americans will want to support the public and private measures necessary to provide each young person who wants to work the opportunity to do so.

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