

Kansas City Industry

Taps a New Labor Source

Training the Unemployed and the Underemployed for the World of Work
Is the Objective of the Training Corporation of America (TCA)

OVER 350 Kansas Citians — hitherto ignored as part of our potential labor force—are discovering a new world for them these days in the five-floor building formerly occupied by the Missouri State Employment Office at 1411 Walnut. This new world is a familiar one to most of us, so familiar as to be taken for granted, but to these — the unemployed and underemployed — the World of Work is a world that demands whole new attitudes and back-to-basic education.

The very location of this industry-supported effort is significant. Most of the 350 now enrolled with the Training Corporation of America at 1411 Walnut have visited the same building often in the past, fruitlessly, when it was the State Employment Office. For these are what are often referred to as the "hard-core" unemployed, men and women, young and old, whom even the most strenuous effort could not place on jobs, or keep on jobs. Educational deficiencies or unrealistic approach to the world of work or (in a few cases) a minor police record while young have closed the doors normally open to any able-bodied applicant. The task of dissolving this hard core, of changing attitudes, of supplying educational deficiencies is the challenging job that TCA is tackling.

How successfully it is performing its job is indicated by the fact that in less than a half year, 173 people previously considered unemployable are gainfully employed, with nearly 25% of them taking on-the-job training to develop needed skills while earning. Enrollments have increased from 177 to the maximum desired of some 350 in late January.

"Education for Living" is the key to the philosophy of TCA's employ-



LEARNING WHAT THE WORLD OF WORK expects of workers, a typical class at Training Corporation of America gets some practical pointers from instructor Charles Royston.

ment support program. Noting that the Department of Labor estimates at least 10,000 people in the Kansas City area are either unemployed or working at jobs beneath their capacity, Edward W. Scaggs, Project Director, points out that TCA's mission is twofold: to place these people in good, solid employment situations and to discover what it takes to rehabilitate a person so that he can become a productive, self-respecting member of society.

"Because of this twofold mission," Scaggs commented, "TCA is dependent on Kansas City business, industry and labor. On the other hand, TCA has something good and durable to offer the Kansas City community. Our trainees come from all over the Kansas City metropolitan area, including Olathe, Platte County and Wyandotte County. They come in all shapes, colors and

ages, but their aims are the same: they want to work, and they want a decent wage. Our aims for our trainees are the same as theirs: we want them to work and we will do all in our power to prepare them, place them, and assist them, with the cooperation of the employer, to adjust to the job.

"To serve its purpose, TCA must be known by the entire community, and even more important, must be trusted. I believe this kind of trust in us by business, industry and labor, is not too much to ask. Like them, we believe that a man should give a day's work for a day's pay, and that industry must make a profit to survive. We believe that a worker should be qualified to do the job he's placed on, and that if he does not perform that job, he should be fired. Since our beliefs are compatible, why should we not trust one another?"



ON-THE-JOB TRAINEE, once considered unemployable, proves good employee at bank job. Edward W. Scaggs, TCA Project Director, at left, discusses her progress with Charles Shewalter, Sr., Vice President, Commerce Trust.

Ed Scaggs is the kind of man to inspire confidence, a big, friendly, outgoing personality whose impact is immediate on trainees, businessmen or visitors to the Training Corporation's headquarters.

Visitors Are Welcomed

TCA welcomes visitors, even in the course of setting up classrooms, work sampling rooms and offices. Some of the staff is always ready to show people around—and it is obvious that they see beyond the temporary partitions that are being put up, the hand-made signs, the confusion and noise of construction going on around them. They can tell you that TCA is a subsidiary of Melpar, division of Westinghouse Air Brake Company, that it also operates the Excelsior Springs Job Corps Center facilities, and that both are results of the MDTA (Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962).

As Scaggs and his staff are quick to point out, theirs is not a course in training for job skills, but a mental, emotional, social conversion of the individual trainee from an employment "discard" to one who is ready and eager to work. The work sampling Laboratories are more to familiarize the trainees with the machines and equipment and procedures in various phases of the workaday world than to develop actual skill on the machines.

Introducing the World of Work

The first class began on August 15, 1967, with 177 men and women enrolled—all classified by the Missouri State Employment Office as unemployable, many through educational deficiencies. At the time, classes were held in temporary space at 1330 Grand. It was immediately obvious to Mr. Scaggs and his staff, all experienced in job placement work, that even more important than remedying poor educational backgrounds was altering the attitude toward work and its desirability. Many had lost hope, many more had unrealistic views of the kind of work they should be doing.

TCA, industry-connected and supported, felt it could devise a more workable training program for such people than a government agency might. General Motors, ITT, IBM and other labor industries are also involved in the program, for which TCA was awarded a 2.2 million dollar contract for operating the Kansas City Project by MDTA as part of the Ten Cities project of the Department of Labor.

All trainees accepted are given an orientation period of approximately ten weeks, a basic introduction to the "World of Work." Under the direction of Joseph Rucker, coordinator of the World of Work program, the trainees spend at least one hour daily in classrooms. The topics covered are significant, with every effort made by the leaders to individualize the approach and to involve the entire group in discussion and action.

Relieving the Relief Rolls

Since a large percentage of the women were on relief, or other public assistance, and many of the men, it is obvious that getting them employed is to the community's benefit as well as to their own self-respect. Some of the trainees have definite skills, but have not been able to hold jobs through faulty understanding of work requirements (punctuality, dependability, impatience with own qualifications for advancement). Most, however, have had no opportunity to develop skills, since they lacked the minimum requirements set up by many industries, such as a high school diploma.

Under Rucker's direction, the first consideration is altering the attitudes toward steady work. To most of the community, prepared from childhood for regular employment, the despair and frustration of the "hard-core" unemployed may be hard to understand. Implanting the attitude that work is a necessary good—an attainable first step upward—is the positive approach on which each individual's success in the project hinges.

Practical Basic Guidance

The World at Work classes, dedicated in every session to upgrading the trainees' self-respect and pride in even simplest abilities, works on very practical projects. Personal hygiene and good grooming are encouraged by example, as part of successful applying for a job, and keeping the job.

Typical was the class visited one day recently, where the class worked



COUNSEL MEETING, typically informal, brings together (l.-r.) Ken Neal (Employment Adjustment Counselor), Richard Nadeau (Coordinator of Counseling), Phyllis G. Tiffany (Trainer Psychologist), Ruth Calata (Nurse), and Michael J. Kellerman (Psychometrist).

with the teacher to suggest the best way to write a letter applying for a job. With fourteen trainees in attendance, the teacher skillfully guided the class to select the kind of job the greatest number might expect to qualify for, and worked out with them what the letter should contain and in what general arrangement. The active participation was notable, and the native intelligence marked.

Other classes stress what are the important things an employee is expected to do if he intends to hold a job permanently. Being on time, avoiding absenteeism, getting along with other employees and employers are basics. Trainees are also instructed in the labor market, where and how to look for jobs, the facts about labor unions, and hear speakers from both industry and labor. Occasional tours of plants are scheduled to show working conditions and requirements.

A final key factor in the introduction to the World of Work is money management, the proper use of credit when earning.

Enrollees Receive Allowance

During the training period, which may take up to 26 weeks where severe educational deficiencies must be made up, the adult enrollee is allowed \$39 a week, plus car fare, while youth enrollees receive \$20 a week. Extra allowances are paid where there are dependents. Obviously, good money management is required even before the trainee is employed.

On graduation from the Project, and placement on a job, the work of TCA is not ended. The employed TCA graduate remains under observation and maintenance on the job, for a substantial period until the complete transition is made from student to steady worker. A counselor is assigned to every trainee when he or she enrolls and maintains close contact throughout.

Dick Nadeau, coordinator of counseling, points out that every trainee has at least four hours per week of group counseling to motivate proper attitudes and a positive concept of himself. In addition, trainees are provided individual counseling on personal problems as needed. For instance, the counselors work with the Council on Alcoholism on this prevalent problem, and have regular conferences with TCA's own staff psychologist, Phyllis Tiffany, a doctorate candidate in psychology at the University of Kansas. Mrs. Tiffany's

chief concern is in-service training of all personnel to handle the daily problems of the enrollees. She also arranges for trainees with deep psychological problems to receive expert help from the agencies best fitted to handle those problems, such as the Mental Health Clinic, or Menorah Medical Center for speech and hearing therapy or psychological evaluation. She also sets up special seminars and laboratory training for the counselors, such as with the Midwest Group for Human Resources and a special program by Dr. Russell Doll of UMKC on the sociology of the disadvantaged.

Work Sampling Labs Installed



SALES JOB SAMPLING LABORATORY helps familiarize a potential salesgirl or supermarket checker with cash register and other equipment, with Joseph Rucker, Coordinator of the World of Work Program, supervising.

To familiarize trainees with the machines, tools, equipment and procedures they will find in offices or industries, six Work Sampling Laboratories are being set up:

1. SALES (Cash registers, adding machines, etc., common in supermarkets, offices, stores.)
2. ELECTRICAL ASSEMBLY (The basics only of electrical equipment and wiring.)
3. HEALTH SERVICES (Background materials for nursing, hospital or doctor's offices.)
4. APPAREL (Fabrics and machines used in garment trade.)
5. BUILDING MAINTENANCE (Equipment and tools for janitorial or building supervision work.)
6. CLERICAL (Office machines, forms and general supplies most commonly used.)

Active Job Placement

The project has its own job placement staff, in constant contact with local labor unions, businesses and industries, including two follow-up counselors who check on trainees placed when there is any problem connected with their performance on the job. It is their responsibility to see that the TCA trainee justifies the investment that is represented by his being on the job, and to iron out any difficulties that may or may not be his fault.

TCA is also qualified as a prime contractor for the Department of Labor, authorized to write sub-contracts with industry to train people on-the-job while enrolled in the program. As such, it offers special advantages:

1. Testing, medical examinations, counseling and basic education instruction.
2. Partial reimbursement of training expenses: TCA pays up to \$25 per week to the on-the-job employer for as much as 26 weeks.
3. Minimal paper work — chiefly done by TCA.
4. Immediate approval of the contract.
5. Follow-up and supportive services by the TCA staff.

The Businessman's Role

With the clearly constructive work program of TCA, it is obvious that business should be interested. Such men as Les Milgram, Charles She-walter, Jr. (Commerce Trust), Max Keith (Wilcox Electric), Phil Metzker (KCP&L), Norm Stuckey (SW Bell), Hank Williams (AT&T), John Erickson (Ford), Jim Hughes (GM) and over 200 other firms have agreed that this is either close to the solution or the actual solution.

It does, however, make the same demand on industry that it does on the worker—a change of attitude toward the ones who, for one reason or another, have been considered unemployable or employable only at certain levels.

What Ed Scaggs and industry leaders can wholeheartedly agree upon is that in backing TCA, the government is finally realizing that industry knows more about industry than government does, and local industry feels that this program can get the job done for industry.