VOCATIONAL ADOPTION

"Youth at work means peace and progress"

Incorporated 1937, Under the Laws of the State of New York
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NAIVE FAITH

It is the consensus of opinion that unemployment is our number-one problem, manifesting itself more and more in violent discontent, and seeking solutions in foreign isms. The cry is that democracy constitutes a stronghold of special privilege and must be battered down. It is particularly our youth who listen to demagogic promises of riches through revolution. The naive faith in economic dreamland is spreading with dynamic force.

To check the menace, forced idleness must be banished. There is no other cure. The only question is how to accomplish it in a manner that will relieve the distressed without distressing those giving relief. Vocational Adoption is an effort to answer this question, on a small scale as yet, but already indicating a plausible approach to a solution of the problem in its entirety.

A Practical Ideal

The guiding idea is plain common sense. Let each going concern make an extra place for an employable, on the principle that there is room for one more without crowding the others. What shall be the starting unit and its progression for extras are details that can be easily determined on an equitable basis. The important point is that we think of nation and country as one big family in one big household. That does not mean ideal equality, keeping in mind that even members of the natural family are not equally en-
dowed. Heights and lowlands seem to be the design of Creation. The best man can do is to clear the human jungle of preying life.

The expense such a readjustment entails will be more than offset by increased purchasing power and a corresponding decrease in governmental philanthropies. Let business establish this policy as "self-taxation in terms of employment", and it will pay cash dividends to all concerned. But the most desirable yield will come from the intangibles we value highest in civilized life—self-reliance, law and order, peace and goodwill.

The Self-Dependents

The present purpose, however, is not a discussion of the potential scope of the idea, but a presentation of what it has accomplished in one special field of social endeavor. The experiment has proved so surprisingly successful, that a high official of a great industry has characterized it as the best he had seen along this line. The expression was not a mere gesture of courtesy. The gentleman attested his sincerity by personal and direct action.

Having started without financial backing, the range of our activity had to be strictly limited, and we naturally gave first consideration to the employment needs of the orphan class. There are no more pathetic figures in society than these children. With all the humaneness of the modern institutional home, there is no substitute for the heart-throb of a parent. The tragedy deepens with the developing years. Grown to youth, they are alone, the road ahead twisted and uphill. One of them expressed it with gripping pathos in his autobiographical letter to us. He wrote: "The first impression I remember was when grandma carried me to the bedside of my dying mother, who smiled at me through her tears. The memory of that smile is my company and comfort in these days of loneliness and despair."

Drawings by one of our boys

A Happy Experience

Now see what happened. The president of a nation-wide business was told about the case. The company had no need for extra help, yet they agreed to make a place for our young friend and to give him guidance and encouragement. Six months later, we received this note: "You are the first to hear of my joy. I have been promoted with a raise in
salary, and I am in charge of two other boys. I intend to enroll next Fall for an evening course at college, so as to be better prepared for efficient service."

That happy result is not an isolated instance but a typical experience. Our files abound with episodes of this kind. If you have the inclination, come and read them. They are fascinating life stories.

_A Vital Difference_

Aren't there Social Welfare Agencies helping orphan youth to find work? Yes, there are quite a few, deserving high commendation for zeal and devotion. But they do not touch the root of the problem. They proceed along the old idea of hunting for openings and jobs. Openings are as scarce as oases in Sahara, and jobs are at best a flimsy foundation for a boy's future. When an opening does occur, it goes to the solicitor who strikes it first, or who has a friendly contact in that personnel department. He in turn gives it to Paul who is his special charge. Meanwhile, Peter is waiting with frayed nerves for something to turn up. But even the good fortune of Paul is short-lived. His job is for the duration of some emergency or seasonal rush. When that is over, he is on the street again, feeling like the beggar who had been king-for-a-day.

Vocational Adoption, incorporated in 1937, has made over six-hundred career-placements on solid and enduring foundations. Nothing haphazard about it. In each instance, the candidate was carefully tested for vocational aptitude and interest. And the relation between boy and organization does not end with the placement work. It really just begins in a family spirit, eager to stand guard all along the road, easing difficulties, discussing problems, and mapping a course of progress and success. As much security as can be had in a shifting world is an end we seek for our protegés.

_Fertile Soil Unplowed_

The great pity is that results have not been tenfold. That goal could have been reached even with a corporal's command deployed for action. We found big hearts in big business. Its great captains readily granted interviews, listened with genuine interest, and responded with generous impulse. Those contacts have proved an inspiring revelation of the innate goodness in human nature. They remain imperishable memories.

Alas, comparatively few concerns have been approached, because of a total lack of field representatives to carry the
appeal. Our organization consisted of a staff of one to the end of 1938, and of two since then, doing the work of telephone operator, typist, publicity director, interviewer, counselor, adjuster, and all the odds and ends incident to organizational activity. Consequently, a large area of productive acres is left untilled.

It would be unfair to leave the impression that the community has refused to extend financial aid. Quite a few have willingly contributed. We simply haven’t had the time to press for funds with concentrated energy, and we were reluctant to pay for money-raising out of contributions. The fifteen thousand dollars or so obtained in cash and supplies came through personal solicitation.

**A Plea**

We believe that Vocational Adoption is serving a definite need in the community and should have a chance to live. It needs twenty-five thousand dollars to demonstrate its full worth. Such a sum will enable us to maintain an adequate staff, competent to make at least one thousand career-placements during 1941. That in turn will give impetus to the movement to go forward, almost automatically, by gained momentum. The local reward in human value is immediate, and the possibilities of the idea on a national scale are incalculable.

We urgently plead for your support. “Come my children unto me,” has been one of the most beautiful expressions of good-

ness in all times and climes. Let us take to heart the needs of those among our youth whom the world has always regarded with loving compassion. No greater homage can be given to the Father of us all.

**Expressions**

*Governor Herbert H. Lehman:*

“I have heard with great interest of the work you are doing for orphan boys and I want to be among those who wish you great success.”

*Federal District Judge John C. Knox:*

“You certainly are doing a splendid work and one that deserves the aid and assistance of every person who is really interested in the betterment of youth.”

*Orphan Society of Brooklyn:*

“Had it not been for the efforts you made in securing our boys the positions they now hold, they would still be out of work.”

*Hebrew Orphan Asylum:*

“Permit me to assure you of our deep appreciation for the excellent work that you have been doing.”
Big Brother Movement:

"We want to express our appreciation of the work you have been doing for unemployed orphan youth. You have proceeded in a business-like way to render the most needed kind of assistance with just the proper amount of human touch and friendly warmth."

Welfare Council of New York:

"All concerned are agreed that you have accomplished some remarkable results in placing boys in worthwhile positions."

Mr. Barclay Acheson, Associate Editor, Reader’s Digest:

"You are doing an admirable piece of work. You may take for granted my wholehearted enthusiasm for the aims and objectives of your organization."

American Tobacco Company
P. is doing well. Has been advanced.

Bloomingdale’s
K. has been promoted.

Chase National Bank
R. seems to have promise for future growth.

Consolidated Edison
U. is doing very satisfactory work.

Dun & Bradstreet
Y. is making satisfactory progress.

Frank G. Schuttuck Co.
We will be glad to take more boys like A.

General Electric
Both boys are making good progress with us.

Hotel Waldorf-Astoria
S. has had two raises in salary since he came.

Metropolitan Life
H. is rated excellent.

Montgomery Ward
W. has a very satisfactory record.

National Broadcasting Company
M.’s work is entirely satisfactory.

New York Telephone Company
P. is making satisfactory progress.

Root, Clark, Buckner & Ballantine
P. does his work in alert and intelligent fashion.

The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company
S.’s work is quite satisfactory.

The New York Times
Our art department is pleased with R.’s work.

Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation
K. is a fine boy. We are preparing him for the sales department.

Woolworth Co.
G. is doing satisfactory work.
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