

FOREWORD

IN PUBLISHING THE RESULTS of a large-scale investigation, it is customary for the author to present in a short preface a description of the initiation of the study and the methods used, and to acknowledge the assistance he received. However, this conventional practice is not suitable as an introduction to the present work.

The Uneducated has a long heritage as well as a special position within the orbit of the research into the field of human resources which is being carried on at Columbia University. Since the late 1930's my collaborators and I have been engaged in a series of studies aimed at increasing the understanding of the basic role of human resources in our contemporary economy. These investigations resulted in four major publications: *Grass on the Slag Heaps: the Story of the Welsh Miners* (1942); *The Unemployed* (1943); *The Labor Leader* (1948); *Occupational Choice* (1951). So much for the lineal heritage of *The Uneducated*.

Impressed with the striking evidence of the wastage of manpower revealed during World War II, General Eisenhower, shortly after coming to Columbia University, took the initiative in establishing a large-scale research project under the title "The Conservation of Human Resources." This Project has a twofold objective: to deepen the knowledge of the fundamentals of human resources, and to show how new knowledge can contribute to sounder public policy aimed at reducing the wastage of the nation's most valuable resource.

As pointed out in the *Progress Report* which was published in June, 1951, the Conservation of Human Resources has a three-fold approach. First, studies are being made of groups in our society which have one or another serious handicap that militates against their effective performance. At the other extreme, the

Project is concerned with developing a fundamental approach to the study of those who possess talent and who are capable of superior performance. The third major effort of the Project is directed toward increasing the appreciation of the fundamental changes that have taken place in the role of work in our society since the turn of the century and the import of these changes for the satisfaction of the individual, the productivity of the economy, and the welfare of the society.

The Uneducated is the first of the several investigations to reach completion. This study of the poorly educated in military and civilian life—one major group of handicapped persons in our society—is related to an investigation now under way of another handicapped group whose performance is interfered with by emotional difficulties, to be published under the title *The Ineffective Soldier*.

The Conservation of Human Resources Project was set up initially and has been operating as a cooperative venture undertaken by the University; the business community; public groups, such as foundations and trade unions; and the Federal Government. In sponsoring the undertaking the University provided the professional staff; industry, the financial support; and the Federal Government, basic statistical compilations and case materials.

The book contains large bodies of original materials drawn from both military and civilian life. The Department of Defense assisted us substantially by making available to us the records of our military manpower experience during World War II. Each of the three Departments, Army, Navy, and Air Force, assisted, but the contribution made by the Department of the Army was of the greatest importance. Our substantial reliance upon the experience of the Army grows out of two facts: during World War II and until 1948 the Army and Air Force operated as one department, at least as far as personnel records were concerned. Moreover, my own ten years of experience with military manpower problems and policies was with the Army.

The individuals who contributed significantly to the present study are mentioned by name and organization in the acknowledgments which follow this Foreword. At this point reference will be made only to the assistance provided by major organizations.

The Department of the Army helped materially: The individual case records of illiterate and poorly educated soldiers, which are analyzed in detail in Chapters 6 and 7, were developed through the cooperation of the Adjutant General's Office, both at Headquarters in Washington and, more particularly, at the Demobilized Personnel Records Branch in St. Louis. In the spring of 1951 draft chapters of the monograph which outlined the theoretical structure were submitted by the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs to the Chief of Staff for critical evaluation. The reply, which proved very helpful to us, was a composite of the thinking of both senior line commanders and technical experts. At about the same time the Secretary of the Army offered me an opportunity to discuss the preliminary findings with his senior advisors; this also proved most constructive and stimulating. The quality of the assistance provided by the Army can best be indicated by stating that the Demobilized Personnel Records Branch at St. Louis was able to provide us with detailed information about every single individual on the eight rosters of names which we submitted.

Although this particular book could never have been written in this particular manner without the wholehearted cooperation of the Army, it is important to emphasize that the analysis, conclusions, and recommendations are the sole and complete responsibility of the authors.

Since we were interested in learning about the readjustment to civilian life of those poorly educated persons who had had the advantage of special training within the Army, we sought the assistance of the Veterans Administration. It provided us with the current addresses of these men and, further, indicated the use which this group of veterans had made of the benefits which were available to them. Chapter 8 is based on the replies which we received to the questionnaires that were sent to these veterans. Our ability to reach them was the direct result of the help which we received from the Director, Coordination Services of the Veterans Administration. We are also indebted to the men who answered the questionnaires.

A major objective of the study of *The Uneducated* was to determine as accurately as possible the practices that had been

followed during World War II in screening the population for military service and, in particular, to learn more about the numbers, characteristics, and residences of the young men who were rejected for service because of an inability to pass the mental tests. In developing these materials, which are presented in Chapter 4, we were considerably aided by the Selective Service System; the Office of the Surgeon General, Department of the Army; and the Bureau of the Census.

We also received assistance from the Department of Labor, particularly in connection with Chapter 9, which deals with the experience of Southern industry in the employment of the poorly educated; from the Department of Agriculture, which helped to provide some perspective on the behavior of the poorly educated in Southern agriculture; and from the Office of Education, Federal Security Agency, which has a very real and continuing interest in all phases of the problem of illiteracy and which made its knowledge and competence available to us. The Office of Senator Harley Kilgore of West Virginia, who has sponsored Federal legislation to eradicate illiteracy, assisted us by providing background materials.

In seeking to improve our understanding of the specific factors influencing differential rejection rates within particular states, we sought and secured the assistance of the Departments of Education in the following states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. Their replies to our inquiries contributed much to the analysis in Chapters 4 and 11.

The New York State Employment Service provided us with information about the difficulties encountered by the poorly educated in seeking employment. This helped us to sharpen our understanding of the differences between the truly mentally deficient person and the person who has been educationally deprived.

In studying the role of the uneducated migrant, we received assistance from the Michigan Unemployment Commission, specifically from offices in the Detroit area which are directly involved in registering and finding employment for migrants and others out of work.

Among the other governmental agencies that assisted at one or

another point of our investigation were: the Armed Forces Induction Station, New York City, which facilitated our acquaintance with current practices in the mental testing of recruits; and the Bureau for Children with Retarded Mental Development of the New York City Board of Education, which helped us to see more fully the relation between mental retardation, special education, and work performance.

Although it was not practical to include in this book much material about the role of the uneducated in other countries, we desire to acknowledge the assistance which we received from several foreign sources. Specifically, we are indebted to the Department of Labour, Canada; the Ministry of Defense, and Ministry of Labour and National Service, and the Department of the Army, United Kingdom; and the Office of the Supreme Commander, Allied Powers Europe, through which we secured helpful information about the military manpower practices, past and present, of the Armed Forces of France and Italy.

In addition to this substantial assistance from governmental sources several non-governmental agencies proved helpful. The National Research Council had been carrying on investigations based on the records of former members of the Armed Services, and its staff helped us to develop the procedures on which Chapters 6, 7, and 8 are based. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the National Urban League made available to us important materials bearing on the educational and work experience of Southern Negroes. Even more valuable were the discussions we had with the staffs of these two organizations concerning the interpretation of various facts and trends. The American Friends Service Committee and the International Brotherhood & Protective Order of Elks of the World also contributed to our understanding of the past and present position of the poorly educated within the South.

In developing Chapters 9 and 10, we relied to a very considerable extent on the information which we gathered through the following sources: The Richmond Area Guidance and Personnel Association put us in direct contact with representative employers in its area. The Charlotte Personnel Directors Association considered a series of questions which we had submitted and sent us a com-

posite reply. The Personnel Association of the Greensboro Area developed a special questionnaire on the basis of our inquiry and furnished us with statistical information and illustrative materials based upon the replies received from twelve of its members. We received written communications from the following additional organizations: Burlington Mills, Greensboro, North Carolina; Crawford Manufacturing Co., Richmond, Virginia; Hercules Powder Co., Radford, Virginia; Humble Oil & Refining Co., Houston, Texas; Industrial Cotton Mills (Division of J. P. Stevens), Rock Hill, South Carolina; Plantation Pipe Line Co., Atlanta, Georgia; Reynolds Metals Co., Richmond, Virginia; Richmond Engineering Co., Richmond, Virginia; Sidney Blumenthal & Co., Inc., Rocky Mount, North Carolina; Sunoco Products Co., Hartsville, South Carolina; Vick Chemical Co., Greensboro, North Carolina. We were further assisted in developing Chapters 9 and 10 by the discussions of the industrial employment of the poorly educated we had with the staff personnel of General Motors, the Ford Motor Company, the United Automobile Workers-CIO, the Textile Workers Union, and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

Members of the following faculties made contributions to one or another stage of the research: Brooklyn College, Columbia University, Yale University, University of North Carolina, University of Texas, Northwestern University, Tuskegee Institute, and the University of Oklahoma.

The scale of *The Uneducated* can be briefly summarized. In Part I, "Education and Society," the major changes which have been taking place in the educational level of the American public are detailed against the background of changes in schooling and in the structure of the economy during the past half century. Despite remarkable improvements in the reduction of illiteracy, the detailed analysis of men rejected for military service during World War II throws a spotlight on the sections of the country where progress has lagged.

In Part II, "Military and Civilian Performance," a unique body of case materials is presented concerning the ability of the uneducated and poorly educated to perform effectively within a military organization once they have been afforded an opportunity to

acquire basic literacy. This analysis challenges the conventional belief that a relatively high educational background is necessary for successful military performance. An analysis of the relation between educational background and civilian performance confirms the finding that emerged from a study of the military that many individuals can perform effectively despite a minimal amount of education. However, there is much evidence that industry encounters serious difficulties when it seeks to integrate a small number of illiterate or poorly educated persons into an organization in which most employees are literate.

In Part III, "Human Resources Policy," the consideration is advanced that there is a sound basis for providing Federal assistance to the poorer states to improve their educational systems. Current military policy which is resulting in the rejection of large numbers of young men who fail the mental test is held to be in error, and the recommendation is advanced that the Armed Forces accept much larger numbers of these poorly educated persons and give them the benefit of special training. The concluding chapter emphasizes the fact that the nation as a whole can no longer remain indifferent to regional and local deficiencies in the education and training of youth since its security and welfare depend upon the full utilization of its human resource potential.

Although primary responsibility for *The Uneducated* rests with the authors, it was shared at every stage of the work with their colleagues on the staff of the Conservation of Human Resources Project. Literally, each member of the staff made a significant contribution. There may be some basis for contending that the demonstration of how a project of this scope involving the active participation of so many organizations and individuals was designed and carried out is as important as the presentation of the specific findings and interpretations. For, if our understanding of the major facets of the problem of human resources is to be enhanced, it will be necessary to develop and carry through to completion a significant number of such large-scale cooperative investigations.

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