

# Jobless Problem Mounts

## Many Factors Cut Effectiveness of Training Programs

By DOUGLAS ELDRIDGE

New projects to train and employ the jobless in Newark are growing bigger.

Some 15,000 adults and young people have been enrolled in various work and training projects launched since 1962 with more than \$22 million in federal funds.

Yet in the knots of men on almost any slum street corner, there is evidence that all this effort has somehow left many people without the incentive or the ability to work.

A survey of major job training projects in Newark shows success stories and favorable placement statistics — but also signs that in many cases suspicion and lethargy could not be cracked.

While projects vary greatly in purpose and performance, and in their records, these basic findings emerge:

—Several thousand people have found new or better jobs through training, yet anywhere from 25 to 50 per cent in major programs fail to complete courses and find jobs.

### Some Projects Lag

—While administrators seek expansion of projects, several are below strength and behind schedule.

—While everyone agrees the projects must reach the poorest and most hopeless, there have been only modest efforts to recruit in the slums.

—Many people have left training because of medical, financial or family problems, and most projects have been unable to track down or help dropouts.

—In some cases persons have been trained but are barred from jobs by company or union standards.

—In spite of widespread pleas for coordination, there is a complex and competitive maze of agencies to baffle the job seeker.

Those seeking solutions to unemployment and unrest are hoping the new \$4.3 million Total Employment and Manpower (TEAM) project, which is pulling together a score of agencies and setting up offices in the slums, can reach those at the bottom of the heap. But the biggest hurdle, in the view of many, is a gap in credibility and communication.

### Don't Believe It

"The whole key to the thing is that people just don't believe it," says Kenneth A. Gibson, a

Negro civil engineer and co-chairman of the Business and Industrial Coordinating Council, a private group involved in training and employment projects.

"There's a myriad of programs, and many people get confused . . . they get stunted

**In this analytical article, The News details the varied efforts made in Newark to cope with joblessness among Negroes. Some successes have been recorded; where there have been failures this is an attempt to show why.**

around so many times they don't go back any more," he adds. Like many others, he wants an operation that is faster, more centralized and more far-reaching than anything yet.

The BICC's own \$1.1 million project SEED (Skill Escalation and Employment Development), aimed at hard-core jobless, has managed to attract many persons out of the social mainstream. But it has mustered only two-thirds of the trainees it expected.

Since January SEED has signed up 943 persons. But 233 never showed up and 241 quit

before completing the nine-week course in machine skills. A total of 180 has gone into jobs or advanced training.

### Funds Lacking

William A. Mercer, assistant director, says the BICC project doesn't have enough funds or manpower to recruit and encourage trainees—a complaint of many administrators.

"The hopelessness and despair are so deeply imbedded that a one-hour orientation session is not going to correct it," Mercer says.

About 30 per cent of those who enter Manpower Development and Training and on-the-job courses never finish. Nearly a third of those who leave the Neighborhood Youth Corps work projects in Newark are dropped for absenteeism.

The city's Title V project—for heads of families on relief—loses more than half its enrollees during training. Yet, ironically, some 60 per cent of those who leave—including the dropouts—are placed in jobs.

### Responses Vary

Bertram Coppock, administrator of Title V, says the project has rescued many from years on welfare.

While Title V gets all its train-

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# Jobless Program

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es from relief rolls, other projects recruit directly or through the N.J. Employment Service. The response varies widely.

Most clerical and mechanical courses, like those at the Newark Manpower Training Skills Center, draw full houses. But other classes, building service, gardening and baking, are often only half full. Officials say any job with a connotation of servitude, no matter how good the pay or great the need, is shunned by minority groups.

Almost every one of a score of persons interviewed agreed that more "outreach" for recruits is needed. But street-corner and door recruitment has been rare.

The State Employment Service sent interviewers last year to anti-poverty area boards, and the city administration opened a storefront manpower information office in South Orange Avenue. Both efforts were part-time, and both were abandoned for lack of response.

## Five Offices

The employment service has five offices—all downtown. Most of the training agencies are not based in the slums. TEAM will be the first to put most of its operations where the need is.

Meanwhile, the state's Youth Opportunity Center has sent five field workers into streets, hired young people to maintain opportunity pamphlet racks in candy stores, and has developed comic books in ghetto argot ("You're lowhere, Baby" and "Power Is Green").

Most officials claim there are plenty of people who want training or work experience. The Neighborhood Youth Corps, at a record strength of 2,300 this summer, turned away hundreds of applicants.

"There's no problem getting people as long as you have something real to offer them," says Arthur Kaufman, director of several job projects.

Training slots go vacant for other reasons besides apathy among the needy. Some projects have suffered from bureaucratic bottlenecks.

although most officials agree there is no great shortage of jobs. The state was able to place only 53 per cent of those who completed MDTA courses last year.

"We get a steady stream of Negro applicants, but many are just not up to our standards," said one insurance executive, who declined to be named. At the same time he said that training projects engage in "a lot of wheel spinning," and the employment service does not reach kids in the street.

The big need now, says Mercer, is "outreach at the top as well as the bottom"—to convince employers to make special efforts to hire the jobless, and to convince the man in the street there is some hope for him.

A state official concludes: "Our hardest problem is to get people to believe we mean it."

## Poor Co-ordination

A classic case of poor coordination is the Blazer Youth Council project, which has only a quarter of the 200 trainees it is supposed to serve. The staff is almost as big as the student body, and it costs an estimated \$9,000 a year for every person trained in upholstery, food service, floor maintenance and auto repair.

The problem is that Blazer must recruit trainees only from Title V, and the future of Title V is so uncertain it has sent few people to Blazer. Blazer has been widely hailed as a "grass roots" effort to instill new hope in the poor, but most trainees have preferred other programs.

The fragmentation of training among the city, the BECC and the United Community Corp. has caused lags, too.

The UCC was supposed to start an on-the-job training effort for 500 persons last summer.

It started six months late and today has only 150 enrolled. UCC officials blame staff changes, pressure of other problems and a poor response from employers.

Even projects that reach their quota lose many along the way. The reasons are many, as shown by a check of 85 persons who failed to complete on-the-job training in a city program last year:

Six never showed up, five were absent repeatedly, nine proved "unsatisfactory" to employers, three misbehaved, two got sick, three moved out of town, three were drafted, three couldn't get transportation, five "could not adjust," three had personal problems, and 16 left for no apparent reason.

Even after training some people have difficulty getting work,