

O. U.'s Employment Problem

By Frances Hunt, '29

THE once familiar sign, "Boy Wanted to Wait Tables," no longer appears on the Ad Building bulletin board. It hasn't for quite a while.

Sooners of a decade or two ago who encourage ambitious youngsters in their home towns to come to Norman with \$20 and a will to work, need to get a new picture in their minds of employment conditions on the campus. A graduate who earned his way ten years ago has a false conception of what it takes now, unless he has had frequent contact with student life in the interval since commencement.

It is not easy to get a job in Norman, and not everyone who gets one is capable of holding it and doing good work in classes.

A much larger number of students are competing for jobs than in the past. The town hasn't expanded its businesses as rapidly as the University has increased its enrolment, and hence opportunities for paid jobs off the campus are scarce. More freshmen are coming to Norman trained to do typing and office work, having been told by their high school teachers that the typewriter will write their pay checks for four years in University. The University itself no longer has a special fund to employ student assistants.

Admittedly, we do have 670 students on NYA rolls this fall, and a few more will be added on the extra fund of \$105 per month to aid young people from the drouth-stricken districts. Without NYA, the employment scene would be good deal more drab than it is. Without NYA, University enrolment would drop, and several hundred bright young people might have to go home.

But every alumnus who advises a prospective student to tackle college without funds should understand that no NYA job pays as much money as the most frugal freshman needs.

I have just gone the rounds of offices, seeking facts and opinions from men and women of the University who know most about this employment problem and have put in many hours helping students get jobs.

Andy Crosby, the NYA secretary, told me that the average monthly pay of NYA students this semester is \$12.75. The average was reduced from \$15 to enable the NYA committee to give more jobs. About one-fourth of the money goes to freshmen.

The committee, when considering applications, estimated that each student needs a budget of \$30 a month, aside from fees, clothes and books. If a student can show that he has another job which pays him

\$10 a month and his parents send him \$10, then he probably will be okayed for an NYA job for the third \$10 he needs. But if he has no resources, the NYA committee cannot help him, for the most an undergraduate can earn on NYA is \$20 a month. And not many students are allowed as much as \$20.

To get an NYA job, a freshman must have high school grades averaging B-minus. A student who has been in college must have a C-plus average. Grades are checked every four weeks.

A student applying for NYA must show actual financial need. Surprisingly, applications sometimes come in from sons and daughters of men known in their home communities as comfortably fixed. In some cases, parents just get the idea that the young people for their own good should work and get experience.

THE 670 on NYA rolls represent in many ways the cream of the student body, and a lot of them are working at jobs that train them for their future professions. Crosby told me about a student who is assistant to the director of radio production. Another is an artist technician. Another copies music. Another helps a crippled girl. Several give tutorial service and supervise study halls. Two are readers for the blind, and several are freshman counselors. One does photo-engraving and another is a news writer. Many others, of course, fill jobs of a more routine nature, where they learn little of future value.

But what of the other hundreds who need work, who fail to get NYA aid for one reason or another, or perhaps are near the end of their twenty-fourth year of age and therefore must leave the NYA list? What about those on NYA who have to get another job for room and board to make up that \$30 budget? What about

those who just want a job for spending money or because it's fashionable to work?

"Those kids can get jobs in the University offices, or around the Corner at the shops and restaurants," the old grad is likely to say.

No, not all of them can. The University, struggling with the most serious financial problem in its history, cannot hire enough help to do its work. The "supplemental fund," furnished by the state during the last two school years for the employment of students, has been discontinued. Last year this fund amounted to \$20,000, and the year previous it was \$10,000.

And jobs at the Corner and in town can't be had for the asking. It takes waiting, and knowing people, and getting a break.

I talked with Charles Miles, University Book Exchange manager, who gets about one hundred applications for work each summer and fall. He told me that he picks only one or two students—freshmen if possible—each year, and he usually has these chosen in the spring before they are to start work. He employs only eight or nine students, and most of the jobs last from one year to the next. Many of his boys go into the law school, so hold their jobs for six years. They are paid from \$20 to \$30 a month. It takes a year for a student to become thoroughly familiar with the book store and to become a valuable assistant. Those who are hired by Mr. Miles are fortunate, and gain useful experience. But they represent only a small percentage of the job-seeking throng that comes to Norman each August and September.

The Oklahoma Memorial Union has one of the largest student payrolls on the campus, with more than a hundred students working in the cafeteria kitchen, be-

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Not afraid of manual labor, some students at O. U. earn their way by such tasks as digging ditches for the utilities department. There are many applicants for every campus job, no matter how tough it is



The crowd and the radio announcer did not understand the play, but the ruling was correct. The receiving team had a net gain of about thirty-yards on the play without ever getting possession and control of the ball.

One of our successful young coaches was asked a few years ago why the National Rules Committee changed the rules so often. His answer was, "if they didn't change them, the fans and coaches might find out what the game is all about."

In recent years, there have not been so many changes in the rules. Most of the changes have been made to make the game safer for the players and to prevent injuries. The National Rules Committee should be commended for the fine work it has been doing in this respect.

Football today is a long way from that of a few years ago when players were permitted to tape their hands and wear leather braces on their hands and wrists, and after downs half of the players were punch-drunk from the effects of the battering they took on the line of scrimmage.

We have one change this year that will be noticed as the season progresses. That is the new rule requiring the ineligible players to remain on their own side of the line of scrimmage until the pass is made. They cannot advance across the line of scrimmage and if they do, they are called for interference and their team penalized fifteen yards and the loss of a down. However, if the initial charge of the linemen against their opponents carries them across the line of scrimmage this is not a violation of the rule.

You may have come to the conclusion, after reading about some of the mistakes that officials make, that the officials are an inefficient and incapable group of men. That would be incorrect. I know that in the Big Six, the Missouri Valley and the Southwest Conferences we have some of the finest officials in the nation. The most famous of them all is probably E. C. Quigley who lives in the neighboring state of Kansas, and his work has been an inspiration for a lot of younger men who officiate.

In our own state we have several that in my opinion are top flight officials and they can call anybody's ball game.

Behind the whistle in almost every major ball game is an official with years of experience as a player, who strives to be letter perfect in his knowledge of the rules of the game, who has officiated in hundreds of football games, a person who knows all or nearly all the possible situations that might arise in any ball game, and who can instantly and correctly give a correct ruling thereon.

He is a person physically fit and mentally alert and one who possesses a keen and unerring sense of judgment, who can instantly, decisively and correctly apply the proper ruling to the actual situation

If he makes a slip once in a great while, don't be too critical. It's a tough job.

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hind the fountain, waiting tables, doing janitor work, running the elevator, supervising the main lounge and recreation room, and so on.

Almost all of these are "meal jobs," which means that the students work three hours a day and receive meal tickets at the rate of 30 cents for an hour's work.

The Union management receives far more applications for jobs than it can possibly handle. During the spring and summer months of 1939, a total of 312 applications were received. Only 116 of these applicants could be employed this fall.

In general, all student jobs in the Union are filled six months in advance of the opening of any particular semester.

George Wadsack, registrar and former head of the committee that selects NYA workers, has been observing student employment on this campus since 1919, and he says it is much harder now for a boy or girl to get a job than it was in earlier days.

In his office, he employs a few students and puts on only one or two new ones, usually sophomores, each year. These are selected on the basis of their ability from a large group of temporary employes Mr. Wadsack hires for registration. He calls the more efficient workers back for a day or two during busy times later in the year. Eventually the best become regular employes. In the registry office, students who live in Norman are preferred because they do not leave town during vacations when experienced student help is needed.

Mr. Wadsack prefers to employ students who do need the money and who are above the average in scholastic ability. He cannot employ students whose grades suffer when they are required to work over time.

About two hundred applications are sent to Mr. Wadsack each summer and fall.

Mr. Wadsack has occasion to advise hundreds of students bothered with the money problem. He says a boy coming to Norman should remember that jobs are just as hard to find here as they are in his own home, and that many of them are sewed up in advance. If there happens to be an opening at one of the Corner drug stores, probably the fellow who expects to graduate has brought a friend in to call on the manager long before school is out in the spring, and the friend gets the job.

The University has little or no control over employment off the campus. If an alumnus has a protege who needs work, he cannot expect the University to guarantee to find him a place in a store or office. The best thing for a prospective freshman to do, Mr. Wadsack advises, is to stay at home until he has saved enough money for a semester. Then he should come to school, devote his first semester

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to his studies and to soliciting a job which may open up for him in his second semester or later.

Mr. Wadsack believes that high school commencement speakers who still say, "All it takes to go to college is ambition," should revamp their advice in the light of present conditions.

One of Mr. Wadsack's most disheartening duties, he says, is to face the students who come to his window with pink withdrawal cards—giving as the cause for leaving school the familiar "financial reasons." Already this fall, three weeks after school started, a number of these pink cards had appeared in the registry office files, testimony that their signers had fared badly in the competitive struggle for employment.

Fred Miller, Y.M.C.A. secretary, told me that he knew a number of boys who went home even before they registered. "They come here with \$20 they had saved," he said, "because they've been told at home that these are the days to go to school and prepare to earn more money later."

Mr. Miller, who handles general employment for men, believes it is a good deal harder for a boy to find a job than it was a few years ago, and he believes, too, that parents are less willing to sacrifice for their children's education.

Mr. Miller had so many applicants thronging his office this fall that he was not able to give any attention to those who had been approved for NYA and then wanted a second job. He has placed about 55 men in "board jobs" that pay no money but do take care of the problem of meals.

This is an achievement, for Mr. Miller's last survey showed there are only 180 "board jobs" available at all the boarding houses and restaurants in Norman. And many of these are filled by the same students who had them last year. Mr. Miller also has placed a dozen men in jobs for room rent, and about a dozen in permanent jobs which pay cash, such as book-keeping. He has found some two hundred "odd jobs" for boys, such as selling concessions at football games.

Miss Helen Ruth Holbrook told me she has interviewed this fall more than four hundred girls, and has placed about fifty of them in definite and permanent places where they get room and board. Since there is a shortage of domestic labor in Norman, she has little trouble in finding domestic work for girls—but that isn't what they want nor what they are trained for.

However, she reports, many girls who have learned shorthand and typing in high school cheerfully accept dishwashing and cooking duties when they can't find office work their first year. Several have found pleasant employment preparing dinner for various faculty women who have their own homes in Norman.

Miss Holbrook suggests that in recent years the high school commercial departments have assumed the duty of helping students prepare to earn their way through college by giving them office training, but that now the high school domestic science departments have something to offer too. A girl who can cook, and who can serve meals nicely can earn her way at the University—and the training will not be wasted after the diploma is received.

Miss Holbrook agrees that it's harder now to finance a college education by working. But she has much praise for the NYA program. She believes the fact that girls can hold NYA jobs and receive money for their work has raised the low scale of pay for domestic work in Norman.

Recalling the ease with which I obtained a job as waitress in the women's residence halls in my junior year, I called Mrs. Nora Wells, business director of the halls, to find out the situation now.

Mrs. Wells received during the summer 39 more applications than she had jobs, received several more when school started, and at present has 11 girls on the waiting list for next semester. She says the demand for employment is twice as heavy as it was three years ago. Like others on the campus who hire students, she selects many of her workers from those who come to Norman in the spring and make application.

She has 14 girls, all freshmen, working in the dining hall, and 20 office girls. Nine more girls work in the kitchen, and four graduate students are employed as counselors. The work is split up to enable as many as possible to have jobs, and no one receives more than her board. Grades of those employed must be kept passing.

The working student of this college era isn't so much publicized as the workers of eight or ten years ago. Nor is he apt to be so sensitive about his lack of funds as we were before 1929. It's part of enrolment procedure now to fill out a work schedule as well as a study card.

But he doesn't have half the chance to get the jobs nor earn the amounts that once were easily made. Alumni called on to advise prospective students should state frankly what the situation is *now*, and not what it was when they were in school.

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Heads newspaper

After handling the position of business manager on the *Chandler News-Publicist* for more than a year, Boyd Cowden, '28ex, has been named editor-manager of the paper.

Serving him as advertising manager is Bob Kniseley, '33ex, former secretary of the Wetumka Chamber of Commerce. He has worked on papers at Tishomingo, Lexington, Anadarko, Seminole, Shawnee and Ada. He was also employed on the *Bee*, Sacramento, California, and the *Times-Picayune*, New Orleans, Louisiana.

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