

Backlog

GOVERNMENT INVASION OF COLLEGE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES IS IMMINENT

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A FEW months ago, while preparing a routine article on the work of the University employment and placement service, I had occasion to talk to the chief recruiter for a major oil company. After he had answered all my questions about professional recruiting of college graduates, he launched into a tirade against what he termed the greatest threat to private enterprise, the federal government's proposed take-over of the recruiting and placement of the nation's professional and technical personnel.

The situation this man described as the ultimate result of the government's proposal sounded to me like something straight from George Orwell—the loss by college graduates of free choice of where they would work and for whom, the same loss of choice by private business of whom they would employ, the matching of man and job by computer, the eventual control of college curriculums by placement counseling methods.

Frankly, I didn't believe a word of it. But curiosity got the upper hand and I began looking into the situation. My conclusion has been that my friend from the oil company did not state the case any too strongly.

In the past couple of years the U. S. Employment Service with the support of its parent Department of Labor has been quietly insisting that it be given direction of recruiting and placement activities of the nation's colleges. Supposedly the USES's justification for this action is that channeling professional manpower into the "most suitable" jobs is in the public interest. Actually a quick reading of Labor Department bulletins, the Congressional Record and the USES instructions to its own personnel reveals that the prime objective is forcing both the colleges and the employers to make full use of the local government employment office regardless of the success they are having with their own programs. USES would then be able to set up a whole new network of offices designed to help find employment for the most employable group in the country—those who are having little difficulty finding jobs as it is—the new college graduates.

In the initial stage USES proposes to:

1) Register all members of college graduating classes, regardless of their future plans or commitments;

2) Make available to college placement officers information concerning job opportunities *without identifying employers*;

3) Station a staff member at the college for a time before graduation to give students labor market information and to arrange for recruitment;

4) Assign a staff member on a year-round basis to the college when placement activity is sufficient to warrant it;

5) Handle placement activity for the college in the local employment office.

All this may sound harmless enough at first hearing, if the USES claim of only wanting to help is accepted. But one fact negates this claim: the federal government has not been asked for help—not by the colleges, not by the employers and not by the college graduates. Qualified college graduates are not having difficulty finding employment. In many more cases than not they have multiple job offers from which to choose. Granted, there are hard-to-place graduates—those who have prepared themselves poorly in their educational training or who are marginal cases through personality, competency or academic achievement. These persons might legitimately be considered the concern of USES—but they are not the target of this program. Rather the government would like a controlling hand in placing the cream of the college crop, supposedly on the theory that government knows better than the interviewee where he will best fit the economic picture and knows better than the individual business man who will make the best employee.

The college graduates and the nation's employers are already being served by professional, trained placement personnel in most institutions. This relatively new profession has grown rapidly in the last 10 to 15 years and has increased in efficiency and competency to achieve its purpose. Certainly its record of serving job-seeking college graduates is a cut above the success which the U. S. Employment Service has had in achieving the purpose for which it was created—solving the unemployment problems of the unskilled American worker. USES has all that it can handle. —CJB