

What Has Happened to the Attractions of Industry?

Back in the remote past when this observer finished graduate school, he and all his classmates clamored for positions in industry, even though at that time they were rather scarce. The government was a much less attractive employer. Today we seem to have almost a complete reversal. It is an unhappy trend and one which industry would do well to correct, because it may soon find itself staffed with those who cannot find jobs elsewhere.

It would appear that industry has not told its story well, and it is a magnificent story. It is industry which takes raw materials from producers at suitably high prices that enable those producers to have a good living standard and converts those materials to desired products at prices low enough to permit us a great variety of goods and services. And along the way industry provides employment at high wages and sets aside enough monies to allow various governmental agencies to support the programs so attractive to the youth of today. I would suggest that top management try to develop a publicity program to tell this fine story to every American.

It is said that the youth of today are more idealistic than ever before and that this explains the attraction of such services as the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps is superb, beyond doubt, but industry has its own equivalent. Those young engineers, for example, who have gone to Egypt to devise cheap building materials or to Pakistan to build ammonia plants for private industry are doing

the same job as many Peace Corps volunteers and probably equally well. Why does not industry let everyone know of these ventures?

It is said that industry lacks in excitement and purpose, that a young engineer should "go where the action is" and join the space or some such program. This seems a hollow argument; in a big organization such as the space agency an individual is just as lost as in big industry. Also, a time could come when a retrenchment in such programs would bring more inaction than action.

Some industries probably have offended in special ways. One way is through overemphasis on gimmicks and sales appeal (even overselling). It does not take a Phi Beta Kappa, seeking a job, to know this. Another offender is the terrible problem of pollution. Most industries have been backward here, and this is known to the college graduate, particularly the technical one. Industry should do everything in its power to improve itself in these regards and to correct other undeniable faults.

The problem is serious. To flourish, industry must seek the best college graduates, technical and nontechnical. To attract them, industry should tell its proud story in the best possible fashion. One very good way would be to emphasize the major role industry plays in our high living standards and in aid to other peoples. Otherwise, industry may find itself staffed with the poorer college graduates, particularly nontechnical ones.

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