

Project Transition — a Manpower Potential for the Fishing Industry

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ONE OF THE THEMES of your conference concerns the availability of manpower resources in those skills for which the fishing industry has a requirement. My purpose in speaking to you today is to tell you about an important manpower potential for you—the returning serviceman. During this fiscal year and those following, over 900,000 individuals will be joining the veteran's ranks.

I would like to give you a profile of these young people: they average about 22½ years of age, about 75% are high school graduates; they have been through a disciplined experience; they have learned responsibility; many have found a leadership potential they did not know they possessed; about 30% say they would follow a good job to a new location; they have their service obligation behind them; they know that they live in a time when knowledge and skill mean job success and they want to make a positive contribution to American life, if the opportunity is presented.

We in the Department of Defense are concerned about their future. We know that many of these men have already made up their minds about what they would like to do; some will continue their education under the GI Legislation, some will return to their former jobs and others will be seeking to use skills acquired during military service for civilian jobs. We also know that there are many who are undecided. There are others whose education or training has given them little or nothing to offer a prospective employer.

In January 1968 we established "Project Transition" in the Department of Defense to help these men bridge the gap between military service and the reentry into civilian life. We recognize that today the pay-off in a better job is the amount of education, skill and knowledge which a man can bring to that job. Even though unemployment may at this time be at a very low level, we recognize that many men are already in areas where they actually are underemployed. We recognize that the problem still remains one of getting the right men into good jobs where the demands are high and the wages good. The greatest task is to introduce more men to the training required to meet our industrial demands. Under Project Transition we tackled this problem for the returning serviceman, establishing these priorities: the combat disabled; those with no previous skill and no civilian-related military skill; those with lower educational achievement; those with civilian-related skills which require upgrading to meet the needs of potential employers; those retiring personnel who need a boost to good job opportunities and those who desire to try their hand in some new skill area.

While we keep these priorities in mind in developing our training programs, we have been quite overwhelmed by the response of all returning servicemen to the program. Between 65% and 70% of the men with 6 months or less of service remaining tell us they want some help. This response has aided us to

shape a program in which we keep to our priorities and also respond to others who desire some assistance.

Our program is designed to provide four basic services: (1) counseling to help men sort out the options available to them; (2) training to provide skills for which industry has a specific requirement; (3) education largely to provide an opportunity to complete a high school equivalency program and (4) placement to link these men to civilian job opportunities.

We now have 254 installations in the United States and overseas where our program is in operation. We are planning to expand it further to accommodate as many men as possible.

I would like to tell you something about how we reach them. For every man in the United States and in some Air Force installations overseas, we provide a questionnaire, particularly to those who have from 1 to 6 months service time remaining. We do this for several reasons. First, we concentrate our Transition program in these last few months of service. Second, we want to sort out those who want to go on to a career as a soldier, sailor, airman or marine. Third, we want to give the men some way to express the kinds of assistance they desire. Once we look over these questionnaires which are administered monthly to new arrivals, our counselors then help to arrange for the necessary inservice training, education programs or placement help.

We have felt that these last 6 months are an opportune time for young men to start to think about their future. These men are in effect all in one place where they can be conveniently reached. We have their personnel records and evidence of what they have done and what they may need. Our real guiding principle has been not to duplicate what other agencies in the public and private sector can do, but merely to bring these resources closer to the men before they scatter all over the nation. Let me demonstrate to you how this is now being done.

First, we hit hard at our skill-training program since almost 70% of the men choose to go this route rather than the education path. Our first task has been to set up training programs which are responsive to business and industry or to establish job referral services. We recognize that we would not be able to accommodate all men because of time or availability of resources, but we have been continuously broadening the base of our training program. We took a unique plunge. We have gone to the business community and asked it to provide training on or near a military base in the skills for which it has a specific requirement. This training is mounted and financed by the companies involved. The company supplies the instructor and equipment. We supply the manpower and in many cases the facilities. We have also asked industry to provide us with training opportunities or available jobs for those who could not be given training prior to separation.

We now have some 50 large companies and some 400 smaller companies supplying us with training opportunities. The automobile industry represented by General Motors, Ford and Volkswagen of America have opened up their regular training facilities near some of our military bases. Lockheed is preparing pipefitters out in Tacoma and IBM is preparing office machine repairmen. Several oil companies are training service station managers. Sears, Montgomery Ward and J. C. Penney are offering training for jobs in their service departments, namely automobiles and appliances. Beyond this, each installation has sought to involve local and regional industry near the base. This may include companies supplying limited on-the-job orientation or training

at the plant or company operation. At one installation some 20 to 30 companies are providing this kind of assistance.

The response has been most encouraging. We gradually are building a larger training base. We are getting our men into very meaningful jobs. In turn industry is getting men trained according to its own requirements. We feel that the whole economy reaps worthwhile benefits since these men are trained and ready, as soon as they leave service, to become immediately productive.

Let me take a few moments to discuss your possible role in our program. First, since we may be training some men in job areas of specific interest to you we might channel these men directly into some of the training programs you now have. We recognize that the training they may now receive in some areas is only pre-apprentice type. But their interest and motivation has now been developed to move on to more solid programs which you offer after they have been separated. Second, you may find it desirable to try out a pilot pre-apprentice orientation program at one or more of our installations for untrained men to develop interest and motivation in some skill areas where we are not active. We have found that such programs are very successful lead-ins for the more extended training programs available after discharge. Third, if the first two suggestions may not fit your operational requirements, we might establish a regular referral service. Under this our counselors could identify men who would be interested in pursuing a training program of your designation after separation, or we would channel men to you with skills acquired during their military service which meet your needs. We would place these men in touch with whatever appropriate offices you would identify for us. In all three approaches, we would plan for you to work closely with our military bases for arrangements and the dissemination of appropriate information.

We welcome any help which you may later choose to give us in making our total program more responsive. You will recall I mentioned our efforts to mount as broadly based training programs as possible. I have just discussed industry involvement. I would now like to mention very briefly the contributions of the public sector.

First, we are using the training resources of our own available on many military bases. Again, we call upon some Federal agencies to provide training. We have 50 courses financed by the Manpower, Development and Training Act funds of the Department of Labor under contract with private concerns or educational institutions for the training of personnel.

One word on our education program. We are trying to provide the academic subject training necessary to bring the men up to the eighth grade or high school equivalency level. We have also asked some colleges and universities to offer on or off base courses which would be lead-ins to a college course for men who never thought about attending college.

In establishing the program I have just described, we have followed certain basic guidelines: (1) we have decentralized operations so that industry can work out mutual arrangements with our installation personnel; (2) we have asked commanders to arrange for on-duty release time for training when consistent with their basic mission requirements; (3) we have enjoined our project managers to seek out local and regional training and placement assistance to the fullest extent possible; (4) we try to keep our training offerings consistent with overall industry needs and in areas where there will be a long term job requirement; (5) we try to promote mobility—especially among

minority groups who would otherwise return to critical urban or rural environments and (6) we try to provide some service, whether just counseling and placement, to all servicemen who may desire partial assistance.

Where do we stand today with respect to this program? From January through August we have provided job training or education courses for 20,000. An additional 11,000 are currently in training. Consistently, some 65% of those leaving the service to whom we have given questionnaires desire some help under the Transition program. Our goal is to try to reach approximately 500,000 each year by questionnaire, to counsel some 350,000 and to provide training for about 150,000. So far, 257,000 have completed the questionnaire and 192,000 have received counseling. We have industry support in training and placement with some 450 companies. We are receiving offers for programs sponsored by colleges, and we are continually trying to broaden our base of cooperation with labor and management.

What I have presented to you here today is both an opportunity and a challenge. It is an opportunity because it helps you to tap a very valuable manpower resource which is already well-motivated. It is an opportunity in that it provides you with a means of tailoring a program to fit some of your unique requirements. It is a challenge in that it helps you to find additional ways of helping these young men, who have served their country well, to find new avenues for their energies—avenues which lead to a productive economic life. It is a challenge in that it helps you to participate hopefully in a venture where the opportunity for innovation seems limitless. I hope I have outlined to you here today enough of a program so that you might see ways in which you can participate. We will be happy to work with you.