

★ Mentally Retarded Prove Efficient Workers ★

WASHINGTON, D.C.—A bold new experiment in human salvage initiated by former President John F. Kennedy is paying off for the Federal government.

The government, which never knowingly hired mentally retarded people before this year, has placed more than 200 subnormal persons in 24 agencies since January. The program has been termed "highly successful."

Reports from superiors of the first 125 hired were overwhelmingly enthusiastic. Only two placements failed to work out.

The Civil Service has found that there are many simple tasks in Government offices for which mentally retarded persons are better suited than persons of normal intelligence.

"They are not bored and dissatisfied in routine jobs. They produce well and have a lower turnover than non-handicapped persons in the same work," said Dr. Melvin T. Johnson, medical director of the CSC.

Persons with an IQ range of 50 to 75 have been hired in about 30 job categories. (The intelligence quotient is only one of the measures of retardation). They now work as money examiners in the Treasury Department, checking for counterfeit. They are mail and file clerks, messengers, press cleaners, elevator operators, clerks, laborers and sales store workers. Almost all are in GS-1 and GS-2 levels, earning \$3385 to \$3680 a year.

JOBS HAVE BEEN REORGANIZED to create opportunities for retarded persons in some in-

stances. For example, one retarded young woman is doing well as a copying machine operator at a GS-1 salary. She has freed several GS-6 secretaries for more demanding duties.

The program has meant a long-awaited breakthrough for rehabilitation workers who were constantly facing closed doors in trying to find work for retarded persons they had trained.

"It has been a particular boon in this area," said Sister Joseph Mary, director of the Kennedy Institute, a local school. "Most of the jobs here are connected with Government. We could train people for manual or office tasks--we could teach them to do them well, but they couldn't get the jobs because of the Civil Service tests."

Under the new program, mentally retarded persons do not take the test. Instead, they must be certified by the state vocational rehabilitation agency as able to perform the duties for which they are to be hired.

Of the 212 employed until the end of September, 129 have been placed in the Washington area.

A letter from President Kennedy to heads of departments and agencies launched the program.

"The biggest thing we had to get across was that we were talking about educable people with no identifying marks. We were not talking about mongoloids," said Carl Murr, the Commission's vocational rehabilitation officer in charge of programs for the handicapped.

THE FIRST PERSON HIRED was a shy young woman who had been working until then for room, board and carfare on a housekeeping job. She became a nurse's assistant at \$1.40 an hour in a large Government agency and did so well that she is now on her way to becoming a clerk-typist.

Others employed had been on public assistance, had worked in sheltered workshops or had been supported by their families. Most were between 18 and 20 years old.

Grateful letters began to pour in from parents. Had it not been for the Government's help, wrote one mother, her son--who is epileptic as well as retarded--would have had to continue on a hazardous construction job. He is doing well as a clerk.

Secretary of Labor W. Willard Wirtz said recently that more than 85 per cent of the 3.3 million mentally retarded persons in this country have IQs between 50 and 70 and can be trained for jobs.

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YOUNG LADIES 18 YEARS OF AGE and over who wish to attend the annual Military Appreciation Ball Saturday night (Nov. 14) will be provided free transportation to and from the Las Vegas Convention Center by a pool of cars operated under the supervision of armed services personnel.

Meeting place in West Las Vegas will be at Jefferson Recreation Center, 'D' and Adams Sts. Young ladies intending to use the free transportation service are requested to be at Jefferson Center by 6:30 p.m. The big dance is scheduled from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m., with the cars returning to West Las Vegas from the Convention Center between 11 and 11:30 p.m.

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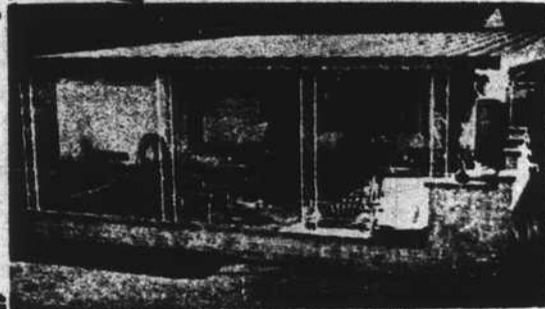
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