Take Charge of Your CAREER

By Richard Dunlop

WHAT HAPPENS to the victims when a large corporation decides to slash a wholesale number of employees from the payroll to make way for efficient machines and streamlined methods?

A lot depends on the corporation. Many large companies set up re-training and personnel placement programs. But even when they do, the real burden of re-adjusting rests on the shoulders of the man who has been jostled out of position. Recently, PM sent me on a scouting trip to interview industry leaders involved with mass placement problems, and to report their views.

Bernard Haldane is the stubby English-born chairman of New York's Foundation for Re-Employment. Big corporations often retain him to help severed men pick up the pieces of their sundered careers. Haldane and his staff show them how to plan new careers, re-educate themselves and find new jobs. As far as Haldane is concerned, the entire process reflects a swiftly growing trend.

"Nobody can tell today the kind of work he is likely to be doing ten years from now," he told me bluntly. "And Labor Department figures show that more than a third of the jobs today will be obsolete by 1970, or radically changed."

Haldane points out that automated equipment has invaded banks and the insurance industry; that telephone operators have given way to direct dialing; that elevator operators are going the way of hand glass blowers and horse shoes.

Only a few years ago unskilled production workers were in great demand on production lines. Today only a few find job openings. These who do are the ones who planned for it and worked at it. Typical is the husky high school drop-out who stopped me as I walked through the auto repair shops set up under the Manpower Development and Training Act at Chicago's west side Washburne Trade School. He was working in a line of foreign cars swarming with trainees who ranged in age from the 'teens to the fifties.

"I'm back in school," he said. "My oldest brother dropped out of high school five years ago, and he got himself a good job over at International Harvester. He made good dough, and he worked up to machinist. So I dropped out too last year, but I couldn't get a job at all. Everywhere I went, there were jobless kids. That's why I'm back here learning how to be an auto mechanic."

The project director came up. "We graduated the first 116 from the course in June of 1964," he told me. "Eighty-six were placed by the time they graduated because there is a shortage of auto mechanics and body men in the Midwest."

The husky boy had discovered first hand that in a world of new technology a man must have an up-to-date skill to land a job on which he can build his future. I found the same thing true in the blighted coal fields of Appalachia. In South Bend, Indiana, hard-hit by the collapse of Studebaker, it holds true on mechanized farms as well as in automated factories and space age laboratories.

Although experts I talked to differed widely as to the full impact of the new technology on Americans and the jobs they perform, all acknowledged the role of the computer as a primary job destroyer. Not a few suggested: "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em." This is happening too.

One day I visited Oak Park High School in Oak Park, Illinois. This school, which nurtured Ernest Hemingway a couple of generations ago, now is nurturing a group of youngsters who organized a computer club. I asked mathematics teacher Norman Thompson how it started.

"Dr. Peter Lykos, director of the computer center at Illinois Institute of Technology, gave a talk here," he explained. "The kids were so intrigued that they asked me to be the faculty adviser to a computer club. They accepted Dr. Lykos' invitation to visit the computer center at IIT. Each youngster programmed the Univac 1105. They proved that kids can do it. Now we have a computer class too."

The classroom in which Thompson meets with his class has the usual rows of seats, and blackboards cluttered with math problems. There is a brace of Minivacs 601 machines in the rear. I asked one of the students if he found programming difficult.

"It's far more logical than math," he said, "and it's fun. I can do my programming work in study hall."

Later I visited Dr. Lykos at the IIT computer center. He had come back from his lecture at Oak Park High as excited as the kids. Soon afterwards IIT sent letters to some 200 Chicago area high schools, inviting them to send bright students to the center for a high school (Please turn to page 32)
basic course in computer programming. “Two inexperienced youngsters walked in one day,” Dr. Lykos related, “and in 15 minutes they had come up with a better way to program the computer than the IBM experts had written,” he said.

This spring IIT had 720 high school students running programs on the 1.5 million-dollar computer.

“The basic language of a computer,” explains Charles Bauer, director of secondary school computer science education at the IIT center, “is similar to high school algebra. Within 16 hours we can have any intelligent person running his own program. It takes a lot of the mystery out of computers. They're not flas

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