
Book reviews

The Discovery Method: An International Experiment in Retraining. Employment of Older Workers, series no. 6. By R. M. Belbin. (Pp. 86; 21s.) Paris: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. 1969.

In 1965 the author wrote a book for O.E.C.D. entitled *Employment of Older Workers: Planning Methods*. This described the discovery method of training. The essential idea is that trainees discover for themselves how things work and, in due course, why. Tasks and problems graded in difficulty are presented according to the trainees' existing knowledge and progress. There is no formal verbal instruction or physical demonstration but the instructor gives advice if requested.

The present book presents the results of the application of a number of demonstration programmes in the discovery method in the training of older workers in four member countries of the O.E.C.D. There was some difficulty in setting up adequate experiments in different countries but demonstration cases in Austria, in Sweden, in the United Kingdom, and in the United States were successfully completed. The jobs learnt included stone masonry, scribing, conversion training on railways, machine shop work and data processing.

The results of the four projects taken together seem to justify the conclusion that with appropriate training an age higher than usual for training constitutes no serious disadvantage. The gain from using the discovery method adequately compensates the older learner for the loss of learning ability attributable to age and often produces a situation of near parity between younger and older learners.

The discovery method allows older trainees to become competitive with those younger trainees who have learnt by the traditional method. Whether or not it reaches the level of performance of those younger trainees who learnt by the discovery method depends on the gains which the younger experimental trainees make themselves. Sometimes the latter make a relatively small advance and the gap is closed or eliminated. Occasionally the younger trainees make a big advance and the gap may even widen.

The four demonstration programmes are described in detail in the second part of the book.

This is an interesting report which will be valuable to doctors working in those industries where there is redundancy among older workers and retraining programmes are being instituted.

P. A. B. RAFFLE

Wage Drift, Fringe Benefits and Manpower Distribution: A Study of Employer Practices in a Full Employment Labour Market. By Derek Robinson. (Pp. 178; 30s.) Paris: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. 1968.

How does one get labour to where it is most needed? This is a reasonable question to consider even if one is unsure how to define 'where it is most needed', and it is an interesting question because, although labour is but one economic resource, much of it is notoriously immobile. One answer to the question is to attract labour by higher rates of pay but it is this book's starting point that that answer is a gross oversimplification – general recognition of which is long overdue. The author devotes one of the book's seven chapters to the various forms of pecuniary additions to income that can be granted on top of basic pay and, in the next chapter, he goes on to catalogue the various forms of fringe benefits. The two chapters make up an impressive list of the possible components of the package of rewards that an employer can offer to attract a prospective employee or to retain an existing employee. Later, the author also considers other courses open to an employer seeking labour.

It would be wrong to imagine that an employer has a free hand in forming his recruitment (and retention) policies. Apart from his own preferences, there are pressures generated by other firms in his own industry and by other firms in his own locality; there are pressures generated by organized labour and pressures and inducements generated by fiscal and other governmental measures. Nevertheless, one conclusion is that the typical employer has more means available than most realize. Distinctions are drawn between the measures necessary to recruit labour and the measures necessary to retain it, and between interests of the old and the young among an employee force.

The author does a service to research in this field in pointing out the heterogeneity of practices between plants and even within plants, a heterogeneity which is concealed by the aggregation of statistics and other information in most published forms. It is this heterogeneity that can be used to induce labour to move and to attract particular forms of labour to a plant. The major difficulties, however, are to convey to a prospective employee what the package of rewards offered to him really comprises and for the employee to compare two packages of very different mix.

If the book has a defect it is that the information in it has been collected for the most part from four of the

21 countries in the O.E.C.D., the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. These, it is claimed, may be taken to represent different economic and political structures and collective bargaining situations. This may be so but the reviewer would dearly love to have seen such a thrusting country as Japan or such a powerful economic nation as Germany included.

There is little of particular interest to industrial doctors although the book may form interesting background to their daily work. Any doctors who regard their work as a company-financed service to the employees will be disappointed; scant attention is paid to this fringe benefit. More space is devoted to the provision of insurance-type services which entitle an employee to private medical treatment or hospital services. The reviewer, whose particular interest is in pensions and similar financial fringe benefits, has less reason for pique although a vast range of benefits in this field are not mentioned at all. But this is the specialist looking at the work of a general worker, and it must be accepted that omissions are inevitable in such a short book on such a general subject. There can be little doubt that within a relatively small compass the author has set down the products of a very comprehensive piece of research.

The book has no index but has an extensive list of contents and an excellent bibliography. There are a number of misprints scattered about the book and, whilst none of these is serious, they are rather irritating. Even so, the book must represent a useful addition to the library of anyone concerned with staff administration whether it be at plant, company or national level.

A. A. JENKINSON

The Role of Medical Inspection of Labour. (Pp. 111; 15s. 6d.) Geneva: International Labour Office. 1968.

There is no need to ask for whom this book is intended. On the first page its purpose is clearly set out. 'To provide a handy guide for young medical inspectors and all those responsible in one way or another for protecting workers' health and for accident prevention . . . suitable for use in the developing countries as well as in the industrialized ones. In fact it is in the former that the book will in all likelihood prove more useful . . .'

In 1963 the I.L.O., in co-operation with the W.H.O., held an International Symposium on Medical Inspection of Labour attended by experts from 21 countries. This revealed clearly that in many countries (and not only in developing ones) facilities for specialized training of medical inspectors were inadequate; this finding prompted the production of this book.

There are three parts: 'Inspection Services and Medical Inspectors', 'Inspection Techniques and Methods', and 'The I.L.O. and Labour Inspection'. There is an interesting background note giving a brief historical account of medical inspection which remarks that it was 'really born' in England.

Based as it is on the conclusions of a symposium the book inevitably bears the signs of being a compilation. The different standards of training, duties, and powers in many countries (not singled out by names) are added together to produce a kind of composite picture of the ideal medical inspector, whose range of training, special skills, knowledge, powers, and personal qualities add up

eventually to a somewhat dauntingly accomplished individual. (One medical inspector found, on going steadily through the book, that his normal sense of inadequacy was growing alarmingly.) But these somewhat flippant comments should not be taken seriously and allowed to detract from the many virtues of the book. It contains a great deal of useful guidance about all aspects of medical inspection, which in some countries goes far beyond anything we are used to in Britain. Many important principles, including those to do with the relations of the medical inspector with other 'labour inspectors' and with works medical officers are set out; they are wise, stimulating, and, in some fields, controversial. And even where, from its nature, the book tends to be prolix and repetitious, one constantly comes on the hard, down-to-earth practical comment or advice that shows the hand of the experienced medical inspector.

A. H. BAYNES

The Evolution of Preventive Medicine in the United States Army, 1607-1939. By Stanhope Bayne-Jones. (Pp. 255; 39 illustrations; \$2.50) Washington, D.C.: Superintendent of Documents, United States Government Printing Office; Washington, D.C., 20402. 1968.

In this slender volume the main events relating to the development of preventive medicine and administration in the Medical Service in the United States Army are treated in chronological order. There is probably no one more competent to deal with this topic than Brigadier-General Bayne-Jones. As one of six young American medical officers who joined the British Army within a month after the United States of America entered the First World War, he served as Medical Officer to the Eleventh Battalion of the Sherwood Foresters in the Ypres Salient and was awarded the Military Cross for gallantry in action, to serve subsequently in the Third United States Army during the Occupation. In the Second World War he was Deputy Chief of the Preventive Medicine Service and Technical Director of Research in the Office of the Surgeon-General, United States Army, and was closely associated with the early years of the Army Epidemiological Board (after 1953 the Armed Forces Epidemiological Board), the most potent weapon for research on the control of communicable diseases in the Armed Forces which has ever existed. He was appointed Commander of the British Empire by His Majesty King George VI for outstanding achievements.

This careful summary of several years reading in the National Library of Medicine of the United States Public Health Service, Washington D.C., and elsewhere and of a life-time's experience of an outstanding contributor to military preventive medicine in the 20th century speaks for itself. There is a generous acknowledgment to the lessons learnt by the colonists from the British between 1607 and 1775 and particularly from Pringle (1707-1782), with whom several medical officers of the Revolutionary Army served previously, Lind (1716-1794), and Brocklesby (1722-1797). The subsequent narrative shows how this was followed by the closest association over the succeeding years between the British Army and the United States Army and their civilian consultants and colleagues.