

On and off for the past 22 years I have been picking up unemployed kids on the road between Perth and Dalwallinu. There <sup>has been</sup> ~~is~~ a wave of youngsters on the road looking for work after each increase in unemployment. I first <sup>saw</sup> ~~noticed~~ them in 1961 when unemployment reached a post war high of ~~4%~~ -- a figure not very nearly cost Menzies an election. Again ~~arr~~ around 1972 when unemployment reached ~~5%~~; again in 1975 when unemployment jumped to ~~6%~~; and now again when unemployment stands at ~~6%~~.

These kids are genuine work seekers; they would not be humping a pack on a cold road in winter if they were not. Although I've some experience ~~of~~ sleeping in the open I would not like to change places with them. (Just in passing, for the benefit of those who won't pick <sup>up</sup> hitch hikers I must say that although I have ~~never~~ pick<sup>d</sup> up one or two who smelt a bit, so far as I can recall, I have never found one who was rude or in any way a nuisance.)

They are mostly easy to engage in conversation. Typically, they <sup>not</sup> are ~~in~~experienced in any calling; have little idea of life outside the city; <sup>are</sup> inadequately dressed for the country, let alone the road <sup>and are</sup> ~~not~~ very intelligent or well organised. In short, they (in spite of their willingness.) would make relatively poor employees. Over the years I don't think they have changed much even though with rising levels of unemployment one would <sup>have expected</sup> ~~expect~~ a rising standard. It is also remarkable that their numbers seem to more closely relate to recent changes in employment levels than to the levels themselves. This last might be explained by arguing that high unemployment is discouraging increasing numbers from going to such lengths to find work and it takes another wave of previously employable jobless to put others on the road but I would like to see stronger evidence before making much of that argument.

At the time of the 1961 employment crisis I employed several ~~casual~~ farmhands <sup>like</sup> these hitch hikers: today ~~xxxxxxx~~. so far

~~casual~~ farmhands <sup>like</sup> these hitch hikers: today ~~xxxxxxx~~. so far as I can avoid it ~~not one~~. They have not changed but my farming ~~practices have~~. Today we crop nearly twice the ~~acrage~~ <sup>area</sup> with less ~~than~~ half the labour. Today we have a marked preference for ~~xxxxx~~ high quality ~~xxxxxx~~ men to work expensive equipment. Capital equipment has

replaced labour but it is not the equipment that is the first cause of unemployment. <sup>We did not outlay, for us, big money on tractors,</sup> There are obvious management advantages

in not putting all the <sup>farm's</sup> ~~business~~ eggs in ~~one~~ <sup>few</sup> basket. One big tractor can be very costly if it breaks down at the wrong time. and <sup>an</sup> is/impossible brute when it gets bogged. <sup>It</sup> ~~and~~ is too big for the

many light jobs. A ~~second~~ <sup>big</sup> small unit is needed for those. Many of us resisted the <sup>for</sup> capital expenditure/as long as practical but <sup>the</sup> high cost of <sup>additional</sup> labour exceeded the high cost of ~~xxxxxxx~~ <sup>additional</sup>

~~xxxxxxx~~ interest and depreciation in spite of high interest rates. <sup>been</sup> ~~xxxxxxx~~ Largely unskilled farmhands have <sup>been</sup> priced ~~xxxx~~ out of the market.

**TP** Nobody asked them if they wished it that way or whether they might have <sup>wanted</sup> ~~preferred~~ to gain experience in a low productivity, low paid job, to ~~unemployment~~. Instead we just enacted laws that effectively <sup>all</sup> banned/low productivity jobs by setting minimum wages above the level <sup>individual could sustain</sup> that low/production/~~xxx~~ <sup>support</sup>, condemning the least productive <sup>people</sup> to unemployment and denying them the opportunity to improve their skills.

~~xxxxxxx~~ the Trade Union officials, Industrial judges and politicians might try picking up a few hitch hikers on country roads then ask ~~xxx~~ themselves if they have been fair to some of our weakest citizens. The right to sell ones labour is a basic human right which in Australia is denied by law. If our Constitution ever acquires a ~~bill~~ of rights then that ought to include the right to work.