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From Whence Your Help

Where will you find the men you'll be needing this coming season, or a year or even two years from now?

Capable help is in short supply. This isn't true just in isolated sections of the nation. No state or region is exempt. Nor is any one phase of the industry. Tree care companies can't find enough men to justify the time and money it takes to make them safe and competent workmen. Spraymen are even more pressed. More than half the states now have licensing laws. Requirements vary, but all require a licensed foreman with the equipment at all times. Some even require that the crew be licensed as apprentices. Turf care supervisors today have so much expensive equipment and such high investments in turf that they cannot afford to trust any but trained operators.

The existing situation is critical. Federal job training programs are not the answer. Too few trainees have the capability and responsibility to reach the technical level which the vegetation care industry demands. Many of those who could make the grade and reap a satisfying career cannot see the advantages in the business. Welfare payments of one type or another serve as a block to others who could handle at least part-time hourly jobs. This refusal to accept available jobs cannot be blamed on the pay scale. Minimum wage laws kill this argument.

We believe that the solution for spraymen, tree care companies, and others is a self-help training program. This type program must be preceded by a recruiting effort. Operators need to locate young men, sell them on a career in the business, and then train them over a period of years. Pay advances need to be commensurate with the level of responsibility and technical ability of the trainee, and pay will have to compete favorably with the local labor market.

Companies have been recruiting help for years, though it has been largely at the college level. This is true of golf course management now. We believe the recruitment program will need to reach the high-school youngster, well ahead of his graduation. He may be started on summer work, during which time the operator will be able to judge ability and encourage those young men he feels will be able to help his own business grow. Some financial help for technical schooling may well be in order for those trainees who show promise.

School counselors can suggest careers, but only the operator who knows the business can sit down with a young man and point out the coming technological changes which will challenge many young and capable men.

WEEDS TREES AND TURF is the national monthly magazine of urban/industrial vegetation maintenance, including turf management, weed and brush control, and tree care. Readers include "contract applicators," arborists, nurserymen, sod growers, and supervisory personnel with highway departments, railways, utilities, golf courses, and similar areas where vegetation must be enhanced or controlled.