Editor desires broad audience

WASHINGTON — "Our job is to reach as broad an audience as possible — from economic policymakers to the general reading public."

That is the way Robert W. Fisher, black executive editor of the Bureau of Labor Statistics' widely read Monthly Labor Review, sees his job.

However, Fisher is keenly aware of what he calls "the success of the MLR within a basic limitation."

"MLR is generally read by professionals and students in economics and statistics, by industrial relations practitioners, and so on," Fisher notes. "Most of the rest of the reading public don't read MLR."

As part of a commitment to make the Monthly Labor Review more appealing to the "general reader," Fisher gives high priority to material that meets the needs of the economist and "general reader" interested in economic affairs.

The Review has been changing continually over the years. Articles are increasingly chosen with the total labor force in mind.

In addition to standard information on developments in the fields of labor relations, labor law, consumer prices and employment, on women and their changing role in the work force, on workers of Spanish origin, on youth, and on the "behavioral" approaches to work.

Heading a staff of 11, Fisher keeps a hectic schedule. His days are longer than they used to be as he sifts through potential article material and carries out administrative duties. He also keeps a close watch on the country's economic condition and its effect on the nation's workers.

Selecting material relevant to current economic events with social and political ramifications, Fisher finds the magazine sometimes "walks the line of controversy."

Fisher is no newcomer to the labor and economics scene. He started his Department of Labor career as an economist for the Wage and Hour Division of DOL. Later, he moved to BLS as an economist and writer-editor. His position with MLR has changed over the years.

"I went from a writer to associate editor, then managing editor, and now the executive editorship," Fisher says.

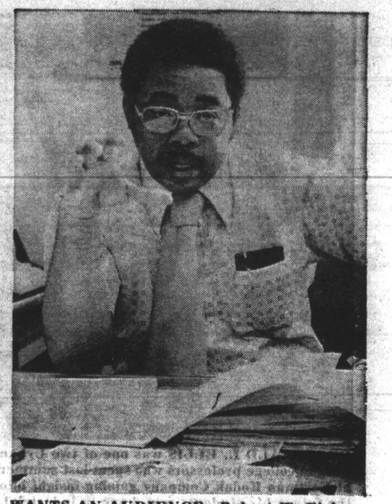
Raised in Detroit, Fisher says, "My father and uncles worked in the automobile factories, and they were part of the drives that organized the plants."

Fisher can remember "the time when blacks had to be sponsored by a minister, or someone, to work in an automobile factory."

Fisher has brought the lessons of his background, ranging from parental guidance, to a brief stint in an auto plant, to his job as executive editor of MLR.

"My folks always taught us to do our best," Fisher says, "and if that won't do, then try again. I think if my personal life has had any effect on my job, it's dedication to doing the best I know how."

The Review's "number one priority," he adds, "is to provide reliable readable information to policymakers and the general public, too."



WANTS AN AUDIENCE—Robert W. Fisher, executive editor of the Labor Department's Monthly Labor Review, wants to reach as broad an audience as possible.

—Job gains

(Continued from Page 7)

furnace and smelter workers, down 29.4 to 22.7 per cent, and gas station attendants, down 12.0 to 10.4 per cent.

The proportion of checkers and inspectors who are black men increased from 4 to 11 per cent, and of bus drivers from 10 to 27 per cent.

In three major categories, farm laborers, laborers except farm, and service workers, excluding private household workers, the occupational participation of black men declined between 1962 and 1974. Counter to the general decline in black male participation in service occupations within the broad group, sizable gains occurred among guards and policemen.

Black women, too, showed an increase in employment from 1962 to 1974, the BLS data showed.

Black women as a proportion of all women in professional jobs experienced an increase from 7 to 10 per cent.

The occupational participation rate for black women accountants increased from 2 to 10 per cent, and for social workers from 14 to 22 per cent.

Small but substantial gains were made by black women managers and salesworkers. More rapid gains were made by black women in clerical occupations with the proportion of all women clerks who are black, increasing from 4 to 9 per cent between 1972 and 1974.

According to the article, black women employed as office machine operators, postal clerks, telephone operators and typists represented 13 per cent or more of all women in these occupations by 1974.

Little change occurred in the occupational participation of black women in skilled craft occupations, where they represented 11 per cent of all women in this major occupational group in 1974. Somewhat greater gains were made in the semi-skilled operative jobs, where the rate increased to 16 per cent.

In groups at the low end of the economic scale, the proportion of all women employees who are black declined or showed no change.

Black female farm laborers and supervisors, for example, declined from 27 to 14 per cent of all female farm laborers.

Although the occupational participation of black female service workers, except private household, showed no change, the proportion of black women among female practical nurses rose from 20 to 24 per cent during the 13-year period.

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How to pick trade, technical schools

By Patricia McCormack

The help wanted ads of the nation's newspapers describe job openings for skilled persons.

The key word: skilled.

For college graduates without a marketable skill, for high school graduates hoping for a good job, for middle-aged persons with obsolete skills there's common puzzlement over how to qualify for one of the promising jobs in the want ads.

Where do you go for "skill training?"

Tom Hebert and John Coyne, education consultants based in Washington, D.C., recommend looking over private trade and technical schools.

They spent 2½ years investigating schools offering skill training. They asked the hard questions:

"Are these fly - by - night schools? How good is the training? Will the training really get me a good job?"

Their report, "Getting Skilled" (Dutton), is a consumer's guide to the private trade and technical schools. The private schools are in business to make a profit. This is in contrast to the public trade schools run on dollars from taxes.

In an interview, Hebert said there are a few bad apples among the private schools but "most deliver on their promises."

The guide is based on interviews with students and parents, recent graduates, school owners and salesmen, plus reports from the Federal Trade Commission and the Better Business Bureau.

The guide is meant to be flipped through and thumbed. It contains a complete listing of schools accredited by the National Association of Trade and Technical Schools.

The listings are arranged two ways. In the first, schools are listed by the training they offer; in the second, by the states in which they are located.

"In the early stages of researching for the guide, we talked to Marshall Palley, director of the New Vocations Center of the American Friends Service Committee in San Francisco," Hebert said.

"Marshall told us what he tells young persons these days. Pick a vocation and stick with it.

"Generalization will come naturally, as you feel the need to expand the job to keep it from becoming dead. If you don't specialize, it's difficult for you to do anything.

"The basis of proprietary (profit - making) school training is the performance contract signed by both student consumer and the school," Hebert said.

"The school agrees to give the training if the student abides by the fee schedule and the school rules. Both sides have to live up to the contract."

The schools tend to be small. Hebert estimated average enrollment is fewer than 300.

"As a result, these schools are friendly, personal places. They are student - centered. We found the trade school owners have a belief in their students that we rarely encountered on college campuses."

At an auto repair school, Hebert was told by the owner:

"We get them to do things they have never done before. We just keep a wrench in their hands. A kid comes back every day if he's learning."

And a welding school president said:

"One feature of our admissions policy is what we call our bad news sheet.

"This is given to every applicant and it lists all the negative aspects of this career. Our first goal with every man is to put him in touch with reality."

The American Council on Education, which each year compiles reports on characteristics of college freshmen, recently did its first "profiles" on trade school students.

Highlights:

—Proprietary school students are more confident of their educational and career plans and more labor market - oriented than other college students.

—Proprietary students view themselves as less likely to change their field of study or career choice or to seek vocational counseling. They are more confident of finding a job in their preferred field.

—In choosing a career, the market - oriented concepts of high earnings, available jobs and career advancement are more important to proprietary students than to college freshmen.

—The trade school students have higher self ratings on academic, artistic and writing abilities, as well as cheerfulness, attractiveness, popularity, drive to achieve, self confidence and understanding, than do community college students.

—Life goals are similar for proprietary and other college students. The proprietary students, however, place a slightly higher value on raising a family and being financially successful.

60 million to seek jobs by end of '80s

PHILADELPHIA — More than 60 million Americans will be looking for jobs before the end of the 1980s.

Who these people are, which industries they will enter, and what types of jobs they will find, are the subjects of a new chart-book, "People and Jobs," prepared by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Philadelphia Regional Office.

According to Alvin I. Margulis, the bureau's regional commissioner, there will be more women seeking work than ever before.

Over the last 25 years, the number of women in the work force has doubled, from 18.5 million in 1950 to 37 million by 1975.

In that same period the number of men working or seeking work increased by about 12 million.

Women will continue to seek work in increasing numbers, according to BLS projections, with more than half of all women over 16 in the labor force by 1990.

The bureau report points out that we also face an increase in population despite declining birth rates. The population should approach 250 million by 1990 as many of the children born in the post World War II baby boom have families of their own.

The number of young workers (16-24) which escalated rapidly in the 1960s and increased less rapidly in the 1970s, will be declining in the 1980s however.

Continued on page 10

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