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Today's Job Market, and Tomorrow's

Federal appropriations for research and development will not increase as rapidly in the next few years as they have in recent ones. Recognition of this change has been marked by the termination of some military contracts, a few layoff and discharge notices, and some talk of "leveling off." Most companies have not hired as many new men this year as they did last. There has been an appreciable decline in the amount of advertising for engineers, scientists, and technicians. The 543 companies and government agencies studied in the recent survey of the Engineering Manpower Commission (*Demand for Engineers, Physical Scientists, and Technicians—1964*) hired 6 percent fewer engineers, mathematicians, and physical scientists in 1963 than they did in 1962, and their recruiting goals for 1964 are 7 percent below those for 1963.

There is real danger of overreacting to these changes in employment opportunities and hiring rates, for the spotlight of public attention will surely be turned upon the termination of a major contract, on the discharge of a group of technical employees, or on anything that can be interpreted as a manpower surplus. One of the exasperating aspects of many discussions of manpower is the undue attention accorded the momentary relation between the number of people employed and the number available for employment. The unhappiness of a competent person who is out of work is not to be minimized, but the simple index of whether there is currently a "shortage" or a "surplus" tells nothing about the gross size of a particular job market and nothing about future trends.

Both short- and long-range aspects of this whole matter are getting high-level attention in government circles, and properly so; government policies are widely influential when nearly 40 percent of the nation's scientists and engineers and more than half of those engaged in research and development are working directly for government agencies or on projects supported by government funds.

But government policy is by no means the only influential factor. Academic scientists and engineers exercise great influence through the advice they give to students and the plans they help their students to make. As a guide for students' plans, tomorrow's job market is at least as important as today's. There are many indications of continued growth in demand. The Engineering Manpower Commission study and recent reports by the American Institute of Physics, the National Science Foundation, and the National Academy of Sciences, while differing in details, all agree that the demand for new graduates in the decade or so ahead will be greater than the prospective supply. The New York Regional Office of the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the College Placement Council report that salaries offered this year to new chemists, engineers, mathematicians, and physicists are higher than salaries offered last year. That rapidly expanding college enrollments will maintain a relatively high demand for teachers is generally recognized. These are better indicators of the future than are the current, and short-term, reactions to changes in the federal budget.

If, too greatly influenced by uncertainties and changes in today's job market, we sell tomorrow's market short, we can expect to be worrying about serious shortages for the next generation.

—DAEL WOLFLE