

Paying the piper is no longer enough

By Jenny Pearson

Once upon a time, when there were many more workers than jobs and the safety net of unemployment benefit was not there to catch the dropouts, someone invented a saying that "He who pays the piper calls the tune." Today, as a recent study of work values in Canada makes abundantly clear, the situation is not so simple. Not only is the piper choosy about what tunes he plays, but if he doesn't like the way the master calls, he may not deign to play at all.

Canadians, in other words, will work if the job fits. The survey, carried out by the Government's Department of Manpower, uncovers all sorts of motives other than pay which determine how, when and where the modern worker will lift his finger. It finds a lot of people dissatisfied with their jobs and frankly not working to their full ability — illustrating American psychologist Abraham Maslow's idea about a hierarchy of needs, in which, having satisfied his basic needs, man must then be able to strive for higher forms of fulfilment, or he becomes discontented.

Colin Wilson sums up the situation when he discusses Maslow in his book *New Pathways in Psychology*: "Business efficiency and the recognition of 'higher ceilings of human nature' are not incompatible; on the contrary, the highest levels of efficiency can *only* be obtained by taking full account of the need for self-actualisation that is present in every human being."

Workers' requirements

Conclusions from the survey are that the jobs which attract workers are those which give them wider opportunities to develop their abilities, to advance their careers and to mesh work with family, friends and other external interests. Employers, it seems, will have to offer more freedom on the job, upgrade the quality of supervision and realise that money is not the only incentive — or they will not get the manpower they need.

A profile of the "average" Canadian worker which emerges from the study is in itself a sufficient pointer to the need for management to improve the scene in order to use the work force to better advantage.

Mr., Mrs. or Miss Average Worker sees himself (herself) as a productive employee, but believes he (she) could produce more if he (she) tried. The worker relies on work mainly to achieve material goals, but expects to get more than just financial rewards for the job.

He would rather work for the minimum wage than collect unemployment insurance, but believes that a person should not have to work at a minimum wage. He has a strong sense of commitment to his job, and is also committed to his employer, but doesn't plan to spend the rest of his career with his present employer. He derives as much satisfaction from his job as does his American or West German counterpart, but if he had to do it all over again, he would think twice before accepting the same position.

Fully three-quarters of Canadians say the main reason they work is "so I can have money to do things other than basic necessities." But only 16 per cent viewed work solely in terms of income.

Work is considered a more important key to success than family and friends, and is second only to family as a source of personal satisfaction and self-fulfilment. Some 70 per cent of Canadians say they work "more because I like to than because I have to." In trade-off situations, work usually loses out to family, but wins over friends and over leisure.

Career Aspirations

Percentage of respondents viewing present job as:

	16-19	20-24	25-34	35+
An expanding career	18	43	54	47
A blocked career	4	9	10	20
Not a career, though respondent wants one	73	32	18	7
Not a career, but respondent doesn't want one.	5	17	19	27

Is the availability of unemployment benefit making Canadians selective about accepting work? Ninety-nine per cent of workers deny that they would rather collect benefits than work, though the percentage dips to 68 if the work were to pay only the minimum wage. But since it is mainly upper-income employees who are disdainful of the minimum wage, the study concludes:

"Those most likely to be offered jobs at the minimum wage were least likely to reject them on grounds that the minimum wage is dehumanising or that

unemployment insurance is preferable. However, there were still a fair number of Canadians (61 per cent) who stated those feelings." In other words, there appears to be some discrepancy between theoretical attitudes and behaviour when these are put to the test.

In considering a new job, 43 per cent consider pay the most important factor, but 49 per cent rate the type of work uppermost. Half the applicants would be put off taking a job by poor work conditions and a larger proportion if they didn't like the boss. Yet 63 per cent concede that they would "work for anybody or at anything" if the alternative was unemployment.

Sore point

Comparisons of what Canadian workers consider to be the most important of job satisfactions with the satisfactions they actually derive from their work show that the greatest sore point is opportunity for promotion. The study points out that "career paths do not exist from nurse to doctor, secretary to executive, and stock-room assistant to manager. Employees are 'slotted' into openings that they may or may not fit." It blames "artificial hiring requirements, credentialism, and restrictive seniority" for creating rigidities that limit job mobility.

Challenge and growth emerge as the second most important cause of frustration. Jobs that do not provide sufficient freedom, demanding tasks, or opportunities to develop one's abilities result in "under-employment of a kind."

Canadians also indicate they would like to have better resources — adequate information, help and equipment — for carrying out their jobs. Less urgent are pay and job security, the merits of supervisors and the competence of co-workers. The study notes, however, "what displeases Canadians most about the supervision they receive is the fact that it does not assist them to grow on the job and thus get ahead. Only with respect to personal relations on the job and the comfort and convenience of work do Canadians as a whole appear to be quite satisfied."

But for all the grumbles, comparison with similar studies in the United States and Germany finds a higher degree of job satisfaction in Canada than in either of the other two countries. In Canada, 89 per cent of workers say they are either "somewhat" or "very" satisfied with their employment. The comparable percentage for the United States is 85 per cent, for West Germany 86 per cent.

The Canadian study, designed to help employers who want to recruit and hold conscientious workers, notes a catch in the generalisations derived from the survey, which is that the balance among job aspirations varies according to age and sex. (Some of the age variables are indicated in the accompanying table). So in interpreting and applying the study, manage-