

# Human Resources Key to U.S. Wealth

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## Our Changing Economy

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**I**S AMERICA really wealthy?

In the script for a Christmas pageant sent me last week, Reader I says that half the total income of the world is received by Americans. Reader II says the average American has 12 times as much electrical power, 22 times as much coal, 21 times as much oil and gasoline, 50 times as much steel and 50 times as much equipment of all kinds as the average non-American.

In this sort of talk, drummed daily into our dear little ears, there is often the not-so-faint suggestion that we are a superior people. Even Caesar Augustus didn't have a Cadillac.

To be sure a note of humility is sometimes struck. We are reminded that our forefathers were worthy people. Mary, the mother of Jesus, who had to wash dishes and clothes by hand even without detergents, was a noble woman. Fortune should not make us proud. It behooves us to be generous to those who don't have all that we "enjoy."



Brown

## What Is the Wealth of a Nation?

What we are not told is that this Nation, with a GNP of \$500 billion, is very poor with respect to much of its human resources.

- Of the 18 million young Americans who were screened by Selective Service during World War II, 5 million were found to have had sufficiently serious mental, emotional or physical deficiencies to cause them to be rejected. And it wasn't because the standards were high. Of those who were accepted, some 750,000 were discharged because of mental or emotional defects.

- Some 10 million adult Americans are "functional illiterates," without knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic equivalent to that of a child who has completed four years of elementary schooling.

- Lack of opportunity is everywhere evident. The number of persons scoring 125 or above on IQ tests (the upper 6 per cent of our population) could be increased fourfold, so Douglas Bray points out, if a moderately favorable family and neighborhood environment were available to all children. About 5000 of those in the Army during World War II, in the very top mental group, had not gone beyond the eighth grade.

- Many young and middle-aged persons are physically

or emotionally disabled and unable to work. A larger number, though not wholly disabled, are so emotionally disturbed as to be ineffective citizens.

- Several million of our older people are dependent almost solely on others for their support and for meeting the normal demands of daily living; they cannot work, travel, feed themselves, dress, or communicate adequately without aid — though a great many of them could be rehabilitated to a point of self-care or even employment.

- Then there are others whom Adam Smith once referred to as "the mutilated and deformed in a still more essential part . . . those without the proper use of their intellectual facilities." These are "more contemptible than even a coward" because of their superstitions and prejudices.

How many are there in this last group? Well, it takes a Senator McCarthy, or the ugly picketing of an elementary school in New Orleans to give us a clue. Then we realize how poor we are and how precariously we live. We sense that our political stability depends more on the fortuitously equal (or nearly equal) division of the intellectually deformed between our two great parties than upon our genius for self-government.

## We Could Be Wealthy

No, we are not a wealthy Nation. We are a lucky Nation — lucky in that we have an opportunity, such as no other nation ever had, to become wealthy. If in the decade ahead we will not waste our human resources by unemployment, underemployment, inadequate training, and arbitrary barriers to employment, we may yet achieve a degree of affluence.

Adam Smith said: "If a society were annually to employ all the labor which it can annually purchase . . . the produce of every succeeding year would be vastly greater in value than that of the foregoing. But there is no [such] country . . ." It was Smith, more than other economists, who spoke out against special privilege and deplored the lack of educational and job opportunities.

Job opportunity is a wonderful cure for many ills. It is the one gift that millions of Americans want above all else for Christmas. The giving requires, in many cases, special training and breaking barriers of discrimination. It requires also imagination to realize that it is the duty of government to invest in people; it requires enlightened fiscal policies designed to eliminate waste of human resources.

If we will but give the gift of work to every American who will accept it, this Nation may become truly wealthy.