

No making hay on Maggie's Farm

William Dew



"I ain't gonna work on Maggie's Farm no more." Maggie's Farm being a euphemism for the wheeling and dealing field of our capitalistic society.

Immortal words from a Bob Dylan song but for me all the more real after only six months of trying to find work on Maggie's Farm. For me the line looms large like an epitaph especially after a refusal for a job I thought I was a dead cert.

Now don't get me wrong, I'm not one of those whining sorts who feels he's being picked on cause he can't find work. I admit I was very fussy about what I'd take when I first joined the unemployed ranks. At that time I thought of myself as being 'between jobs'. But as time went on my terms of reference for an occupation fluctuated quite a lot with me varying between driving a digger to fronting a television show.

Needless to say I'm doing neither and it's taken months for me to decide some things need to be written about the faceless nameless statistics currently unemployed in New Zealand.

Social concern

Most days in the newspapers there are articles on the social cost of unemployment with lots of concern from

social workers who are in the front line of dealing with the effects of unemployment. But most of the talk about unemployment comes from those who know least about it, the bueracrats and politicians. It's got to the stage with me that when I hear a 'concerned' person say "there's plenty of work for those that want to", I no longer rise to the bait.

In the beginning there was plenty of advice from acquaintances of jobs they knew were going. Upon checking I found a lot of the jobs were ones full-time staff wouldn't touch and so temporary help was needed to clear the backlog. That's been the case with quite a few I've applied for, temporary jobs for temporary people. Seems the lean times bring out the economic wizard in us all and the hiring of temporary staff where a full-time position was before, is here to stay.

Psyched up

I guess you could say I've been a lucky one with several temporary jobs paying the rent and food bills for my family. However they do require quite

an adjustment in the psych, planning schooling for the children and just where I'll be next year or even next month. If I want to work at what I want to work at, I've had to mentally prepare myself and my family to shift out of Auckland and even overseas. On the other hand I like it were I am and accordingly have applied for jobs not at all to my liking but situated in this city.

Faceless employers

That brings me to a point about applying for jobs. There's quite a technique in being suitably vague to an ad that's in turn so vague that some times the firms name is omitted in favour of an anonymous box number. I know I find it hard to enthuse about my past work experience to someone who wants to remain faceless.

And then there's the stock replies usually beginning with "there was a very high standard of applicants". The best one I got was from a television channel which shall remain nameless. To my three applications over a period of four months for separate jobs, I received regretful replies addressed to my wife, who needless to say had a full-time job looking after me and who doesn't need any more work.

Then there's the government jobs which don't exist for people who are