

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

nearly as many low-wage jobs in the United States today as in 1967. Jobs paying less than the current \$2.65-per-hour minimum wage are readily available in exempt industries, such as food service, and in other categories like domestic service, where enforcement is lax. Spurned by many Americans, these jobs are attractive to the illegal aliens moving in at the bottom of the wage structure.

Nevertheless, Wachter argues, available statistics suggest that about 50 percent of all illegal aliens earn wages at or above the legal minimum. Assuming that illegal aliens constitute 30 percent of the nation's lowest-skilled labor, if all of them were forced to leave the country, wages at the bottom of the job ladder would be driven up. Of the estimated 6 million jobs now held by illegal aliens, Wachter estimates, as many as 3.5 million jobs might simply disappear. Some 2.5 million would be taken by low-skilled U.S. citizens at higher wages, and the U.S. unemployment rate (5.7 percent as of June 1978) would drop by approximately 1.2 percent.

Illegal immigration, however, is likely to continue, Wachter predicts. The United States badly needs the low-wage labor to supplement the shortage of teen-agers entering the labor pool. The only real question is whether the immigrant labor will be legal or illegal. Wachter concludes that Washington must decide soon whether to open or shut U.S. borders, or to introduce a system of temporary "guest" workers like that which exists in Western Europe.

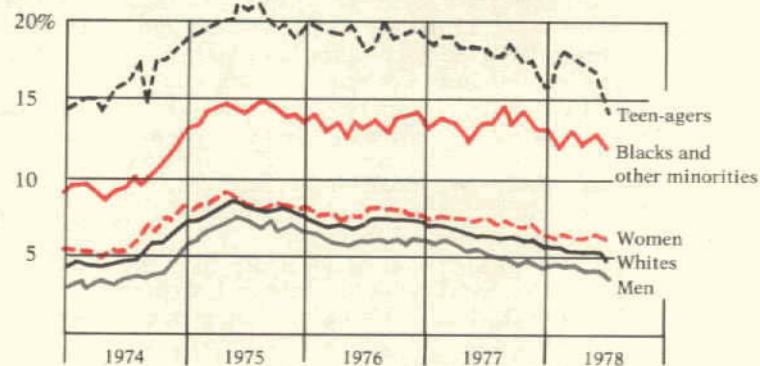
Reassessing the Distress Factor

"Unemployment: It's Not What It Used to Be" by Harrison H. Donnelly, in *Congressional Affairs* (July 15, 1978), 1414 22nd St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037.

Unemployment in the United States fell sharply in June—down from 6.1 percent in May to 5.7 percent—but economists disagree on the validity of these figures and how to interpret them. Increases in welfare and unemployment benefits for example, which permit people to remain out of work for longer periods, and the larger numbers of women and young people in the work force have combined to lessen the value of simple unemployment figures as an indicator of America's overall economic distress or well-being.

"The unemployment rate," says Donnelly, a reporter for *Congressional Quarterly*, "conceals vast differences among subgroups of the population." For example, the unemployment rate for blacks and other minorities was 11.9 percent in June 1978, more than double the moderate 4.9 percent level for all whites; the adult female unemployment rate was 6.1 percent, compared with 2.9 percent for men; the unemployment rate for black women was 11.3 percent, versus 7.8 percent for black males; and the unemployment rate for minority teen-agers was 37.1 percent.

But the "discomfort" of being unemployed is far less today than in the past. Almost three-fifths of all American families have more than

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS**SELECTED UNEMPLOYMENT RATES**, seasonally adjusted

one breadwinner. And unemployment insurance provides succor for the short-term or seasonal jobless. (The June figures show that almost half of the unemployed had been out of work for less than five weeks.)

A National Commission on Unemployment Statistics is now studying new definitions of employment and unemployment that could make a substantial difference in the way local and national jobless rates are computed. Current methods, Donnelly notes, exclude from the ranks of the unemployed the estimated 842,000 "discouraged" workers who have given up trying to find a job. Moreover, persons seeking part-time work are counted as unemployed, while members of the armed forces are not considered part of the nation's labor force, thereby skewing unemployment rates, especially in areas near large military bases.

SOCIETY***The (Un)Happy
Homemaker***

"Are Working Women Really More Satisfied?" by James D. Wright, in *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (May 1978), National Council on Family Relations, 1219 University Ave. S.E., Minneapolis, Minn. 55414.

The number of working women in the United States has jumped sharply in recent years (the labor-force participation rate for women over 16 increased from 31.8 percent in 1947 to 46.1 percent in 1974), but social scientists still disagree as to who leads the more satisfying life—the full-time mother and housewife or the woman with a job outside the home.

Some studies have tended to support the "bored housewife" theme;