Women are ready and finding 'new' career jobs

By Bernice F. David

NEW YORK — "Women are going into all kinds of job areas now," said Gwendolyn G. Poole, coordinator of the National Urban League's women's component. This program is part of the labor affairs program of the Urban League and has been responsible for placing nearly 1,000 women in jobs across the country.

Ms. Poole maintains that there are several factors in the recent trend toward steering women into jobs traditionally held by men.

"First of all, the skilled trade jobs overwhelmingly pay more than the traditional 'good' jobs for women," she said.

Secondly, she attributes the growing popularity of these jobs to "the amount of media coverage now going toward women in non-traditional jobs. Women are now visible in these jobs — it's not as far-fetched a notion as it once was," she added.

Another important reason is the passage of civil rights and equal opportunity laws during the late 1960s and early 70s.

Whatever the reason, more women are joining their sisters in non-traditional jobs as electricians, carpenters, truck drivers, copy machine repairers, and heavy equipment operators.

Many of the jobs woman are now taking require them to work outdoors or to do what used to be considered hard or dangerous work for women. But many women are finding that although the work is tiring, it's not impossible.

Annette McClain works on the Alaska pipeline in Tacoma, Wash. She fits together the pieces of the pipeline before they are shipped north. She says, "My job requires that I lift pipes and during the first couple of weeks I had more muscles, but after that it wasn't a problem."

Although some male co-workers resent women working alongside them, others are unconcerned or even helpful.

"We were warned that some of the older men would probably be harder to get along with, but we've found just the opposite to be true," said Thelma Howard, a carpenter's helper in Columbia, S.C. Some women however, have found that younger men accepted their presence on the job site more easily.

But most women working in non-traditional jobs agree that each worker must be able to handle the job individually.

Yvette Montgomery was a cable television installer on the West Coast for three months before quitting her job because of all the climbing it entailed. "The one thing I quickly came to realize was that you can't expect a man to help you when you're getting the same pay check he is," she said.

That pay check is what draws many women to jobs in the skilled trades. Apprentices in training in such areas as carpentry, electrical work and plumbing usually earn about $6 an hour and fully qualified workers, or journeymen, usually earn about $10 an hour.

Salaries of other blue collar jobs vary, but more often than not, they pay more than traditional jobs for women. In addition, unions offer good fringe benefits for apprentices.

These jobs usually only require a high school diploma or GED certificate. They offer paid on-the-job training and sometimes include classroom work.

Apprentices are required to pass entrance exams held by their unions, but programs such as the Urban League's Labor Education Advancement Program are located in 42 cities across the country to help minority men and women pass these tests.

Salary was critical for Suezanne Turner, who was unemployed in Richmond, Va., before she became a machine operator trainee at a local chemical plant.

She now earns $5.85 an hour, after a year on the job. Not only has she gained a new sense of self-worth, "I'm still amazed to know I can handle the job," she says, but the job also enabled her to support her son.

For until recently, Ms. Turner was, like many of the women who hold non-traditional jobs, the head of her household. Many of these women are divorced or are widows who face the same financial responsibilities as the men with whom they work.

Today one out of every five households is headed by a woman and for minority families that figure is even higher.

And what do families and friends think about mothers and wives who are non-traditional workers?

Ms. McClain replied, "At first my children wanted to know how I got so dirty at work. But after I explained that I had to use tar to put the pipes together, they understood."

Thelma Howard recalled that she was hesitant to tell her friends about her new job as a carpenter.

"I guess I was afraid they might look down on me," she admitted. But her family was supportive and although she didn't tell many of her friends what she was doing until after she had moved, she did write and tell those whose friendship she valued.

"One friend in particular was really surprised, but after we talked about it, he realized that I was doing something I really liked and wanted to do," she said.

There are many other kinds of jobs that are now open to women. White collar jobs are no longer considered the only

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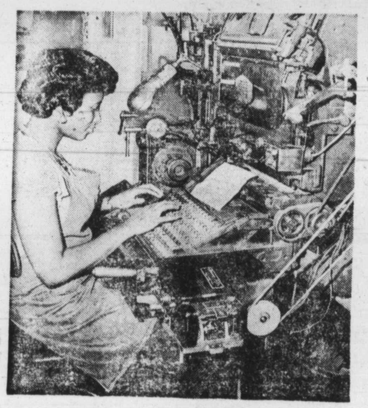

LINOTYPE OPERATOR—Miss Candace Price is the only woman at the AFRO who sets type on the linotype machines although during World War II a number of them did.

(AFRO Staff photo by Newson).

A NUMBER OF MEN, are doing jobs once thought of for women-only and here, Tal Harris, a Pan-American steward for four years, shows off the safety vest and high altitude breathing apparatus during April flight from London to New York. Harris is from Milwaukee but resides in Europe now.

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Advance planning averts surprises about full costs of going to college

NEW YORK — With the total cost of college going up in September, 1976, from 5 per cent to 9 per cent over this year's costs according to a recent survey by the College Entrance Examination Board, more families than ever may be thinking about financial aid as one way of paying college bills.

If you're among these families, give yourself the best chance of receiving the money you'll need by doing some careful planning now.

Start by getting the most reliable and current information possible on what college really costs and how much your family can afford to contribute. The difference between costs and your contribution will indicate your need for financial assistance — and colleges award most financial aid to families that can show they need it.

When it comes to financial planning for college, don't rely on outdated cost information. Also, be sure to take into account the five basic components of a student budget — tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, transportation, and personal expenses — plus any extra amount.

Here are some facts from the survey of 1976-77 costs at 2,500 colleges contained in the book, "Student Expenses at Postsecondary Institutions," 1976-77, published by the college board:

— Total costs at private four-year colleges next year will average between $4,100 and $4,600 depending on whether you live at home or on campus.

— Private two-year colleges cost about $400-$500 less than their four-year counterparts.

— Public four-year colleges will cost between $2,400 and $2,800 in 1976-77. But for students who are not residents of the state in which the public college is located, additional tuition charges can range anywhere from $100 to $1,500 per year.

— Total costs at public-two year colleges will be $200 to $400 less than those of four-year public colleges.

Proprietary schools (privately-owned, profit-making institutions) could cost between $3,700 and $4,200 for a nine-month period. These schools are usually concerned with preparing students for a particular business position or industry, skilled trade or some other occupation.

— Of the five types of expenses, tuition and fees vary the most from one type of college to another — sometimes by as much as $2,000. For example, tuition and fees next year will average between $387 at public two-year colleges and $2,329 at private four-year colleges.

— Differences in total costs for residents and commuters at the same type of college range from $200 to $500.

Commenting on the need of families to have current information on college costs, Elizabeth W. Suchar, director of financial aid services for the College Scholarship Service said, "A good deal of information is available on choosing a college, and on the kinds of student financial aid provided by federal and state governments, private agencies and colleges themselves.

"But all too often, there's little easy-to-use information about the full cost of the kind of educational program the student will pursue."

She said complete information on next year's total costs at 2,500 colleges is available in the new edition of "Student Expenses at Postsecondary Institutions, 1976-77," by Stephen Ivens, Edmund C. Jacobson and Elizabeth W. Suchar.

Check with your counselor or librarian for a copy of the book to help you and your family plan for college.

To obtain your copy, send $2.50 to College Board Publication Orders, Box 2815, Princeton, N.J. 08540. Ask for item number 3179427 to speed up delivery.

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