

16 Waratah Crescent,
Bunbury, W.A. 6230.
Tuesday 13th April 1999.

The Secretary,
House of Representatives Standing Committee
On Employment, Education and Workplace Relations,
Suite R 1 116, Parliament House,
Canberra, A.C.T. 2600.

Dear Sir,

RE: EMPLOYMENT INQUIRY

I write to make a formal submission to your inquiry in the first instance as a participant of a voluntary redundancy package, now seeking full time employment. In short I am 52 years of age, with a deal of attributes acquired in both the rural and transport industries.

My current situation has began to evolve in 1988 in what began as a "Fill in" situation due to the economical climate and the lack of opportunities.

- In January of 1997, due to restructuring we were offered a voluntary redundancy package of 2 weeks pay for every year of service - an agreement between my employer, and the union. I believe it was a scheme of arrangements devised to persuade a problem employee to leave. Because the good old boot out the gate system had itself become redundant. However, I'd had enough of what was an impossible situation and decided to except the offer myself.
- On the 18th April '97 I wrote to my employer to informing them I had excepted the redundancy offer. Moreover, that I would terminate my employment on Friday the 2nd of May 1997. Subsequently I was informed that date would not be suitable, as the restructure would not take part until May.
- At the end of August following **a last minute attempt by my employers to renege on the deal** – I finally left the company, the entire sordid episode some 8 months in the making. A very ordinary departure after 9 years of service in what was not the easiest of jobs.
- Undeterred and having put the episode in the "That's life" file, in October I obtained a position with another company, only to find the situation there to be a complete disaster. In essence I refused to work 14/16 hours a day, just to fit in with a bunch of dipsticks trying to make a million dollars overnight because the operation was not going to plan.
- Apart from the safety factors, the situation was denying the other 110 plus applicants the opportunity to work - even part time.
- **In fact the entire operation has now ceased - permanently - some \$500 Million down the shute.**

Again I put it down to experience and booked myself into 6 part time computer course modules and a Management / Marketing course at the local TAFE. **at my expense**. Then registered with every employment agency in Bunbury. In addition I began a research and development program for a product which I hope eventually to market as a patented product.

The next phase of my re-employment strategy concerns the dealings with the agencies, my Local Federal Member Mr. Prosser and Federal Employment Minister Kemp.

- Having discovered that because I was not eligible for un-employment benefits, I was not being offered any positions, I undertook the following procedures.
- I wrote to the Federal Minister twice, only to be fobbed off by an assistant secretary. **who iust plain did not read. comprehend, or both. the context of my letters.**
- However, my local member managed to go one better. After writing to him with my concerns about the matter, He sent me copy of the letter sent by the Federal Minister to another constituent, with "HER" name and address blocked out using a textacolor pen. Which [the letter] by the way, went absolutely no where toward addressing the problem either.
- I keep going back to the agencies to see if there are any positions available, and ask why I had **never** been offered any job opportunities. Moreover, in this past 12-month period they had never had any positions to which my qualifications and experience were aligned. - **With absolutely no result.**
- **SINCE I REGISTERED 16 MONTHS AGO - TO THIS DAY I HAVE NEVER BEEN OFFERED ANY VOCATIONAL SITUATION FROM ANY EMPLOYMENT AGENCY.**
- In December last year [1998] one agency wrote, included a form, and asked if I could update my particulars. No mention of any enhancement of skills or qualifications, just am I still looking for / or found work.- One week after I had walked in their door and informed them, that I was about to complete the TAFE courses I had listed and was going to pass.
- Moreover, every time I approached these agencies, they proceed to the manual filing system out the back, not on the computer.
- Subsequently of course, I also continued to look for positions using the West Australian, and the Weekend Australian Newspapers. In general I found the Intemet services to be somewhat outdated, or with listings of high turnover positions not aligned to my preferences or qualifications. Then again, turnover is a pre-request for any successful business.
- In the 10 years we have lived in Bunbury there has only ever been three positions actually advertised for, within the sphere of my attributes.
- The Manager at my last place of employment told, of how they had over 110 applications for positions without even advertising, when they commenced operations. Subsequently, it must still be whom you know not what you know locally. That's how I obtained my position with that company.
- I have actually lost count of the number of positions I have applied for as I only keep copies of letters I received a reply to. However the figure would be within the sphere of **35 to 40 positions.**

The Situations were either aligned directly to, or in some cases above **my then** current qualifications but within the bounds of my experience. They were Geographically situated from Central Queensland, to New South Wales, Victoria and Westem Australia. All of which I had lived and worked in previously. From which I received either of the following:-

1. Absolutely no reply what so ever.

2. A letter thanking me for my application and informing me that they would be in contact regarding an interview. Then never heard from again.
3. Received 1,2,or sometimes 3 letters over a 2/6 week period. Even the odd interview.
4. A letter thanking me for my application stating without explanation that they had decided not to go ahead with the situation. There have been 4 or 5 of them.
5. I even applied to my old employer for an advertised position, as a previous opportunity offered did not come to fruition, thinking I may be re-considered.
6. A letter explaining what good attributes I had however, there were **92 applications** for the position and consequently you were not to be granted an interview. Then I read a month or two later in the rural press, that the position selling Gum Trees was given to a kid with a Ph.D in everything who's hardly even been around the block.

However, that is really was only the beginning of what defies description. The following series of applications have for reasons that will become obvious, been set aside for special mention.

1. I applied to a West Australian Government department for a position on the 7/9/98. I received confirmation of the application from them on the 14/9/98. Then, some **13 weeks & 3 days later** on the 17th of December they posted a letter stating my application had been un- successful.
 - I wrote a letter of complaint to the relevant Minister about the exorbitant amount of time it had taken. The explanation was that they in fact had to "APPOINT SEVEN [7] OFFICERS". How traumatic that must have been.
 - The fact was they already had the runs on the board. I had applied for two other positions in March and June of that year, which took 5/6 weeks to receive a reply to.
 - As I explained to the minister, I had no complaint about not getting the position. That's life. However, with Xmas a week away into the equation, how are people supposed to organize their life? There is children's schooling and everything else to consider when you have the possibility of being dispatched to a remote area 3000 kms away.
2. Next cab off the rank was a Victorian Government Department I applied to in February 1999. Like a shot out of a gun on the 3/3/99 back came a reply, stating that my application was "under consideration".
 - On the 17/3/99 I receive a further letter stating that I had not been successful in my application, **"FOR A POSITION I DID NOT APPLY FOR"**.
 - Three [3] days later I receive **another** letter also dated the 17/3/ apologizing and stating **"THAT THEY HAD MADE AN ERROR, HOWEVER YOUR APPLICATION FOR THE POSITION YOU APPLIED FOR WAS ALSO UNSUCCESSFULL"**.
 - Then an advertisement appeared in the Weekend Australian, for a similar position based in Canberra with the Commonwealth government. No prizes for guessing what happened there.
 - That's 10 working days to decide who's appointed to a Senior Management position in Victoria, with a monumental cockup into the bargain. And 13 1/2 weeks to decide who does the Border Patrol in

Western Australia. Moreover, the writer is now beginning to wonder why he does not look to acquiring a Human Resources Management position.

3. The next example again concerns another West Australian government department, somewhat higher in profile. As you will see it is also a bizarre series of events.
 - I applied for a position on the 9th. Of March 1999 advertised in the **West Australian newspaper**.
 - On the 23rd. of **March** they wrote thanking me for my application advertised in the Public Sector magazine, which I have never seen let alone read.
 - That there had been an error and the Position [A] **that I had not applied for** was to be advertised in the West Aust. Along with position [B] Which is where the position was advertised in the first place.
 - In plain English, they wrote stating I had applied for position [A] when I had applied for position [B] in the West Aust. Paper which they say they didn't advertise in when in fact they had.
 - They then stated if I wished to have my application for position [B] Considered, so they obviously had not read my application, and to which I had already applied for, to forward the relevant information [which they already have] before the new closing date of, **WAIT FOR IT - the 20. Of April 1999 !!**
 - That is at least 43 days from conception to the revised closing date. Subsequently, for the very first time I decided that I would not bother wasting the paper and reply.

Once again a total cock up and obviously no concern what so ever, that people are out there who want to work now! This week not in a couple of months time. Moreover, I guarantee this much, when you are subjected to these types of situations, and the monumental mistakes that are made by people who are supposedly **“QUALIFIED”** I now really wonder what the hell you have to do to get a job.

4. The last example concerns a high profile Federal government authority, and I would like to make 1 very clear from the outset, that their handling of the situation was by all accounts, beyond reproach. However, over 7 **months**, it became obvious they were not without their Senior Management and Ministerial problems.
 - Having aspired to be involved in this type of vocation for a number of years I replied to an advertisement on the **14th. Of August 1998**.
 - On the **28th. Of August 1998** they wrote acknowledging my application.
 - On the **8th. Of September 1998** I received a second letter stating that the selection process was to be delayed for 4 weeks due to an organisational initiative and would recommence in October 1998.
 - On the **3rd. of November 1998** I received a third letter, updating the situation, stating that a review was again under way and the findings were expected later that month. Moreover, at that time the recruitment exercise would again recommence. And that I would be given the opportunity to reconfirm my interest.
 - Unfortunately that opportunity did not come to fruition.

- Then on the **9th. Of March 1999**. I received a forth and final letter apologizing for the extended delay, thanking me for my patience, that my application had not been successful, and stating, “I would encourage you to apply for positions in the future”.
- What concerned me, is that it obviously took 7 months for this organization to **obtain approval** and complete a recruitment exercise. This organization is charged with the responsibility of maintaining National security.
- Yet somewhere along the chain of Managerial operations, some person or persons effectively blocked there every move to just "get on with the job at hand". Which is an appalling set of circumstances. And again those applying for a position left wondering for months where the hell they are going.

Had there been any examples of similar circumstance, from the private sector, I would have **no hesitation** of including those as well. This is not a government bashing exercise on my part. To date the private sectors operations align with the first group of operatives. And to tell the absolute truth, neither situation is worse than the other, when you're on the receiving end.

My contention was to except voluntary redundancy as the best option because I had a deal more to contribute, and further enhance my vocational attributes. As previously stated I am 52, NOT DEAD but that seems to be a real problem with prospective employers.

Unfortunately I fear a further consensus of opinion with many, is that recipients of redundancy packages voluntary or not, want the easy way out and are not a good re-employment prospect. At least I hope that is the reasoning because if it isn't then I just ran out of ideas.

What is even more disturbing is the number of people in my age group, who cannot make any transition to the technologically advanced workplace. If indeed such a place is actually going to exist.

I do not wish to create the wrong impression here, Technology, having taken the plunge, just blows me away. But its hardly going to be any good if the majority of the population can't handle it.

The other major factor concerning the rural industry or any industry for that matter, can best be explained by my own experiences. I was employed by a Woolbroking Co-Op in a regional country town in Northern N.S.W. and before that in South West Queensland.

During the mid- 70's there were 7 Woolbrokers and Private agencies in the N.S.W. town. Now there are 3 Woolbrokers and a couple of Private agencies. The ones that have gone were due to takeovers and it was they who were the employers. All undertaken for the good of “economical rational”.

Which of course is the tertiary institutional phrase for Bullshit.

Every company I, and many colleagues worked for, simply no longer exist.

Institutions with clientele of two and three generations. All disposed of for the betterment of who? Not the client, there commission charges have never been reduced. And certainly not for the benefit of the employees either, Managers included.

Consequently, the government of the day must realize that these amalgamations, merger, whatever you call them, **"have not now, nor in hindsight ever been in "everybody's" interest.** It started in earnest within the rural industry with Dalgety and The New Zealand Loan Co. in the 60's as memory serves me and no

doubt before that. Surely, we have come to a time in history when the- "**Us first and bugger everybody else**" attitude, nee, assumed right, has to be properly addressed?

Otherwise we are heading for a total imbalance of people without the appropriate fundamental opportunities in life. Society as we know it now, will self-destruct.

Given the opportunity that's all people want "A proper job".

Yes, there are a number of factors which have contributed toward unemployment. Global trading, Technology and all the rest. But from the mine-face it has been the insatiable appetite of large corporations to buy and merge with everything in sight, **what ever** the cost, during my 30 years in the workforce, that has done the almost irreversible damage.

I am a great believer of the free enterprise system, and firmly believe that it is the only way to go. However, it was born of a bygone era and my contention is that the legislation under which it operates has unfortunately outlived its judicial capacity.

Sure you can blame technology and a bit of competition, however my contention is that it's the lack of competition within Australia that is one of the major problems. Anybody can blame a computer, we do it all the time, but in reality it's not much of an argument.

There is absolutely no doubt in my mind, that the best working environment in my experience, has been a medium employee / clientele situation.

In conclusion, there are those people I have been dealing with over the past 16 months that obviously do not address their vocational obligations properly. Perhaps it is time they were informed that there is a lot out here in the real world, willing and wanting to have a crack at it. **THEIR JOB !** What's even more to the point, in a majority of cases judging by the current spate of performances, they would undoubtedly do a better job.

Yours Faithfully,

JOHN. M. BAIN.