

Jobs go begging

Canucks shun work while trying to keep immigrants out

BOB SILVER'S looking for people who want to do an honest day's work — but Manitobans aren't exactly knocking his door down to apply.

Silver has openings for about 100 jobs at his company — jobs for which training is available in the industry and which offer a chance for advancement.

Trouble is, Silver's company, Western Glove, is part of the garment industry. And Canadians look down on that industry as the domain of immigrant labor. They apparently consider themselves above doing such work.

How else to explain why so many



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Manitobans continue to sit around collecting welfare while jobs at Western Glove and other Winnipeg clothing manufacturers go begging?

"What we have available are jobs for sewing machine operators. That requires substantial training, but the industry has a productivity centre that offers to train people," says Silver.

The situation is a sad commentary on the state of the work ethic in this country. It used to be that going on welfare was a shameful state of affairs, a blow to pride and self-respect and something to be as short-term as possible.

Nowadays, being on welfare means joining the ranks of yet another whiney advocacy group, one hand held out to the public trough, the other clutching a list of things the group thinks government should do for it.

In the past few months, we've heard the advocacy types complain that making welfare recipients join work-fare projects demeans them.

And barely a week goes by without a single mom on welfare featured in some news story or other. Most of these people are young women who look perfectly capable of working.

Some of them explain they can't work because they're at home with small children. What kind of reason is that for collecting welfare? Western Glove not only has job openings, it has an on-site day-



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care for employees' kids.

The point is, these and other opportunities exist, but there's a lack of will to seek them out and take advantage of them.

"I often wonder how many of the people on social assistance truly want to work and how many don't," says Silver.

'Wide-open attitude'

As the manager of a largely immigrant work force, Silver can't help contrasting the attitudes of newly landed immigrants with established Canadians.

"The new Canadians appreciate this country and what the economic possibilities are — more than do the present and long-time Canadians," he says.

"They've got a wide-open attitude toward the potential of what they can do and accomplish, versus the attitude of present Canadians — which is about what they can get."

Silver is also puzzled by the prevail-

ing attitude toward keeping immigrants out of Canada — a mindset perpetuated by people who themselves are only a generation or two removed from the old country.

"Why am I different than the people (they) want to keep out? My grandparents were immigrants from Russia and the Ukraine. I don't understand what we're trying to do."

What, indeed? Canadians can't seem to make up their minds. They grumble about immigrants coming over and taking jobs away from Canadian citizens. Yet, they turn their noses up at the idea of taking those same jobs themselves.

And if single moms on welfare don't have the gumption to get off their duffs and look for a job, the generation they're raising hasn't a hope in hell of growing up with any kind of work ethic at all.

Naomi Lakritz's column appears every day except Monday and Friday.