and then? One day, perhaps, some researcher will discover a Victorian history of the circus in whose index appears the incomprehensible entry:

*Romans*, the art of opening their ranks in battle to admit the elephant quickly learned by the . . .

This entry should certainly have appeared in the index to *Animated Nature*, if its treatment of the account of warfare in the ancient world on p. 526 of Volume I were to have had any claim to completeness.

Meanwhile, the mystery remains.

**References**

2. e.g. Kendall, *op. cit.*; Windham, Mève. Extracts from the Index of *Scottish Life and Character* by Dean Ramsay (1872). *The Indexer* 10 (4) October 1977, 175.

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**The Manpower Services Commission: professional response**

The April 1984 issue of this journal included a note on Special Community programmes subsidized by the MSC (*The Indexer* 14 (1), 29). These projects are intended to offer employment for a year, with some degree of training, to applicants from the long-term unemployed. The projects must meet specific criteria, such as being of public benefit and not already the responsibility of any official body, or likely to be undertaken by any other body within two years. As the indexing of local newspapers or archives, or cataloguing of museum collections, often fills these requirements, many such projects are being set up, the work done by teams of novices from the unemployed, at an average rate of pay for indexing, as advertised often in *Executive post*, of £2.50 per hour.

Since our report a year ago, many further such advertisements have appeared. Meanwhile, however, the MSC conditions of eligibility for employment under Community Programmes have been tightened; applicants must now actually be in receipt of Unemployment Benefit or Supplementary Benefit. As married men out of work do usually receive one of these, while married women at similar income level very often do not, many women are thus excluded from qualifying for these posts, and indeed, the Equal Opportunities Commission is challenging this policy of the MSC on grounds of sex discrimination. Another effect of the new limitation is that it reduces yet further the number of likely applicants for indexing work under these programmes; they must be not only sufficiently interested, skilled, willing to work for this rate of pay, and available, but actually in receipt of one of these state benefits. The likelihood of the posts being given to unsuitable applicants whose work may prove of low standard, degrading the image of indexing, is increased.

The Library Association has seen similar threats to its own profession and taken action on its behalf. It is concerned about rates of pay for library work lower than appropriate for the job; failure to insist on a librarian-ship qualification where appropriate; the substitution of MSC workers for regular workers in tasks that are reclassified as 'special projects' or to clear backlogs, or cover during illness. The LA Council on 17 November 1983 issued a policy statement beginning:

Several members of the Association have expressed their concern about the misuse of Manpower Services Commission Employment Schemes in libraries. The Library Association has investigated the situation as far as is possible and has found some examples where there is justifiable cause for this concern.

The principal problem arises in cases where MSC-funded staff have been used to substitute for work which would normally be done by permanent staff but which is not being done because of either staff shortages or vacant posts. The second problem area relates to cases where the appropriate rate for the job is not being paid.

The statement indicates that the MSC has clearly defined rules covering these issues, which are not always followed, and comments, 'In order to obtain the full support of the trade union (which is normally required by the MSC) and of the Library Association members responsible for sponsoring projects are advised to follow the appropriate rules to the letter.'

Indexers as yet have less professional clout. But we must all continue to feel concern at the effects and implications of this attitude on the part of the government to the hosts of unemployed—'Let them compile indexes!'.

There is a similar government scheme in Canada. We reprint below an account of one such project there as reported in the IASC/SCAD Bulletin 6 (3), Dec. 1983/Jan. 1984 (pp. 195-6).

Christopher Gowers, LLB, Solicitor and Honorary Legal Adviser to the Council of the Society of Indexers, makes the following comments.

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