

Summer unemployment rates in San Angelo are barely two percent. The two percent, so I was told, are workers that are changing jobs. It takes a little time to fill in the blanks on the application forms. I imagine that as tight as the labor market is, employers like to know the prospect's name and Social Security number.

In the outlying towns like Mertzon, the rate is zero. The whole population is subject to recruitment. I am not saying that the old time sea coast game of shanghaiing sailors might start, but I would say that an old boy who knows enough about oilfield work or cowboying to wear boots or a hard hat had better watch his drinking partners.

For my part, I ignore this hysteria. I am not going to chance becoming a workaholic to satisfy the greed of an oil boom that's driven people crazy. The risk of sunstroke or sunrise fever is too great to drive me out after the rich coin of the out of country oil companies. I didn't spend all these years developing my life style to end it with back trouble and skinned knuckles. You may trick me on a cow trade, but you're sure not going to find me prostituting myself to a steady job.

Believe me, it is hard to keep from working. I noticed last week that the road contractors were using women out in the hot sun to flag traffic. They are bound to have had a terrible time finding girls for that job. Nearly anything that'll make a reflection in a mirror along the female line will cause a trucker to run his diesel 44 feet off course. The roadmen must have had a hard choice finding a flag person that wouldn't crack windshields, yet wasn't so handsome of frame and face that she'd cause a traffic snarl the New York police force couldn't unravel.

Discrimination entered into hiring the girls, too. Everything from arranging the pews in the church house to marking off the lines on a parking lot comes under the civil rights law. Door to door salesmen who still say "yes mam" are apt to end up being headlined in a Supreme Court case. Oldtimers that tip their hats like I do take chances of being a feature article in the Ladies Home Journal.

How a fellow trained all his life to run tar and gravel stays up with this, I don't know. I guess that by the time the whole crew has about three coats of tar splashed on them, the government or anyone else can't tell the sexes or the color line apart. It must be something like that, or the regulations would make building a new highway so tough that we'd have to learn to travel by sheep trails.

Even though able bodied workers are short, I'm not going to panic. In another 20 years. I'll be eligible for full retirement/ I've passed through danger periods before. There'll always be enough of us around for a hand of dominoes or a game of pool.