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Barbara Ehrenreich is a veteran of American social commentary. In *Bait and Switch* she set out to discover more about the newly emerging class of downwardly mobile white-collar workers. Ehrenreich planned to infiltrate their ranks by getting a job in public relations. She set aside ten months and $5,000 for the project and expected to have a job within six months. Instead she found herself adrift in a twilight zone of career coaches, internet job boards, and dreary ‘networking’ events based on pop psychology or bible-bashing, where nobody talked to anyone else. Despite spending nearly a year full time trying, she never even got an interview for a ‘real’ job – one with salary and benefits.

Most depressing was the isolation she found among her fellow jobseekers, fostered by an almost Orwellian atmosphere of voluntary thought control – always show a positive attitude, never criticise the system, and blame yourself for your misfortune. *Bait and Switch* is nevertheless a very entertaining book. Ehrenreich conveys her bemusement at the world she uncovers with gentle wit – and slightly exasperated sympathy for everyone caught up in this modern purgatory.