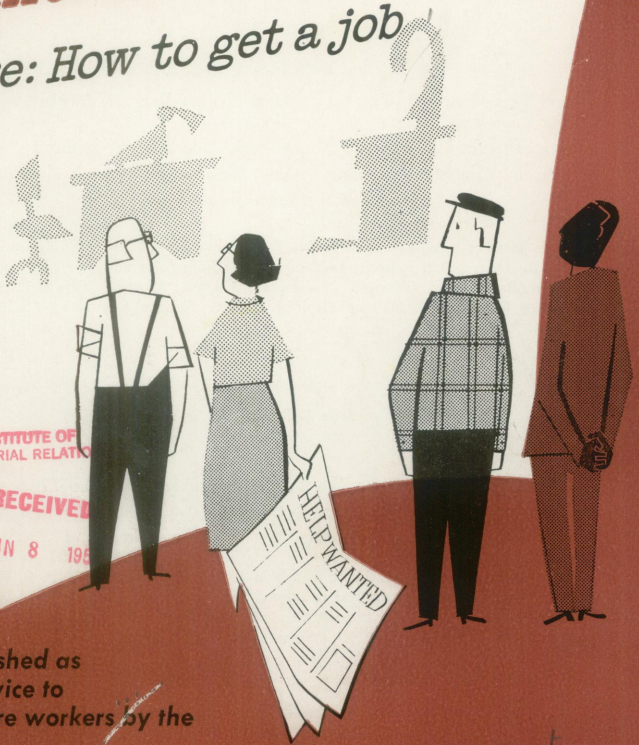


Older workers (1959)

memo to mature workers

re: How to get a job



INSTITUTE OF
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

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on Problems of the Aging

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Foreword

THIS is written for mature workers who are hunting jobs and find the going rough because employers think they are "too old". In particular, it is for "you", at age 45 or 65, if your years of experience are stumbling blocks rather than the stepping stones they should be.

People are living longer these days, and necessarily must work longer. The problem, of course, is that the need for work is no guarantee that it can be found. Job seeking is usually difficult and for older persons it requires a great deal of effort. *This fact should be faced squarely, but without discouragement.*

I've seen men and women of 45 and 75 work like beavers, through all sorts of discouragements, until they landed jobs; good jobs, too. Sure it takes a lot of spunk at times not to give up. But others have found jobs despite their age, despite their grey hairs. It can be done. It is being done. Remember, there is no substitute for seasoned experience and the important thing is not (or at least should not be) your age, but whether or not you can handle a job. That depends on your work skills, not the number of birthdays you have seen.

Employment experts know this is the only sound point of view. And, encouragingly, more employers are beginning to think so and to change their hiring policies. But the job is the final payoff. And whether you are hired or not depends, primarily, on the action *you* take. In this booklet, we discuss a few things we hope will help you reach your goal.

Thomas C. Desmond
Chairman

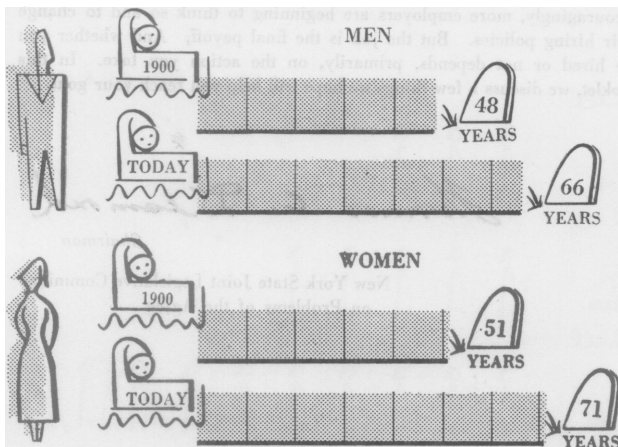
New York State Joint Legislative Committee
on Problems of the Aging

Memo To: Mature Workers

If you are mature, and out of work, you don't have to be told that you're at a disadvantage in finding a new job. You've discovered it yourself through bitter experience. We mention it only as one of the job facts-of-life which you're old enough to understand. We almost finished the last sentence by saying "... old enough to understand *and accept*", but changed it quickly because we know that if you "accept" such a situation, you're licked.

For many years, even during high employment, older workers have had job finding difficulties. Under extreme man-power demands, brought on by war-time periods, the situation may be temporarily eased, but as yet there seems to be no solution to the basic, long-range problem. Because of modern medical knowl-

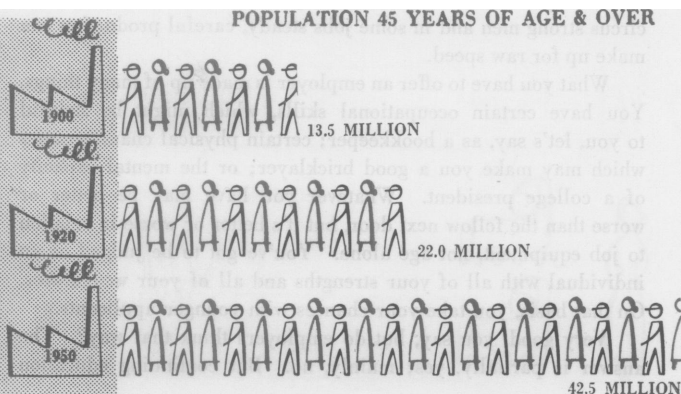
Increase in life expectancy . . .



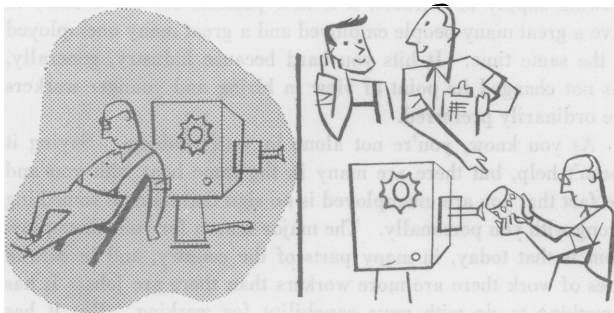
edge, people are living many more years and the proportion of older persons in our population is steadily increasing. With a growing supply of workers, it is now possible for the country to have a great many people employed and a great many unemployed at the same time. It hits you hard because industry, generally, has not changed its point of view in hiring and younger workers are ordinarily preferred.

As you know, you're not alone in your problem. Saying it doesn't help, but there are many in the same boat with you and the fact that you are unemployed is no sign that there is something wrong with you personally. The major reason for your unemployment is that today, in many parts of the country, and in certain lines of work there are more workers than there are jobs. It has something to do with your capability for working. But it has more to do with an oversupply of labor and some old-fashioned hiring habits on the part of employers.

*... increases number of mature people
available for productive work*



Myth vs. Fact



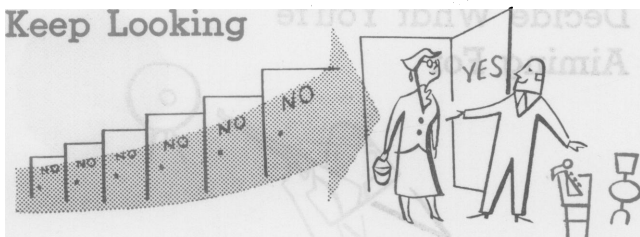
For many reasons, some real, others not so real, employers hold back in hiring mature persons. Some firms believe that older workers are less adaptable, are slower to learn, have less stamina, will increase pension costs, can give fewer years of productive work and so on. Some of these reasons—**ALWAYS DEPENDING ON THE INDIVIDUAL**—may be true. Others are myths which should be dispelled. Of course you have slowed down, and of course you can no longer lift 300 pounds. But few jobs require circus strong men and in some jobs steady, careful production can make up for raw speed.

What you have to offer an employer is made up of many things. You have certain occupational skills, which might be helpful to you, let's say, as a bookkeeper; certain physical characteristics which may make you a good bricklayer; or the mental capacity of a college president. Whatever you have may be better or worse than the fellow next door, but it's better or worse in relation to job equipment, not age alone. You've got to be judged as an individual with all of your strengths and all of your weaknesses. On that basis, you take your chances with younger applicants.

Very good, you say, but do employers think that way? The answer is partially, yes; mainly, no. But continuing education

is going on. And more employers are beginning to understand that older workers, in general, are good bets for most jobs.

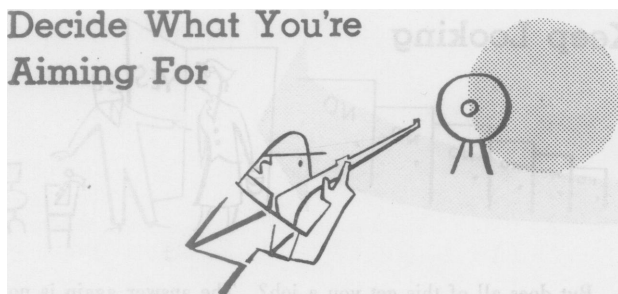
Continual rebuffs may have brought you to the point where you feel that you are not, in fact, a qualified worker. As an individual, maybe yes and maybe no. But a number of studies show that mature workers, as a group, make good employees. When compared with younger workers, they are as productive, their attendance record is better, they are as efficient, more attentive, more conscientious, less likely to be injured, and they cut down on labor turn-over. In addition, they offer the great benefit of their experience in working with other people and in knowing the conditions and the attitudes of work.



But does all of this get you a job? The answer again is no. **THE ONLY WAY TO FIND A JOB IS TO LOOK FOR ONE.** We write this simple statement aware that it is obvious, yet knowing at the same time that it is the most important sentence in this booklet and the one of most practical importance. Employment for older workers can be found only by determined, continued job seeking. No one can question this, yet, from direct experience, we know that many, many unemployed persons feel that job hunting is useless; they become discouraged and stay at home. As practically as we can, we should like to point out what you already know; employers do not seek you out unless you have outstanding talents. Most of us, young or old, are not outstanding and are not sought out. Most of us, in fact, apply for jobs hat

in hand. And no matter how discouraging job hunting may be, it cannot be improved by giving up the fight.

If the problem seems difficult—and it is—the thing to remember is that **YOU ONLY HAVE TO FIND ONE JOB**. Of the thousands of employers to whom you might apply, only one has to say, “Report on Monday at 9.” This is beginning to sound like a “pep-talk”, we know, but it is sound advice, nevertheless. Job getting is as down to earth a process as any we know, and we’re not saying things here to raise false hopes. One good interview, which can come at any time, may solve your problem. But it won’t happen while you are sitting at home.

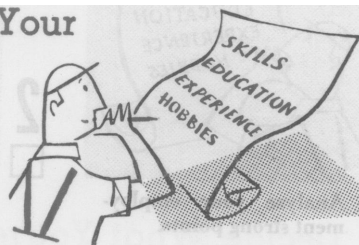


The first step in job hunting is to know what you’re looking for. This is another of those simple statements which everyone should appreciate but doesn’t. We put it down here in black and white precisely because so many job seekers do not know what they’re after. Nothing can waste your “powder” more quickly than aimless job applications. And by “powder” we mean time, energy, carfare and confidence in yourself.

Before going out, sit down and do some thinking about what you have to offer an employer. If there are vocational guidance agencies in your town, maybe they can help you. There is almost sure to be an office of the State Employment Service where an employment counselor can help you decide whether you have the

requirements to fill jobs that may be available. But in any case, you can do some self-analysis about your skills, interests, education, work experience and personal qualities.

Take Stock of Your Abilities



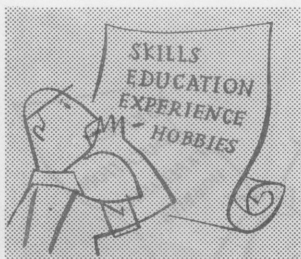
It may help you to take stock of your abilities and opportunities if you try to figure out why you lost your last job. Employers do not, as a rule, lay off workers because they are too old—unless it is a question of compulsory retirement in line with company policy. There is almost always some other reason. You may not have been told the real reason when your services were terminated. Try to visualize how it happened that your value as a worker to your last employer underwent a change. The change may have been caused by outside economic developments; or it may have been due to other factors—some of which may be within your control. If you're honest with yourself regarding your work assets, and perhaps even more important, your work limitations, you will have begun to settle your problem.

If you have always been in one occupation, can still do a job, and know that people are being hired in your field, then by all means continue in the same direction.

On the other hand, if you can no longer handle the work, or if the opportunities have disappeared, be sure to examine your other skills and see what they add up to in terms of jobs. Think about your hobbies. Skill in gardening, photography, carpentry

Check List For Job Hunters

1



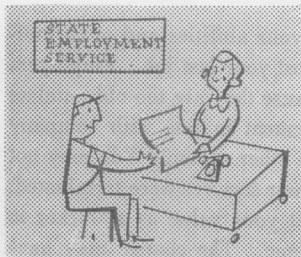
Analyze your employment strong points.

2



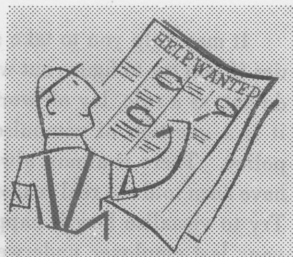
Recognize your limitations.

5



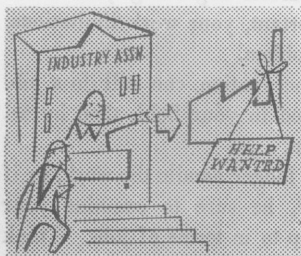
Register with S.E.S. and private agencies.

6



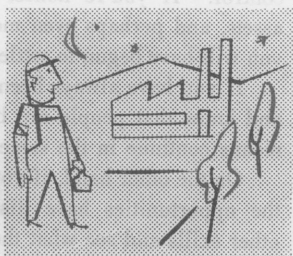
Check newspaper "help wanted" ads.

9



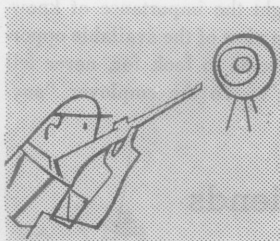
Contact unions, associations, former employers.

10



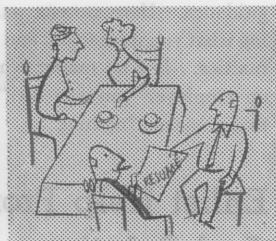
Consider off-locations and off-hours.

3



Decide what you're aiming for.

4



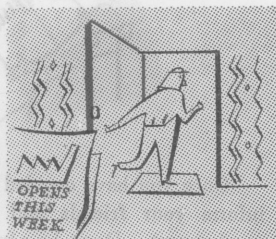
Enlist help from relatives and friends.

7



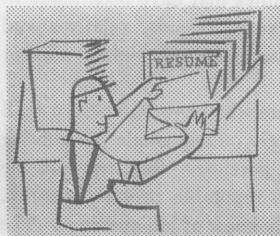
Place a "situation wanted" ad.

8



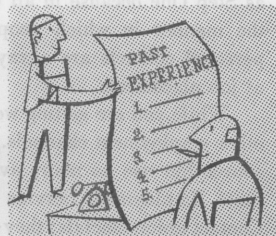
Look at news columns for likely leads.

11



Carry on a systematic letter campaign.

12



Plug experience—don't apologize for your age.

or electrical repair may be turned into occupational assets. Some of these outside interests may be of help to a particular firm.

This is not the place for a detailed discussion on vocational guidance. Here we can only highlight the importance of knowing what you want to do, and can do, in view of the available opportunities. But no matter what you decide to look for, never tell an employer you can do "anything". To the employer "anything" means "nothing".

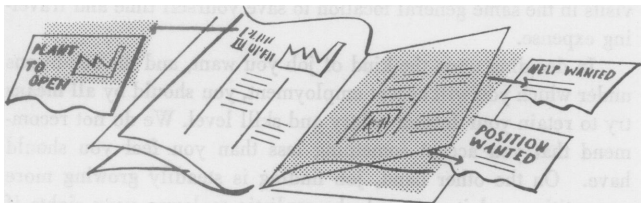
Enlist Help From Friends And Relatives



Once you have decided upon the kind of job you will seek, inform your friends and relatives that you are looking for employment. Don't be afraid of using such contacts and don't be sensitive about making the requests. Finding work is too important to let false pride interfere. And we're suggesting this as Step One because in all of the studies that have been made of the manner in which people find work, friends, relatives and personal contacts are always responsible for the highest number of job placements.

While you are getting word to those who know you best, use all other employment channels. Don't rely on any single job hunting source but use as many avenues as possible. Register with the State Employment Service and with reputable private agencies. Contact union officials; they frequently know of job openings. The more irons in the fire, the better your prospects.

Newspapers Can Be Helpful



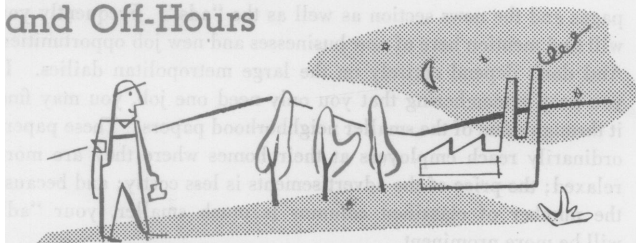
The newspapers, as you know, can be helpful through the classified advertisements. Simply checking the "Help Wanted" section, however, and placing an "ad" in the "Situations Wanted" section is not enough. Examine the entire paper, the financial pages and the news section as well as the "ads". Frequently you will find mention here of new businesses and new job opportunities. And don't depend entirely on the large metropolitan dailies. If you keep remembering that you only need one job, you may find it through some of the smaller neighborhood papers. These papers ordinarily reach employers at their homes where they are more relaxed; the price of the advertisements is less costly; and because the number of classified columns is much smaller, your "ad" will be more prominent.

To develop a list of "prospects", beyond these sources, it may be of value to contact former employers. If your past work has been good, a direct recommendation from such a source will carry a great deal of weight. Trade associations of employers can become additional resources. Frequently, they have centralized information on job openings and some operate informal placement services. Business directories, available through the chamber of commerce or industrial associations and in most public libraries, may also help you develop your job hunting plans on a systematic basis, according to industry and occupation. And, depending on the busy "seasons", you might plan to apply to certain industries just before the hiring upswing.

Plan your employer visiting schedule carefully, and hold to it as far as possible. If it can be done, concentrate one day's visits in the same general location to save yourself time and traveling expense.

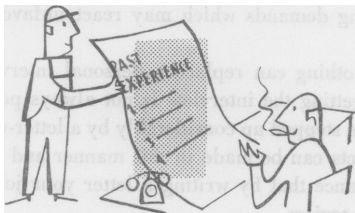
In deciding upon the kind of job you want, and the conditions under which you will accept employment, you should by all means try to retain your former salary and skill level. We do not recommend that you accept something less than you feel you should have. On the other hand, job finding is steadily growing more competitive and it may only be realistic to lower your sights if work is scarce and some of your skills have grown rusty.

Consider Off-Locations and Off-Hours



If you look in outlying districts, for example, you will have less competition than you will in central city locations. This applies as well to jobs where the hours of work (late shift, for example) or other working conditions are less desirable. This is not to say that older workers should take less for their labor, or that they should be subject to substandard working conditions. It is only a practical recognition that some employers, because of the nature or the location of their business, may have more trouble getting workers, and it makes sense to capitalize on this difficulty. Obviously, longer travel or irregular hours are as distasteful to older workers as to younger ones, but a compromise of this nature may mean better chances for employment.

Plug Your Experience— Don't Apologize For Your Age



In approaching the employer, you know, of course, that appearance is exceedingly important and care should be taken to make a good first impression. Make the best of what you have. But don't work too hard at trying to look younger. Don't apologize for your age or try to create the impression that you are much younger than you are. Remember that the thing to sell is your long experience. An employer who will turn you down at sixty-two, will probably turn you down if he thinks you are only fifty-two.

Never try to gain sympathy in an interview, or ask for employment because you need a job. Employers are not social workers and they must judge you solely on your competence. In their private lives, and in giving to organized charities, businessmen may be very sympathetic people. But by and large they are rather hard headed, as they must be, when it comes to hiring for their own plants.

During the interview indicate what training and experience you have *specifically*, to meet the needs of the particular firm. Don't attempt to over-estimate or under-estimate your importance, or the contribution you can make. Respond to the employer's direct questions as factually and briefly as possible. Don't ramble, or become involved in unrelated subjects or your own personal philosophy. Needless to say, all of the rules of courtesy, which you have learned through the years, apply during the employment interview. Allow the employer to satisfy himself about you, and

to decide that he is interested in you, before you question him. You have, of course, the full right to know the terms of hire, if you are being taken on. Before that is known, however, avoid making demands which may react unfavorably during the interview.

Nothing can replace a personal interview with an employer. But getting the interview is not always possible, and job hunting can be stepped up considerably by a letter-writing campaign. More contacts can be made in this manner and there is generally more assurance that by writing a letter your job qualifications will get some review.

Study Model Letters For Job Applications



There are many types of job application letters and in the libraries you can find sample letters and suggestions on how to write them. Here, we can only point out a few important facts. First of all, and of primary importance, the letter must be carefully focused. You may write, for example, to determine whether there are any job possibilities; to apply for a definite vacancy; in response to a newspaper advertisement; or to seek a job out of town. There are many other types, of course, and the pitch will vary widely depending on the circumstances.

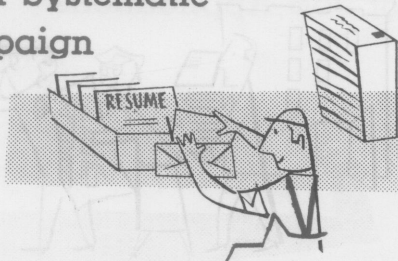
And once you have your major focus, be as precise as possible in showing how your qualifications meet the job demands. Highlight your strong points as they fit not only the position, but the industry and the needs of the particular firm. If you are applying, as illustration, for a job as a bookkeeper with a textile firm, point

out your competency as a bookkeeper and, in addition, how well you know the field, the problems of the industry, the sources of material supply, the processes of manufacture and so on.

Do not address the letter to "Gentlemen". Write to a specific individual, by name and title. If you don't know or can't get the name of the person who does the hiring, address your mail to the "Personnel Manager".

The letter can take many forms, but, under any circumstances, should be neat, brief, definite and convincing. The language should be simple and understandable. Pay careful attention to grammar and spelling. Without bluffing or appealing for sympathy, note all of your positive assets. Exclude personal traits or accomplishments that have nothing to do with the job itself.

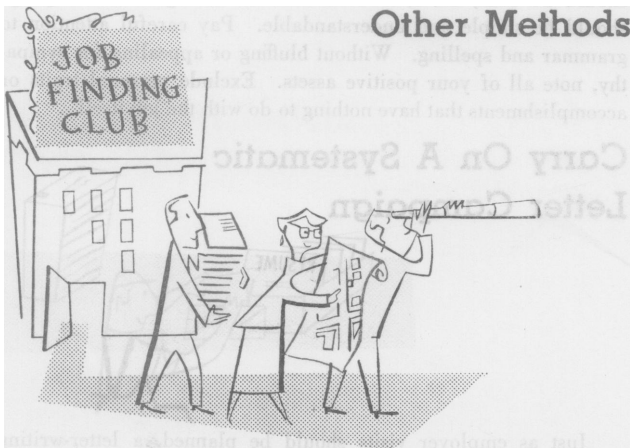
Carry On A Systematic Letter Campaign



Just as employer visits should be planned, a letter-writing campaign should be systematic, with some scheduling of the number to go out and the places to which they should go. The use of a standard mimeographed letter should be avoided, although it may be helpful to attach to the cover letter a mimeographed summary of the factual information.

The summary, in concise outline form, should include personal data, i.e., age, marital status, health and so on; education; work history; and references. Be very clear under the work history in regard to the exact duties and level of responsibility of your most recent or most important jobs. If you have difficulty in describing your work duties, there are standard outlines in the "Job Descrip-

tion" series and the "Dictionary of Occupational Titles", Volume I, prepared by the United States Employment Service. These can be found in libraries, put into your own words, and changed to suit your particular job. Good letters may get you the all important interview. But, to do so, they must stand out. You don't exist for the employer until he reads your letter. And you never will if the letter goes into the wastebasket.



There are other methods of job seeking, more involved than careful planning on the part of the individual worker. Cooperative job finding clubs, for example, through which groups of workers promote jobs for each other, have been useful aids. Community campaigns, using newspapers, the radio and other means of reaching employers have also been successfully attempted.

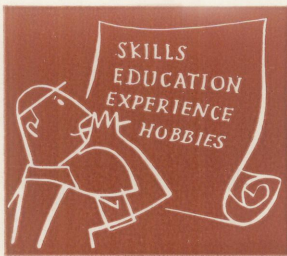
These are rather complex, however, and this booklet has been written primarily for the use of the individual job seeker. We hope you find it of some value. Good luck in your job hunting campaign!

Acknowledgment

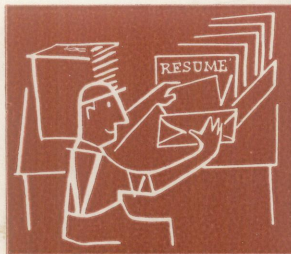
This pamphlet was prepared as a public service by the Federation Employment Service, 67 West 47th Street, New York City, at the request of our Committee. The Federation Employment Service, a non-profit, non-sectarian agency of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, has had wide experience in the counselling and placement of older workers.

We are especially indebted to FES executive director, Mr. Roland Baxt, and its assistant executive director, Mr. Preston David, for their assistance in the preparation of this pamphlet. We also deeply appreciate the aid given by our own Advisory Committee on Employment and by Public Employment Service officials, federal, state and local, who carefully reviewed the manuscript and made many helpful suggestions.





Single additional copies of this report are available free of charge by writing to State Senator Thomas C. Desmond, Chairman, New York State Joint Legislative Committee on Problems of the Aging, 94 Broadway, Newburgh, New York.



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