

Old Age - National Conference on Aging
(A list of the delegates of this section is available in the Press Room)

CONFERENCE ON AGING
August 13-15, 1950
The Shoreham Hotel
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Russell, Ex. 6300 Ext. 4625

Digest of Proceedings
Section II
Employment, Employability, Rehabilitation
Morning session, Aug. 15

Approved by Albert J. Abrams, Chairman

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The employment section of the Conference on Aging today agreed to recommendations that the nation begin to disregard age as the sole factor in compulsory retirement plans, that every effort be made to put older workers in the most useful employment during the expected period of full employment in the near future, and that the nation cannot afford to do without the services and experience of its older workers.

Even in a period of heavy unemployment, the employment section agreed, the older workers should not be expected to bear the brunt of the depression by being denied jobs in favor of younger workers.

Much of the committee's attention centered around the special treatment that the older workers deserve in periods of full employment or much unemployment. It has been generally accepted, the delegates agreed, that older workers are the first to be laid off during a depression. This was unjust, it was felt, and the group agreed that while attempting to find jobs for all people during a depression or recession every effort should be made to treat older workers as fairly as younger people.

The recommendation that chronological age no longer be the sole factor determining compulsory retirement was especially important in view of the makeup of the committee that agreed to it. Insurance companies, big employers, and labor unions alike were represented in the small group that came to the decision that other criteria must be reached in determining when a man must retire. Although age should be taken into account, the ability to do the work and the physical condition of the employee were more important in determining whether or not he should be forced to retire. This recommendation carries a great many implications, the group agreed, in view of the millions of dollars tied up in compulsory as well as voluntary retirement funds, and they recognized that such a general principle could be applied only to the general level of workers and probably not to some specialized groups like executives or teachers. But the general principle stands, it was asserted, and the group suggested that standards be set by research for the other rules of retirement.

Another group of the employment section emphasized the great shortcomings in our present systems of counseling with older workers and for rehabilitating them toward new jobs. Most counseling and rehabilitation agencies are ill-equipped, understaffed, and lacking in the knowledge necessary to do the proper job with older workers, the group agreed.

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In its last session the employment committee agreed on the following recommendations: that every effort be made to push home-town action to assist older workers; the employment agencies modify their present practices to give special attention to older workers; that self-help groups be expanded and urged to seek more funds; that employment and placement agencies be urged to reexamine their testing systems; that more vocational training facilities be made available for older workers; and that efforts be made to spread the belief that compulsory retirement is not always the most desirable thing for older workers.