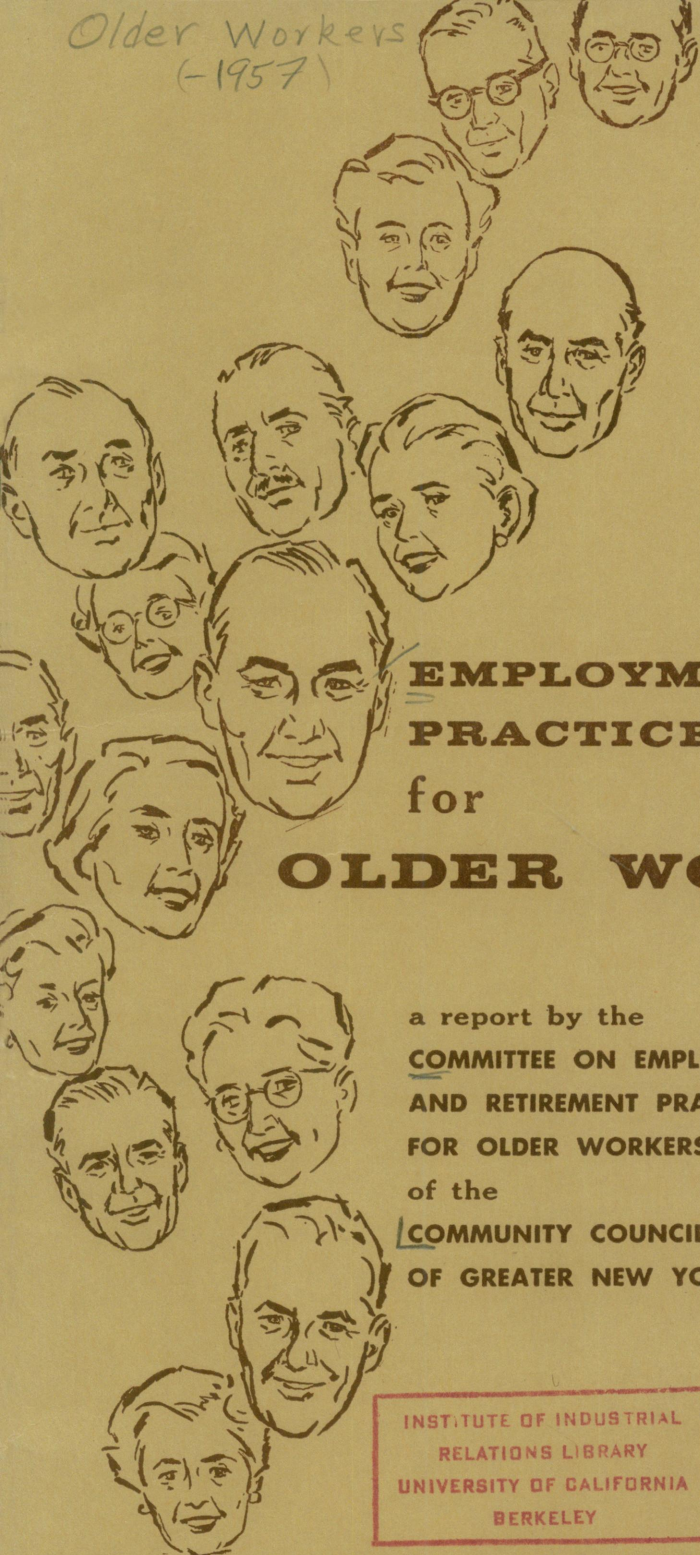


Older Workers
(-1957)



**EMPLOYMENT
PRACTICES
for
OLDER WORKERS**

a report by the
**COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT
AND RETIREMENT PRACTICES
FOR OLDER WORKERS**
of the
**COMMUNITY COUNCIL
OF GREATER NEW YORK**

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Employment Practices For Older Workers

Report by the

Committee on Employment and Retirement Practices
for Older Workers of the Community Council
of Greater New York

COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF GREATER NEW YORK

44 East 23 Street, New York 10, N. Y.

□1957?□

FOREWORD

This is a report about the employment problems of the older worker: the man or woman who has reached or passed a forty-fifth birthday. In New York City, one out of three workers today is in this category and in the very near future, nearly half our working force will be forty-five or older. Most of these are satisfactorily employed; but all are potentially subject to serious job discrimination.

Forty-five is certainly not an advanced age. Against the back-drop of life expectancy, the man or woman of forty-five is young. Yet—as this report indicates—he or she is subject to serious discrimination in the labor market.

This discrimination exists in terms of holding a job, but it is most strongly felt in seeking new employment. It affects women earlier than men; it touches all occupational groups and all industries, though in varying degree. It leads to heart-ache and tragedy for the individual and his family and to colossal economic waste.

What accounts for this situation? The causes—as this report shows—are many and complex. In some cases, they may be rooted in prejudice or in ignorance. Where this is true, a campaign to inform employers of the true facts about the performance of the older worker can greatly help. But in more cases, the discrimination is a by-product of a complex of personnel practices, union policies, provisions in retirement plans, and the like. These effective deterrents to the employment of older workers vary from industry to industry and even from company to company. They can be overcome only in specific terms and by examining and overcoming each specific road block. All of this emerges clearly from this report.

What, then, can be done about a situation which so seriously affects so many? We believe that many of the existing obstacles can be overcome by management and labor, if they jointly consider them. We need to establish a series of joint or tripartite voluntary committees (management, labor and interested citizens) starting on an industry by industry basis to review the situation in each industry. We need also to establish a clearing house for the exchange of information and experience as these separate committees proceed. The Community Council is prepared to take the initiative in this matter. We hope that this report will lead to enough interest on the part both of management and labor in New York City to make such an approach feasible.

J. DONALD KINGSLEY
Executive Director

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES FOR OLDER WORKERS

Report by the

Committee on Employment and Retirement Practices for Older

Workers of the Community Council of Greater New York

INTRODUCTION

One of the problems pressing with increasing urgency upon the community and calling for positive action is that of the place of the older person in society as worker, consumer, and as participant in the benefits of social progress upon retirement from productive life. The problem is certainly not new—the Roman publicist Cicero discoursed on it as far back as the first century B.C.—but it has assumed new dimensions as a result of the industrial and social changes of our times. Employers and workers, Federal and State Governments, social agencies and public-minded citizens generally are attempting to cope with the problem today. While much has been done to clarify the issues involved and to advance some rational ways of dealing with them, the need is for more imaginative thinking about them, for bolder experimentation with methods of action, and for wider exchange of information on all aspects of the problem.

Owing to its industrial and social structure, the New York metropolitan area faces the problem of the older person in especially acute forms. In the hope of contribution to its solution, and in keeping with its long standing interest and work, dating back to 1925, the Community Council of Greater New York (formerly the Welfare and Health Council of New York City) set up, in 1956, a *Committee on Employment and Retirement Practices for Older Workers*, with specific assignment to survey the present state of information and action on the problem and to suggest practical steps for further action. This report is the result of the deliberations of the Committee. It deals with only one aspect of the problem, namely, employment practices. Other aspects will be considered in subsequent reports.

EXTENT AND SERIOUSNESS OF THE PROBLEM

For purposes of this report, we are considering workers who usually, after the age of 45, begin to encounter employment difficulties either in *obtaining* new jobs or *retaining* old jobs by reasons of chronological age. Accordingly, the group under 45 years of age has been considered “young” and thus outside the scope of the assignment; the group 65

years of age and over has been considered the subject of the assignment on retirement practices; it is the group from 45 to 64, "the older worker" that is the subject of this report.

The problem of employment of the older worker has two phases: (1) *retention* in employment and (2) re-employment. The first of these—*retention*—is on the whole less in magnitude and difficulty than the second, primarily by reason of the many pressures upon the employer, both practical and moral, to retain the worker as long as he can "pull his weight."

Much the larger and thornier phase of the problem of the older worker is that of securing re-employment, once he or she has been separated from a job. The problem of re-employment becomes serious for workers at about the age of 45, though for some workers it may and does begin at an even earlier age.

The extent of the problem—that is the number of persons who are potentially subject to its impact—may be gathered from current statistical data. For the United States as a whole, it is estimated that one-fifth of the population is in the age group of 45 years and over and that the average adult in the labor force is now at the beginning of this age category. In New York City, out of a population of about eight million, 1,625,000 are in the age group of 45 to 64 and 740,000 are 65 years and over; that is, about 2,365,000 persons (or 29.3% of the total population) are 45 years of age and over. Even more significant are the figures reported by the New York State Department of Labor (in *Labor Market Review* for October 1956) showing that, out of an estimated total of 3,537,000 non-agricultural employees in New York City, 718,000 were in the age group 45-54; 262,000 in the age group 55-59; and 194,000 in the age group 60-64. In other words, 1,174,000 (about one-third of the total number of employees in New York City) were between 45 and 65 years of age.

No exact information is available on the extent to which older workers in the City of New York are actually affected by the difficulties of finding jobs, but a few figures may illuminate the situation. The Unemployment Insurance figures by age groups (for October 1956) show that 58% of the male claimants and 48.7% of the female claimants were over 45 years of age. In actual numbers this represented 47,000 claimants in New York City over 45 years of age. Significant also is the fact that, for nine months of 1956, approximately 50% of applicants for jobs were over 45 years of age but only 26% of placements in jobs were placements of persons over 45 years of age. The discrepancy between the percentage of job seekers and the percentage of placement certainly testifies to the seriousness of the problem affecting workers over 45. Women are vulnerable in seeking re-employment as early as age 35, as shown by the markedly higher rate of unemployment at 35 years of age

and over as compared with younger women. The New York State Employment Service has also found that not only the volume but the duration of unemployment in New York City is higher among persons 45 years of age and older than among those under 45 years of age. The largest number of "hard to place older workers" in New York City are in the white collar occupations, followed by industrial service, and needle trade applicants in that order.

What the insecurity of employment and forced idleness revealed by the figures cited above mean to the individual worker and his family, both in economic hardships and in emotional stress, is too well known to need elaboration. Neither is it necessary to dwell on the public and private costs imposed by these conditions—whether in the form of unemployment insurance, social security, pensions, or public and private assistance. What is not generally taken into account and should therefore be given special emphasis here is that (1) the problem is bound to increase in magnitude with the passage of time (the population of New York City increased 128% in the last half-century but the component aged 45 and over increased more than 300%) and that (2) the situation described, if not remedied, will hinder the full utilization of our productive and labor resources, thus impairing the opportunities for maintaining and improving the living standards of the American people which constitutes the best long-range defense of our democratic ideals and institutions.

REASONS FOR AND AGAINST THE EMPLOYMENT OF OLDER WORKERS

As already indicated, there are many factors which offset the tendency to separate older workers from their jobs by reason of age and which favor their *retention*. On the practical side, there are the steadiness, reliability and loyalty of the older worker which are offsets to possible reduced productivity; in certain cases the costs of severance and replacement; the need to comply with collective agreements and grievance procedures; the desire to maintain the morale of the work force; the concern for community goodwill and the like. On the moral side is the reluctance of many employers to discard an "old hand" merely because he has slowed down on the job he holds, particularly in view of the obstacles to his finding a steady job elsewhere.

On the other hand, recent studies show that in *re-employment* ceilings on age are applied by a large number of employers. In many cases, even where age limits are not established policy, personnel staffs will often take informal cues from top management and anticipate, as well as apply, restrictive age specifications. And when an older applicant is eventually placed, a higher proportion of the placements is in temporary

work, thus leaving the basic problem unsolved, if not actually aggravated.

Corroborative evidence of the situation is supplied by the survey made by State Employment Services in seven cities (Worcester, Mass.; Philadelphia, Pa.; Miami, Fla.; Detroit, Mich.; St. Paul-Minneapolis, Minn.; Los Angeles, Cal.; and Seattle, Wash.) and published by the U.S. Department of Labor (BES No. E 152, September 1956). The survey covered 21,386 job orders placed by employers with these offices during the month of April 1956. It was found that 52% of all job openings specified age limits *under* 55; that 41% specified an age limit *under* 45, and 20% specified an age limit *under* 35. In these seven cities, in which conditions may be different from New York City, the occupational groups encountering the most restrictive upper age limits were, in order, as follows: (1) clerical; (2) unskilled; (3) professional and managerial; (4) sales; (5) service; (6) semi-skilled, and (7) skilled.

The reasons generally given by employers for not *hiring* older workers may be summarized as follows:

1. Older workers are less efficient.
 - a) Their productivity is lower.
 - b) Their absenteeism and turnover records are inferior.
 - c) Their lost-time accident rates are higher.
2. Many of the social costs of doing business rise when older workers are hired.
 - a) Workmen's compensation rates go up.
 - b) Cost of private pension programs increase.
 - c) Unemployment insurance rates go up because of the longer duration of unemployment of older workers.
 - d) Private group employee medical insurance premiums rise.
3. Hiring older workers creates internal administrative problems.
 - a) Younger workers are discouraged by the effect on promotion policies.
 - b) Training costs become uneconomic because of the reduced work-expectancy.
 - c) Provisions of collective bargaining agreements raise difficulties in cases where unions are concerned with the effect on security of current employees by addition of older workers.
4. General attitudes favoring the employment of younger workers.
 - a) Younger workers have the requisite new skills.
 - b) Modern production methods are more suited to younger workers.
 - c) Younger workers are more flexible.
 - d) The public prefers dealing with younger people.

Some of these reasons undoubtedly have a basis in the actual experi-

ence of some employers, and others are advanced in good faith but largely on the basis of hearsay or assumptions. However, the fact is that many of them cannot withstand objective analysis or testing, when such testing is possible, or that they are found to apply in particular cases or conditions and not in general. Actually, many of them are discounted by employers when it comes to the *retention* of their older workers.

Where studies have been made, the record shows that older workers generally fare as well as, if not better than, their more youthful counterparts. For example, in 1951 the National Association of Manufacturers conducted a poll of more than 3,000 employers having two and one-half million employees. The work performance or productivity of older workers was rated as equal or superior to younger employees by 93% of the respondents. Another study (U.S. Department of Labor 1956) of 16,500 men employed in 109 manufacturing plants showed that older workers had a 20% better attendance record than the other workers. A United States Census Report for December 1951 (*Mr. Employer, Why Not Use Their Growing Source of Manpower?* U.S. Employment Service 1953) showed that the median length of employment with one employer for *all* employees was 3.4 years, compared with 6.3 years for the 45-54 age bracket and 8.0 years for the 55-64 bracket. As to the social costs of employing older workers, a study (U.S. Department of Labor 1956) of 17,800 employees in manufacturing showed that workers over 45 had 2.5% fewer disabling accidents than those under 45 and 25% fewer non-disabling injuries. Other recent studies, while not conclusive, indicate that there are means of minimizing or even eliminating the increased costs of private pension plans as an obstacle to the employment of older workers.

Obviously, there is need for more definitive information with respect to certain of the alleged consequences of employing older workers. It is clear, however, from the above figures and other available data, that the reasons sometimes given by employers for refusing to *hire* older workers either have little foundation in fact or are rooted in attitudes not justified by rational analysis. What is even more important, it seems probable that those reasons which may be justified by the facts, under existing policies and procedures, could be counteracted, if not wholly eliminated, by changes in such policies and procedures.

WHAT IS NOW BEING DONE TO MEET THE PROBLEM

A growing realization of the extent and seriousness of the problem of the older worker has led in recent years to many constructive efforts at dealing with it by management, trade union organizations, government agencies, and private welfare groups. While, as already pointed

out, these efforts are far from adequate either in substance or in coverage, they are important as marking the path of progress in this basic area of industrial and social relations. It is impossible, of course, to describe here the policies, procedures and practices now in operation in all their functional variety and human effectiveness. All that can be done is to give a brief and general summary, which can help to convey the character of the present trend and to serve as a point of departure for future action. We present the main facts separately for the several industrial and social groups.

Management Policies

From the management point of view, the *retention* of the older worker presents a problem when he becomes unable to perform effectively in the particular job he has been doing, though continuing to be potentially productive. When this happens management is faced with two broad alternatives: 1) it can *retain* the worker, and either change his job content or transfer him to another job which better fits his capacities; or, failing this, 2) it can assist him in finding suitable employment elsewhere.

Many firms follow the practice of *retaining* older workers. To do so in a manner which maintains efficiency of operations and desired costs of production, firms make use of the following procedures:

1. Assignment of older workers to lighter or less demanding work.
2. Transfers of employees to new jobs on the basis of medical and psychological examination.
3. Job analysis to determine which jobs can best be performed by older workers.
4. Establishment of objective criteria for determining *retention* in the same job or reassignment to a new job.
5. Adjustment of compensation in accordance with reduced productivity of the worker in the same job due to age.
6. Change in the amount of compensation of the worker dependent on reassignment.
7. Arrangement with labor unions, when negotiating contracts, for provisions in the contract which would allow the employing firm to adopt and apply the above practices.
8. Establishment of In-service training programs which prepare workers for new jobs.

As experience has shown, the policies and procedures enumerated above create many problems for management. The practice of reassignment, for instance, requires more objective knowledge than is now avail-

able about the physical and psychological demands of each job and about the corresponding abilities of the older workers. There seems to be no practical set of criteria which can be used in individual companies to determine at what point each worker in each job should either be transferred to more suitable work or have his present job redesigned and at what point he should be retired. Currently, many individual employers are grappling with this vital problem.

For any employer whose employees are unionized, a program aimed at adjusting work assignments of other workers depends heavily upon a cooperative attitude by the union leadership. The labor unions are far from eager to approve generally the practice of reassignment, especially if it involves a lowering of compensation, since they tend to regard it as a "down-grading" of the worker not only in earnings but also in social status. However, where good will between management and unions prevails and sincere efforts are made to overcome obstacles—e.g. with regard to union rules or transfer, seniority, etc.—the results have been positive. In fact, the very attempts to deal with these difficulties, to refine medical and psychological tests, to establish objective standards for measurements of output, attendance, promptness, morale, errors and spoilage, and to analyze the relation of the age factor to the realization of these standards, are proving to be the most practical and promising way of developing more definite methods and techniques for dealing with the problem of the *retention* of the older worker.

In so far as the *hiring* of older job seekers is concerned, the growing shortage in recent years of skilled workers in many occupations and in many geographic areas has tended to stimulate an increasing number of employers to turn their attention to the feasibility of removing (or at least liberalizing) existing age barriers in their *hiring* policies. In New York City, a survey conducted in 1956 by the Commerce and Industry Association, showed that of 318 employers, 124 (or 39%) are easing their previous age requirements in *hiring* office personnel. In January 1957, this Association received requests from over 200 New York City employers for opportunities to interview plus-40 job seekers for a large variety of occupations. It should also be noted that the liberalization of rules concerning both the *retention* and *hiring* of older workers is encouraged by employers through their collective agreements with trade unions, as is shown in the section which follows.

Employers who have begun *hiring* older workers have generally reported a very satisfactory experience. It may be expected that as more facts emerge establishing the essential soundness of *hiring* older workers, and as management-union agreements devise practical ways of achieving them, arrangements for lowering existing barriers to their employment will become more general.

Trade Union Rules and Practices

In general, trade unions lay great stress on job security for their members and on the application of reasonable rules in *hiring* and *firing*. While they have developed few policies explicitly concerned with the older worker, their general drive to increase job security and to improve working conditions has also benefited the older worker. In practice, the unions have shown the greatest interest in the *retention* of older workers in existing jobs, though they are aware of and interested in all aspects of the problem of employing older persons.

Trade union policies are reflected in their collective agreements with employers and in the administration of their own rules. An examination of current provisions of collective bargaining contracts and union rules with regard to the employment of older workers shows that they may be classified into three categories: (1) provisions and rules which affect the employment of older workers *indirectly*; (2) provisions and rules for the *retention* of older workers in employment, and (3) provisions and rules encouraging the *hiring* of older workers. The equitable application of these provisions is a major objective of the grievance and arbitration machinery which unions and managements have set up in most industries and in business. While the living experience of such grievance adjustments is more interesting, it is too complex and varied to be dealt with in this report. All that can be done here is to summarize the three sets of rules referred to above.

1. *Indirect rules.* The important rules affecting indirectly the employment of older workers are those relating to hours of work and to fringe benefits. The adoption of the 5-day work week with the 2-day weekend, paid vacations and paid holidays, work breaks, and the deterrent effects of premium pay requirements for overtime and holiday work, all help to reduce fatigue and otherwise to extend the working years for workers. The fringe benefit programs, especially those providing for health service, promote indirectly the capacity of older workers to perform satisfactorily on their jobs for a longer period of time.

2. *Provisions for the retention of older workers.* According to the study made by the U.S. Department of Labor (Bureau of Labor Statistics Bulletin 1199, Part I, August 1956), it is a common practice in collective bargaining agreements to provide greater job security and more liberal benefits to workers of longer service. In so far as there is a relationship between age and length of service, this means that the older worker can benefit by seniority provisions giving him greater privileges in the matter of layoffs and rehiring, and also in such matters as transfers, promotions, choice of work shifts and length of paid vacations. Some of the specific provisions are as follows:

a. The age alone of an experienced employee shall have no bearing

on his qualifications as to continued employment. The company shall not discharge, transfer or demote any employee on account of age.

- b. Employees who have given long and faithful service and who become unable to handle the work at which they have been regularly employed shall be given preference on lighter work which they are able to perform.
- c. Preference should be given to workers on the basis of length of service in the choice of work shift. This favors the *retention* of older workers because the shift selected may be more in keeping with the capacities or more conducive to maintaining the health of older workers.
- d. Unions and managements may work out on an individual basis, special arrangements for older workers which include adjustments in rates of pay as well as in seniority status. Such arrangements facilitate their transfer to jobs more suited to their capacities.

3. *Provisions relating to the hiring of older workers.* Some union-management collective agreements, according to the study referred to above, contain clauses which encourage or require *hiring* of older workers. These clauses take many different forms. The more important of these are:

- a. A general statement banning *hiring* age limits or discrimination because of age. The company agrees that there shall be no established maximum age limit in the *hiring* of employees.
- b. Permission to *hire* older job seekers at special wage rates under certain circumstances.
- c. Requirements to employ one older worker for a specified number of journeymen employed. Such rules are common in the building trades. For example, in three agreements covering electricians, carpenters, and painters, respectively, the requirements are that: (1) On all jobs employing 5 or more journeymen, if available, every fifth journeyman shall be 50 years of age or older; (2) Where there is a job employing 15 members of the organizations, there must be one member over the age of 60 years; (3) An employer employing 10 or more journeymen shall take in his employ at least one journeyman of 60 years of age for every 10 men in his employ, who shall receive the prevailing rate of wages set forth in the agreement.
- d. Under some agreements, managements give preference in the selection of employees to applicants referred by the union. To that extent, unions, especially those which maintain employment offices, can influence the *hiring* of workers, including older workers.

It should be noted that the degree to which the above rules and pro-

visions are applied in practice varies. On the other hand, the absence of such provisions in collective agreements does not mean that there may not be satisfactory informal arrangements in the plant which aim to give job protection to the older worker.

On the whole, it is clear from available data that provisions for the *retention* and *hiring* of older workers have not as yet gained a prominent place in collective bargaining. The study of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics quoted above analyzed 1,687 major wage agreements covering seven and a half million workers. Of these collective bargaining contracts, only 212 contained provisions about older workers' *retention* rights and only 76 included clauses encouraging or requiring the *hiring* of older workers. As the numbers of older workers increase and as their employment problems become more insistent, the limitations of existing provisions both in content and in coverage will become an increasingly serious issue for both unions and management in collective bargaining proceedings.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES

The increasing concern of the Federal Government with problems of the older worker is evidenced in the many studies which it has carried out on the subject. The central aim of these studies is to bring facts to bear on the discussion of the reasons given against the employment of older workers. Thus, pilot studies have been made by the Federal Government on productivity, absenteeism, accident rates and labor turnover by age groups; collective bargaining agreements covering seven and a half million workers have been analyzed to ascertain the effect of provisions in these agreements on the *hiring* and *retention* of older workers; employer practices and policies affecting the utilization of older workers in seven major metropolitan areas have been studied; demonstration projects have been carried out on methods, time and cost of counseling and placement of older workers in the same seven metropolitan areas and in New York. In addition to these and other studies, the Federal Government has provided funds, on a limited scale, to State Employment Services for counseling and placement service to job applicants over 45 years of age. In August 1956, Secretary of Labor James P. Mitchell announced that he was making \$449,500 available for that purpose to State employment security agencies.

NEW YORK STATE GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES

Joint Legislative Committee on Problems of the Aging

For nearly ten years, New York State has had a Joint Legislative Committee on Problems of the Aging, chaired by Senator Thomas C.

Desmond, which has been holding annual public hearings and publishing the reports of these hearings. The Committee has also published many studies on employment, unemployment and productivity of older workers. Among its other activities, the Committee has sponsored legislation to provide funds to the public Employment Service for personnel to serve unemployed older workers. In the 1956 Legislature, the Committee sponsored legislation to provide funds to private non-profit agencies for special service to older workers.

The Governor's Office

Shortly after he took office, Governor Harriman appointed the Honorable Philip M. Kaiser, formerly Assistant Secretary of Labor, as a Special Assistant on Problems of the Aging to work with the Governor's Interdepartmental Committee. In October 1955, the Committee convened a three-day conference on problems of the aging, at which one special work group devoted itself exclusively to employment questions. The major recommendations of this group were: (1) to collate all available data on employment practices affecting older workers; (2) to stimulate the interest of employers and communities throughout the State in the hiring of older workers; (3) to promote the establishment of proper training and retraining facilities for workers.

State Labor Department

The New York State Department of Labor has long been concerned with the problem of the older worker. Its Division of Research and Statistics has made and published a large number of studies on the subject. Its Division of Employment was the first public employment service in the country to establish special counseling and placement service for unemployed older workers.

The New York State Employment Service now has a total of 38 older worker counselors assigned to and working with those older workers who need special help in finding re-employment. These 38 counselors are assigned to 25 offices in the State. They work with an average of 4,000 individuals a month and average 400-500 placements a month. Outside of New York City, the number of job placements of the "hard-to-place older workers" which these specialists have been able to make, has increased steadily from 267 in January 1956 to 688 in October 1956.

In New York City, the offices of the State Department of Labor make a monthly average of 15,000 placements of persons over 45 years of age, and the distribution by occupational and skill level runs about the same. For example, in the month of October 1956, which can be considered typical, the New York City offices of the State Labor Department made

18,072 placements of persons over 45. Of these placements, 823 were in professional and managerial jobs; 1,415 in clerical and sales jobs; 7,713 in service jobs; 1,871 in skilled jobs; 5,755 in semi-skilled jobs, and 495 in unskilled jobs.

NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC AND VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS

It should be noted that, in addition to the organizations listed below, other agencies in New York City have done work in this field.

Community Council of Greater New York

For thirty years the Community Council of Greater New York (formerly the Welfare and Health Council of New York City) has spearheaded activities to alert the community to the growing needs of the rapidly increasing number of older persons in New York City and in urging the establishment of services designed to maintain their health, dignity and productivity. It made numerous studies and reports identifying specific problems and recommended action for their solution, pioneered recreational programs for the aged, sparked the organization of Day Centers, was instrumental in the creation of Goldwater Hospital, and established The Elder Craftsmen Shop and the Hobby Show for Older Persons.

Mayor's Advisory Committee for the Aged

In New York City, the Mayor's Advisory Committee for the Aged has concerned itself with employment as well as other problems of the aged. In 1953, this Committee published a comprehensive report on New York's Senior Citizens which included much valuable material on the problems of the unemployed older workers. Each year, the Committee also sponsored New York City's participation in Senior Citizens Month held under the general auspices of the New York State Legislative Committee on Problems of the Aging.

Federation Employment and Guidance Service

The Federation Employment and Guidance Service, an affiliate of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, has been interested in the job-finding problems of older workers for many years. Its activities in this area include the establishment of Job Finding Clubs for Older Workers, a program of vocational counseling and testing of mature women long absent from the labor market, and a study of the job per-

formance of a group of older workers it had placed. Currently it is conducting an operation study financed by a State grant to determine the problems and skills required to place older workers.

Commerce and Industry Association of New York, Inc.

During the last two years this organization has been active in clarifying the employment problems of older workers. Through its circular letter, it has alerted its members to the availability, desirability and feasibility of employing older workers; it has presented statements on this subject at public hearings of the State Joint Legislative Committee on Problems of the Aging; it has supported legislation for expanding job counseling service for older workers, and for establishing pilot projects in counseling and placement of older workers to be undertaken by non-profit placement agencies. Currently, the Association is assisting these agencies with the project by urging its members to provide jobs for the 40-plus workers.

National Social Welfare Assembly

Through its Committee on the Aging, the National Social Welfare Assembly has been gathering information and stimulating interest in the aged throughout the United States since 1950. In December 1956, the Ford Foundation made a grant of \$500,000 to the National Social Welfare Assembly to be used over a period of years to establish and maintain an information and consultation service to organizations and community groups wishing to provide or expand services to older people in such fields as housing, health, recreation and employment.

* * *

While the work done by various agencies, both public and private, has been important and helpful, further action could be profitably undertaken by them. There is need to expand research on worker productivity, on the effects of aging on job performance, and on the effects of certain personnel policies and practices on the *hiring* of older workers. Most of the studies so far made have been on a national or State basis, some of which include New York City. However, no major studies have been made exclusively of New York City's *hiring* patterns, practices, peculiar industrial or worker characteristics and problems. Considering the size and complexity of New York City's industry and population, such local studies are badly needed.

Public and private agencies are also in need of funds for counseling, special placement service, training and retraining of older workers. It is estimated that at the present time in New York City the public and private agencies combined can give counseling and special placement ser-

vice to less than one-half of the unemployed workers over 45 who need such service. Yet repeated studies have indicated that such a worker's chance for employment is doubled if he can receive such special service. Almost no facilities now exist in New York City for the training or re-training of older workers and no sheltered workshops exist in New York City for older workers.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR FURTHER ACTION

The lines along which further action is needed take form from what has been said above. Whether such action will be developed rapidly and vigorously will depend upon greater comprehension of the problem of the older worker, upon the good will of all parties concerned and upon objective and effective leadership. Purposeful action should be more effective, however, when guided not only by empirical understanding of a problem but by general principles which express the moral and social value of the action contemplated. In the case of the problem of the older worker, a statement of guiding principles should be particularly helpful since it can serve as a standard of evaluation of progress made.

The starting point for a statement of principles is the general idea that age discrimination in employment is destructive of the dignity of the individual, a drain on our social-economic system and a waste of human material. In *A Bill of Objectives for Older People* which it proposed, the Council of State Governments formulated the general idea as "Equal opportunity to work." According to this statement, our society recognizes the value of work to the person and to the community. The older person should have equal opportunity, if physically and mentally able, to be gainfully employed.

The general idea stated above, may be translated into the following guiding principles for action:

1. Each person has the responsibility—as a right and a duty—of making whatever contribution he is able toward his own support and that of his family during his effective working life, including the later years, and should have the appropriate opportunity to do so.
2. All persons able to meet job requirements and willing to work steadily should not be deprived of the opportunity to work because of age, either by employer or union restrictions.
3. Each person should be considered as an individual with respect to employment, to be hired or fired in accordance with his or her skill, experience, knowledge and physical capacity; we must not create classes based on age.

4. All employers should make the greatest possible effort to provide job adjustments (through transfer or otherwise) and job changes to enable them to *retain* and *hire* older workers.
5. Labor and management should formulate and interpret their collective agreements so as to facilitate the *hiring* and *retention* of older workers.

It would be possible to quote many leaders of public opinion who have endorsed these principles in their own way. Suffice it here to quote from a recent statement by the President of the United States. Said Dwight D. Eisenhower:

“Our nation must now learn to take advantage of the full potential of our older citizens—their skills, their wisdom, and their experience. We need those traits as much as we need the energy and boldness of youth . . . we must recognize older persons as individuals—not a class—and their wide differences in needs, desires and capacities. The great majority of older persons are capable of continuing their self-sufficiency and usefulness to the communities if given the opportunity. Our task is to help in assuring that these opportunities are provided . . . 1) to help make it possible for older persons who desire and are able to work to continue their productive lives through suitable gainful employment; 2) to remove the fear of destitution in the later years. . . .”

No one who has faith in the future of America can doubt the validity and practicality of the President's statement and of the principles which it reflects. Our faith is that America will maintain its capacity to grow and to develop its economic potentialities, that there will be jobs for all, and that the ability to do the job—rather than chronological age—will become the sole criterion in placement and employment.

OPERATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

The principles presented above can become a vital force in our industrial life only if they are translated into operative policies and procedures. To develop appropriate methods of implementing these principles is primarily the task of those concerned with the problem of the older worker in a direct and practical way; namely, employers, organized labor, government and social welfare agencies.

No attempt can be made here to spell out in detail how the task of implementation should be carried out. But some specific recommendations are in order here as a means of indicating the scope and direction of the task. With such purpose in view, we suggest the following lines of action:

1. More job counseling facilities, specifically directed at the employment problems of older workers, should be established in business, industry, labor unions, voluntary counseling agencies, and government.
2. Job analysis and classification as well as in-service training procedures should be developed to fit older workers into jobs appropriate to their capabilities.
3. Relaxing age restrictions is not enough. Office and plant managements and personnel directors should review the job descriptions and requirements to determine whether improved methods or equipment have changed requirements to the extent that older workers can qualify.
4. Every device now available should be used by employers to the extent possible to distinguish between functional and chronological age.
5. To convince themselves of the validity of *hiring* older workers, employers should compare their older and younger workers with regard to production, spoilage, down-time, absenteeism, turnover, as well as investigate comparative costs of insurance, workmen's compensation, and other fringe benefits.
6. Systematic research into specific problems connected with the employment of older workers should be made by qualified and objective agencies, based on grants from public and private sources.
7. Broad educational campaigns should be organized to bring home to management, labor and the public the latest scientific data on what older workers can and cannot do, as well as how and to what extent the economy as a whole is weakened by arbitrary age limits.

VII A PROGRAM FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

In the last analysis, the problem of the older worker can best be solved by the two groups directly concerned, namely, management and labor. But government and the community have an important role to play in creating the climate of opinion and the social attitudes favorable to rational and constructive action. In the New York metropolitan area, with its diverse industrial, commercial and financial institutions, its highly organized labor force, its complex economic structure and its many-sided social interests, it is particularly necessary that the efforts of management and labor be encouraged in every way possible by community action.

The Community Council of Greater New York is ready to assume responsibility for such a program of action. In broad terms, this would be primarily a coordinating and educational pro-

gram. Specifically, the program would aim to acquaint employers and labor organizations with the nature of the problem, would supply them with information on what was being done to solve it, would stimulate research into phases of the problem requiring further clarification, would arrange small group meetings to discuss suggestions for practical action, and would help bring the problem to the attention of the general public through the press, radio, television, and in other ways. It would be of great educational value, for instance, if an employer who has made a successful experiment in the employing and placing of older workers would tell his story in a radio or television interview, or in a newspaper or magazine feature article. It would certainly be a stimulus to positive action if management and workers were aware that the community is concerned with this basic problem and has facilities for keeping them informed and for counseling them.

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