

However well designed, legislation alone only breaks down the initial barriers confronting the older person seeking employment or reemployment.

As a consequence of their special employment problems, older workers need special training, counseling, and placement services. A dramatic example of concerted efforts to solve such problems occurred after the Studebaker plant shutdown that I referred to earlier. Under the sponsorship of the South Bend Community Council, the U.S. Department of Labor, and the National Council on the Aging, an 18-month demonstration was carried out, combining intensive job counseling, intensive job development, and intensive publicity. The basic core of long-term Studebaker employees consisted of about 6,800 workers, whose average age was 55. Of the approximately 4,500 persons over 50 who were unemployed as a result of the shutdown, over 4,000 were serviced by the project and at its termination in September 1965, 66 percent were reemployed or in MDTA training, and only 8.6 percent were still looking for work (of the remaining, 21 percent had retired, 2 percent were deceased, and 3 percent had moved out of the area).

The substantial success of this project in overcoming age barriers to employment seems to be attributable to the combination of concentrated and wide-ranging services, the very active cooperation of the community involved, and adequate funding by the Federal Government.

Section 3 (c) and (d) of H.R. 3651 which directs the Secretary of Labor to "foster, through the public employment service system and through cooperative effort, the development of facilities of public and private agencies for expanding the opportunities and potentials of older persons; and to sponsor and assist State and community institutional and educational programs;" would establish formal procedures for expanding the kinds of activities and services—which seemed to account for the dramatic success of the South Bend project—and to provide adequate funding for the initiation of such activities on a national level.

It should be pointed out that we need to know a great deal more about occupations themselves, in particular the extent to which age is a relevant job qualification. While there are many occupations which can be satisfactorily carried out regardless of age, there are others where age does not affect performance.

For example, a study of truckdrivers indicated that 55 is a reasonable upper age limit beyond which it may be too risky to employ a man. It is also important to keep in mind that the purpose of age discrimination legislation is to prevent situations where older persons are not hired because of false notions concerning their ability to do a particular job. It would serve neither the older individual nor the larger society to force acceptance of persons into occupations where their age constitutes a real handicap to their carrying out the work safely and efficiently. Empirical studies of a variety of types of occupations could clarify our thinking about age as a factor in job performance, and could be used as guidelines both in the counseling of older workers and in the fair administration of age discrimination statutes. Such studies would be possible under section 3 (a) and (b) of H.R. 3651.