

coincidence that the State of Michigan had a fair employment practices law prohibiting job discrimination on the basis of race.

But the picture was not the same when it came to age. While nearly 60 percent of the young ex-Packard workers—under 45—found new jobs with the Big Three; only 30 percent of those 45–54, and only 15 percent of those 55 to 64, found jobs with the Big Three. These older workers were no less qualified to work in an auto factory than the younger ones.

I have often wondered what has happened to these Packard workers over the past 10 years. More important, what might have happened to them if there had been legislation, either State or Federal, which prohibited job discrimination on the basis of age. I have already stated that at least among the larger companies, such as in the auto industry, racial discrimination was nonexistent, and I attribute a good part of this to the State FEPC law prohibiting race discrimination. Furthermore, Negroes hired by the Big Three obtained jobs at wage rates equal to or better than their wage rates paid while at Packard to the same degree as did whites.

This one case study certainly suggests that the same beneficial results for older workers could be obtained if we now had laws prohibiting age discrimination in employment.

One of the arguments frequently posed against age-discrimination legislation is that age is not the reason for the problems of older jobseekers—that the real reason is that they happen also to be less skilled than younger workers, and that employers naturally will choose the better skilled job applicants who just happen to be younger.

As on so many other issues in our society today, this is an oversimplified argument. There are dozens of reasons—not just one—for the disadvantages of older jobseekers, and lower education or lesser skills may be only one of the many reasons.

This is why manpower training programs must improve the proportion of older workers who obviously need skill upgrading. MDTA still has a long way to go. I am the first to admit that legislation prohibiting discrimination—whether it is against Negroes, women, or older workers—will not be the total solution for all the job problems of such disadvantaged groups. There is no such thing as a total solution for any kind of problem, despite the naive search for panaceas on the part of many sincere people.

But if skill level is the simple explanation for the problems of older jobseekers, why is it that age was a much more important determinant of job-finding success than skill or education among the Packard workers in 1957 and 1958? Why is it that in a more recent study in 1964, by the Upjohn Institute, we found that among skilled workers all of the younger skilled men found new jobs, while 38 percent of the older skilled workers were still unemployed?

In this more recent study, based on interviews in Erie, Pa., we not only found that older skilled workers had more trouble getting new jobs, we also found that among those who did find new jobs their wage rates on the new jobs were below the rates they were paid on their previous jobs. Here is a case, then, in which skill levels did not guarantee immunity to older workers.

And before I forget to say so, I should make clear that I am not talking about 65- and 70-year-old skilled workers when I use the term