

living, which has resulted from this discrimination, but also because they see the same age discrimination affecting their children, who are now over 45 and reaching the dangerous age for employment in America.

Frankly, the serious manpower shortages which are now developing throughout the Nation cry out for Congress to pay new attention to employment of the elderly as a matter of national policy. Current shortages of skills in defense-related industries are a matter of serious national concern. But we have permitted our entire society to become so youth-oriented that those over 45, without jobs, have been swept away in a backwash.

And to justify this blatant discrimination against the elderly worker we have promoted one myth after another to help employers rationalize hiring practices based on the theory that a young labor force guarantees greater performance and less overhead.

One of the prejudices we have used to hire the younger worker instead of the man and woman over 45 is the canard that it costs much, much more to hire older workers. A recent Department of Labor study shows that putting an older worker on the payroll, including all fringe benefits, costs an average of just 5 cents an hour more than a younger worker.

We have heard that older workers are absent more—but the truth is that older workers actually lose fewer days from work, they are just as adaptable, their average performance is as good as, and sometime better, than younger workers.

Clearly, the most serious problem of the elderly is financial insecurity. And basic to secure retirement living is the nature and extent of one's employment before retirement. Of the over 7 million Americans over 65 who are currently living below the poverty line—if studies undertaken within our own organization are anything to go by, a large majority have suffered from considerable discrimination in employment for over 20 years. They had just entered the dangerous age when World War II ended and many of them lost out in the fierce competition for jobs which followed demobilization. They have been losing out ever since. They have no savings, they live on public assistance or on inadequate social security, and they have little hope.

It has been variously estimated that not more than 1½ to 2 million over-65 elderly would be physically capable of accepting full-time or part-time employment or even after adequate retraining. But if Congress could help the over-65's to find jobs, where they are willing and able, we might be able to cut in half the number of elderly who are still on relief rolls. And Congress would strike a blow for human dignity.

But age discrimination in employment is a much more serious burden on this Nation than merely the plight of the over-65's, as serious as their problem is.

Time magazine recently said that the estimated cost of this country's outmoded prejudices against hiring workers over 45 is over \$4 billion a year. Yet arbitrary discrimination in hiring—unless it is checked now—will become even more costly to the Nation as technological developments make physical labor more outmoded and changing job specifications, changing education requirements, and changing personnel practices, demand more sophisticated judgment and experience.