

In January 1967 President Johnson called for an end to arbitrary age limits on hiring and reminded us that although 23 States have already enacted laws to prohibit discriminatory practices, the problem is one of national concern.

I therefore urge prompt and affirmative action on my bill H.R. 9568, which I introduced into this House on May 3, 1967, identical with Mr. Perkins' bill H.R. 3651.

These bills would establish as a matter of national policy the elimination of arbitrary age discrimination in employment.

These proposed measures would also provide minimum standards barring arbitrary age discrimination for workers between the ages of 45 and 65, with authority for the Secretary of Labor to adjust these limits upward or downward in order to effectuate the purposes of the act, and finally State legislation for meeting the problem of discrimination in employment because of age would be encouraged by these bills.

Mr. Chairman, the problem of age discrimination in employment is a serious one. Within the next 20 years we will have approximately 25 million people over the age of 65.

Furthermore, life expectancy is steadily increasing and some scientists predict that an average life expectancy of 100 could theoretically be possible within 35 years.

But what do we find concerning the plight of the older American worker today? At age 40, a worker may find that age restrictions become common, according to a report of the Secretary of Labor to the Congress in 1965.

By age 45, his employment opportunities are likely to contract sharply; they shrink more severely at age 55 and virtually vanish by age 65.

This does not mean that so-called older workers cannot get jobs or cannot get good jobs. But it does mean that their job search may be long and hard, for they are given no consideration for employment in some establishment. For many, it also means that their choices are narrow; that they must accept reduced wages in some cases, for the same kind of work, and in others, for work at lower skills.

Only 8.6 percent of all new workers hired by surveyed establishments during 1964 were 45 years of age and over—less than one-third this age group's proportion among the unemployed. In fact one out of five employers failed to hire a single new worker who had reached his 45th birthday and half reported that less than 5 percent of all new workers hired were in this age group.

Moreover President Johnson said in January 1967:

Despite our present low rate of unemployment, there has been a persistent average of 850,000 people at age 45 and over who are unemployed.

The average duration of unemployment for workers age 45 to 64 in 1966 was 15.4 weeks, while for workers of all ages, average duration of unemployment was 10.2 weeks.

These statistics reveal dramatically the existence of cruel discrimination against the older workers in employment.

As the economist, Sumner Slichter, said:

The community's need for more employment among the older workers is a permanent one, and it will become greater as time goes on, and as the proportion of older persons in the population increases.