

VI

RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

A. Applicant Shortages

Difficulties of recruiting well-qualified law enforcement officers are expressed in the following comment from the City of Fremont:

"The age group now reaching or beyond 30 has been in notably short supply, since this nation experienced a reduced birth rate during the depression years. As a result, all public agencies have had difficulty in obtaining enough qualified applicants within the age limits most suitable for entrance into police and fire positions."

Nevertheless, the City of Fremont is contemplating reducing the upper age limits for entrance into both fire and police positions to age 28, in the hope that the "baby boom" may lessen their recruiting problems.

Other cities and counties have taken a different approach. Nine cities and *eight counties in the survey sample reported no age limits, other than retirement*. Several cities provide for raising age limits for law enforcement jobs at the discretion of the hiring authority, for applicants with stipulated experience. The latter group includes Huntington Beach, Lompoc, Lynwood, Monterey Park, Redlands, and Whittier.

In professional and clerical jobs, age limits may unduly restrict the applicant supply. This may be especially true in clerical jobs where turnover is often a problem among younger women who marry, have children or migrate with their husbands to other areas. In most locations, there is a growing supply of women in their 40's and 50's, with previous experience and skills often unimpaired or which can be re-sharpened with brief retraining, who are returning to the labor market. Many need jobs because of the husband's death or disability or to provide support for minor children, or to supplement the inadequate pension of a retired husband. Often these women have skills adequate to fill jobs sometimes classified at the "junior" clerical level. Although some agencies consider such jobs to be trainee positions, the term "junior" does not necessarily relate to age but rather to a minimum skill level. Establishment of age limits at age 50 or 55 for such positions may disqualify mature women who can perform the duties, have need for steady employment, and may be less subject to family cares than women with young children. Since physical demands for such jobs are usually not great, they can often be performed by physically handicapped persons, and certainly by older persons able to meet the physical, mental, and performance requirements of the job.

The question was previously raised in this report as to whether public agencies can legally establish upper age limits for jobs not in the law enforcement, safety, firefighting, or other categories mentioned in the Government Code and statutes (relevant provisions are summarized