

VIII

"HIDDEN DISCRIMINATION"**A. Physical and Educational Requirements**

Age limits on civil service jobs do not in themselves constitute the only form of discrimination against older workers. Some requirements which may place them at a disadvantage include (a) strict physical examinations for jobs where physical demands are limited; (b) possession of a high school diploma or college degree; (c) recency of education and experience.

Older job applicants may be ruled out by rigid physical examinations if they have any medical history, even if the physical demands of the job are not great. Physical or performance standards in excess of actual job requirements close the door to many persons who could provide long years of service.

Standards of appearance, particularly for non-public contact jobs, are another form of "hidden discrimination" which affects older workers, even though younger applicants may also face this problem.

Requirements for a high school diploma or college degree may work against the older individual with long and successful experience, who entered the labor market before such requirements were common and who never returned to school.

Recency of training and experience may be especially important in jobs subject to great change, as in aerospace and scientific occupations. However, such requirements sometimes appear in civil service examination announcements for jobs where the "recency" would place the older applicant at a disadvantage—as in clerical examinations which specify "two years of experience within the past ten years." Such a requirement may curtail job opportunities for well-qualified women who are returning to the labor market after they have raised their families, and who are in search of stable employment.

"Over-qualified" older applicants may face rejection because the hiring authority may hesitate to place him with a group of younger workers, or may feel that a person with supervisory experience will not adjust easily to a subordinate position.

While it is only natural for an employer to want the best possible workers, some of these attitudes and practices are forms of "hidden discrimination" against older job applicants. Continuing emphasis in public policies and practices on the capabilities and performance of older employees may in the long run help to modify these prejudices.

B. Training Opportunities

Specialty training through scholarships or other grants, directed toward advancement in government employment, is sometimes closed to older job applicants or older government employees. For instance, graduate training for Health Physicists is largely sponsored by the