

stability and maturity, have little value in these instances while his major lacks, physical strength and stamina, are sometimes necessary to perform the work.

Nearly all of the employer respondents related their preferences for older workers in terms of the types of work within their companies. This led to the conclusion that employers in general do not hold a conscious bias against older workers. Overt discrimination or prejudice could be suspected if a significant number of employers had expressed across-the-board preferences for younger workers. Discrimination could also be suspected if union and company respondents had differed sharply in appraisals of older or younger workers' fitness for given activities. In general, neither of these conditions occurred; employers seemed objective in using older and younger workers in the jobs for which they are best suited.

It should be noted, however, that preference for the older employee generally decreases as company size increases. Larger companies recognize the qualities of the older employee but cannot utilize to the same extent as small companies the breadth and depth of experience that the older employee has to offer. Large companies have relatively more junior and unskilled positions to fill and the range of tasks assigned to any one person is likely to be far more specialized than in a smaller organization. For example, the typical accountant in any of the large companies interviewed performs tasks that are related to a single phase of accounting such as accounts payable or payroll. In these companies, the younger person is preferred for such a position since the work requires little experience and the position is typically at or near the bottom of the promotion ladder. In contrast, a certain medium-sized business prefers older persons as accountants. There are only four such positions in the company and each employee must not only be thoroughly familiar with project accounting but must have experience in all phases of accounting that apply to company operations. The company has found that younger employees cannot satisfy these requirements and it will not even consider applicants under 35.

In summary, the older employee is frequently preferred. His role generally seems to vary with the kind of work to be done and the size of the company involved. By and large, survey respondents appeared quite genuine and objective in their preferences; there was virtually no evidence of conscious discrimination or prejudice against the older employee.

B. THE OLDER WORKER AS AN APPLICANT

The status of the older applicant is in sharp contrast to that of the older employee. While older employees actually on the job are accepted and even preferred by employers for many types of work, the same employers are often reluctant to hire older persons for similar work. A number of reasons for this seeming contradiction have been expressed.