

"EXPANDING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR
THE OLDER WORKER IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA"

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In accepting the invitation to speak on "Employment for Older Workers" I did not fully appreciate the complexities of the problems to be discussed. The enormous backlog of research, investigation and theories, as well as current forecasts, will continue to be made, as a large percentage of our population moves into the aged category. There are many compelling reasons why all citizens should work to identify and solve problems of the unemployment of older people.

One is economic, and necessary in order to keep our Nation, State and Region productivity high and their economics prosperous. Another reason is social in that everyone must help bear government costs. The third is human and we must do it to keep individuals independent and free from direct government subsidy. There is nothing constructive for the individual, or our way of life, in large numbers of citizens being dependent upon the Federal Government provided that they are physically and mentally capable of self-determination and support.

It is interesting to note that approaches to these problems are being made by a variety of groups, both public and private, and recommendations are being implemented. Our presence here today, in response to House Resolution 77 passed by the 1963 California Legislature, is evidence of the concern which will produce supportable programs.

Before proceeding, we should establish some guidelines. Who is the elderly worker? How old is he, measured in terms of functional years. Is he the person beyond normal retirement years who wants or needs employment? Is he the middle-aged older worker who is slowing down? Is he the mature worker too vigorous to retire and wishing to continue in his job but facing compulsory retirement? Is he the older worker who through automation, relocation or change over in products, such as saw-milling in this area, is seeking employment? Does he want part-time or full-time employment, additional training or retraining in order to qualify for new employment? What are the job barriers which keep him out of the labor force? How many of these are based on hiring practices, retirement policies or pension plans? How many are created by a national tendency to glorify youth and minimize the values of maturity? How many problems are created by the older worker himself through refusal for re-education; not keeping abreast of technical skills; by unwillingness or inability to change location when retired; by reluctance to accept new positions at less salary; by a lack of ability to sell themselves or by discouragement and bitterness through a forced period of lengthy unemployment?

How many job restrictions are based upon faulty assumptions such as more injuries of the older worker, mental confusion if the work pace accelerates, frequent absenteeism, and sight and hearing changes