

"SUMMARY OF EUREKA WORKSHOP"

by Mrs. A. M. G. Russell, Chairman
Citizens' Advisory Committee on Aging

Our purpose in meeting here today has been mentioned specifically -- and as an underlying thought -- as we have talked. To again quote our very able Legislators' resolution, Assemblymen Belotti and Kennick stated that "the meeting is relative to improving the employment opportunities of older persons -- it is part of a study of how and where employment opportunities for older persons may be improved and expanded throughout the state." And perhaps we might add the thought of our keynote speaker--that we also find out what older people can do for themselves.

We have seen today that we need to look more at the total picture in order to find workable solutions. The employment of the older worker in the future is only one part of long run total labor requirements -- it is dependent on the rate of economic growth in output per manhour. It is also dependent on the size of the total product and what that product is. It is difficult to tell whether the demand may not change from goods produced by machines to goods which require large amounts of labor or vice versa. For certain, rapid technological changes will undoubtedly continue to confront the older workers in the future with the threat of occupational and educational obsolescence.

What are we doing to help the situation -- true, we are looking at it today, but looking is not enough -- and it is not enough to find one solution and work at this -- the situation is complex and requires attack from many angles. We must find immediate solutions for the older worker today and we must take preventive steps for the future.

Some steps have been taken. We have an "Employment for Older Workers Act" passed in 1961, which makes it unlawful for employers of six or more persons to discriminate, solely, on the basis of age, in hiring, firing, or promoting persons between the ages of 40 and 64. Today there have been suggestions that the age should be lowered, also that enforcement policies should be reconsidered.

We have the statewide program of the Department of Employment -- each office has an older worker specialist who gives services to older workers -- provides counseling, job development-retraining, placement.

Under the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962, older workers can be retrained along with younger ones -- good percentages of retrainees are in the over-45 group. California workers are permitted (by legislative action, 1961) to attend school while drawing unemployment benefits -- providing the worker is leaving an occupation where the demand for workers is diminishing and trains for an occupation where workers are in demand. This program utilizes the Adult Education program on an individual need basis. During 1963, of 2746 enrolled under the program, 18.7% were over 45.