

"A MODEL FOR ACTION TO IMPROVE AND EXPAND
EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER PEOPLE"

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What we want to talk about today is the older and retired workers, primarily the older worker and how we help this older worker not only to look busy but to be busy. Actually, concern with the plight of the older worker is not new in our country. Many years ago, Carl Sandburg wrote very feelingly of the 40-year-olds in the steel industry in Chicago back at the turn of the century who were found to be too old to work every time that there was a seasonal layoff in the industry and then, of course, the great depression of the 30's was also a period and particularly a period of dramatic experience for the older worker.

During the 1930's when Frances Perkins became Secretary of Labor, the U. S. Department of Labor established a study committee on a national basis to do something about the problem of the older worker. As a matter of fact the Social Security Act was passed primarily in an effort to remove the older worker from the job market and to provide him some income for not working. Now, when World War II came along, of course this obscured, and in a large measure reversed, the manpower problem of the older worker. In World War II there were practically 12 million young men under arms and almost all of them had to be replaced either by older men and women of all ages, physically disabled and even some of those who had already retired. This experience in World War II and to a lesser and still a significant degree in the Korean War has left many of us to the overall, oversimplified conclusion that the solution to the problem of the older worker is full employment.

Full employment is obviously a solution but if it is achieved only in an allout mobilization for war, is it in any sense a practical and desirable solution to the problem? We believe that we must seek other and less expensive solutions to the problem so while we are most enthusiastic about the need and desirability of full employment under peacetime conditions, we also think that it is necessary to face the economic reality today and look further and deeper beneath the surface of this problem to find real and lasting solutions which can begin to take effect prior to the time that we are able to achieve full-time employment. It was in request of such solutions that the U. S. Employment Service and the U. S. Department of Labor undertook studies, in depth, of the older worker problem. This was done in 1947, '49, '50, '52, '55 and again in 1957. All of these studies led to about the same conclusions. We may summarize these as follows:

First: That there is widespread discrimination against older workers in the hiring and employment practices of employers large and small, public, private and voluntary.

Second: That this discrimination is incurred at different age levels, sometimes even at ages 30 and 35 depending upon the sex and