

Now, since the problem is so complex, it is also obvious that solutions will also have to be complex. We do not believe that there is any single simple solution to the problem of the older worker. First of all, we believe that we can do a better job through the existing mechanisms, procedures and techniques which are currently involved in the employment problem. We can, for example, in a corporation establish a clear and unequivocal policy on hiring and retention on the basis of ability and without regard to age. Now, many companies and unions claim to have adopted such a policy, but how many have really tried to implement such a policy through very direct, written and spoken interpretation to supervisory personnel, managers, foremen, and the personnel officers of the corporation?

Secondly, we believe progress can be made by examining carefully the hidden forms of age discrimination which may be found in various corporations. By hidden forms, I mean certain arbitrary and generalized educational requirements which automatically eliminate a considerable proportion of the 45 or over applicants who have, say less than 8 grades of formal schooling, or a corporation could re-examine the arbitrary physical requirements which it may set for new employees. Physical requirements which may discriminate against older workers who are not at all disabled in a job sense even though some may have minor disabilities which, in the eyes of the company doctor, may be classified as disabling from the point of view of employment with their company. Or, we can take a hard look at the psychological screening devices which are used by many companies which automatically rule out many older workers since they were standardized on a new generation of students and they were not necessarily standardized on successful job performance. In other words, what we are saying is that the devices which are used to screen out so-called undesirables or potentially unproductive employees may have a hidden factor of age discrimination which really has no reality as far as the individual worker is concerned and it is only in the study of arbitrary requirements rigidly applied that this discrimination comes to light. Furthermore, corporations could make studies of the pensions and insurance requirements which are frequently referred to involving the older worker on cost grounds. In the past, studies have shown that the cost of employing an older worker in the 40's and 50's need not be a very significant factor to the corporation.

Now, aside from the question of discrimination on the age basis itself and its elimination, another major approach to a solution of the older worker problem is to help prevent it by doing a better job of training and utilizing the worker who is already on the payroll. It is frequently recognized by management that the middle-aged worker who is passed over several times for promotion and/or upgrading in skills suddenly becomes either frightened or disillusioned and cynical about his place and status. His morale begins to fall and he looks down the hill to retirement instead of up the hill to further advancement and progress in the organization. Opportunities for training, retraining or even a complete change of assignment become important considerations in this phase of the problem. You may know, for example, of the practice of Bell Telephone Company in the case of their linemen, who at a certain age become ill-suited for the continuance of their