

Apart from these suggested arrangements, it is to be noted that organized labor did not venture into these fringe benefit areas necessarily as a matter of preferred choice. The money that goes for health and welfare and pensions comes out negotiated money that would otherwise be available for wage increases.

Unions started negotiating health and welfare plans after labor was unable to secure approval of either a national or state prepaid health care plan. The negotiated plans were the "second best" that could be obtained. The older worker problem, in this sense, is a reminder that perhaps the time has come to reconsider a national or state health care plan. If not, then let's not blame unions for doing the next best thing available to workers.

The same applies to pensions. Labor would prefer to see an adequate federal social security program that would make negotiated pensions unnecessary.

These are some of the reforms that we ought to be thinking about. Let's keep our eyes on the main tent when we talk about older workers' problems in these areas.

IV. Training Problems

Early warning systems are not easy to negotiate. Employers fear loss of competitive positions when bargaining with unions on these issues.

Information on new technologies well in advance of introduction is vital to the whole field of skill development, if coordinated community approaches to job training are to be undertaken.

Retraining of older workers has no chance of achieving substantial success unless young workers coming into the labor force have the basic training they need for the development of employable skills. Otherwise, they are vieing against the older worker in areas of diminishing labor requirements, as much as possible, for older workers.

Early warning systems and projections of new technologies may require a lead time, sufficient not only to acquire the skills, but also to pick up the basic skills that may be necessary for an older worker to pass an aptitude test to qualify for the training.

In some cases it may be desirable long before the new technology is introduced to provide the financial means whereby an older worker may undertake such basic training without loss of pay.