

over will increase 34 per cent. Therefore, the time is at hand when we must give serious attention to the older worker.

PROBLEMS OF HIRING OLDER EMPLOYEES

The older person who is seeking employment encounters major difficulties and roadblocks. Some of these are real difficulties -- some are imagined. All too frequently employment opportunities for older workers are denied because of prejudices on the part of employers. I would like to look for a moment at some of the prevailing attitudes of employers for not hiring older workers:

1. Older workers are inflexible -- they are too set in their ways, they resist change; are difficult to train, lack versatility, etc.
2. They don't keep up with changing technology. From the time of Moses to the Victorian Age, change was slow, and age was revered because it implied wisdom. Today the emphasis is on youth, and technological advances are rapidly dissipating the value of the older worker's experience.
3. They are unable to maintain normal production standards -- are slower and more prone to make errors.
4. Older workers frequently cannot meet the physical requirements of the employer. They are more susceptible to arthritis, rheumatism, heart disease, etc.
5. They cause the employer's cost for fringe benefits to be increased -- pension and insurance costs are greater.
6. Some companies are just set against hiring older workers: Charles W. Ufford, Director of Industrial Relations for Warner & Swasey Co., a Cleveland machinery maker, states: "We like to hire our workers young and let them work themselves up the ladder. This policy is good for our younger workers, and it's good for the older workers who started with us. But it's not so good for the older fellow who's outside trying to get in."
7. Companies with a rigid retirement policy of 65 are reluctant to hire a man over the age of 55 because they cannot provide retirement benefits for those with less than 10 years of service. Robert N. Sprague, program director in employment and retirement for the National Council on Aging says that the overall trend in industry is not toward flexible retirement but rather toward more rigid mandatory retirement policies. Compulsory retirement at age 65 is often necessary to make room for promotions at regular intervals.

These problems just cited are some of the major reasons given by employers for not wishing to hire older workers. Let us remember that many of these so-called reasons are possibly generalizations and have no widespread basis in fact.