

This ever-increasing problem is not one that can be set aside for future consideration, for, by that time, it might be uncontrollable. As reported in the *Older American Worker*, a report of the Secretary of Labor to the Congress pursuant to section 715 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 on age discrimination in employment, the "older" persons category includes approximately 55 million Americans aged 45 and over, which is one-fourth of our total population. Out of that 55 million, 29 million are employed and 750,000 are seeking employment. However, the 3 percent unemployment rate is higher since unemployment figures do not include those individuals who have relinquished seeking jobs because of repeated failures in locating employment, but actually want to work.

Unemployment of these "older" persons lasts an average of 19½ weeks as compared to 11 weeks for those under 45. Older persons represent about 25 percent of the labor force, or roughly 30 million, and, of those 750,000 unemployed, 150,000 make up about 35 percent of the long-term unemployed (6 weeks or more). Moreover, a significant portion of those unemployed are faced with the termination of unemployment compensation benefits because their eligibility period expires.

The older workers' plight should not be destined by gross misconceptions. These statistics must be reduced in order to save the fate of the older workers, for they are more needy than those in any other age bracket today. The poverty rate among heads of families is directly correlated to the age of the person. Nearly one-third of those over 55 are living in poverty with a family to clothe, feed, educate and protect. Our society cannot economically afford this unemployment problem.

I urge that we move now to recognize this unfair discrimination. The misunderstanding of the relationship of age to usefulness and the deliberate disregard of a worker's value solely because of age must be reevaluated and understood by the employers. The answer to any solution here must be administered by the use of education, information, and research into the problems of age discrimination in employment. There must be a realization of the older worker's potential and ability to be retrained and educated. They are still productive at age 45 and must not be relegated to the ash heap because of the older worker syndrome.

We must deal with this problem which stigmatizes the worker as he reaches the relatively young age of 45. One approach is with the Manpower Development and Training Act. It can be enlarged and expanded to further the needs of our society. We should learn by the examples already laid down in other crises of employment. When the Packard plant shut down permanently in 1956, the "Big Three" automobile companies in Detroit hired 60 percent of the young workers and only 20 percent of the older employees. Today one-half of all private job openings are barred to applicants 55 and over and one-fourth are barred to those 45 and over. Dr. Harold L. Sheppard recently testified before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Labor that the reason for such excellent reemployment of workers regardless of race could be attributed in part to Michigan's Fair Employment Practices Law which does prohibit job discrimination on the basis of race—unfortunately there is no parallel legal prohibition of discrimination due to age, which is exactly the purpose of my bill.