

farmers had a second job in a blue-collar occupation and about one-fourth of the craftsmen, operatives, and laborers ran their own farm as a sideline.

Secretary WIRTZ. I think that the larger factor in older people working today is the increasing feeling that they want to continue in a meaningful function in life. As far as their financial positions are concerned, the increase in the social security benefits and in medicare a good deal more than makes up for whatever inflation there has been. Inflation unquestionably hurts the retired person. But, if your question is why more people, older people, are trying to work today, we are proceeding on the assumption which I think is completely sound—that they want to have a meaning and a function, rather than for economic reasons.

Representative WIDNALL. Compulsory retirement at a certain age comes as a real hardship to many people I am sure today. With some, they have to retire at a very early age.

Now, I have seen so many people just foundering after their compulsory retirement, and then looking around and trying to find something that their skills and ability would be adequate for, where they could fill that type of job.

Now, hasn't the number of retired people seeking jobs substantially increased in the last few years?

Secretary WIRTZ. May I ask Mr. Ross on that. I do not have the figures immediately available.

Mr. Ross. Well, Congressman, just answering rather indirectly, there are two points. One is the number of unemployed persons over 65 is quite low compared to what it was a few years ago. Secondly, the percentage of older people in the labor force has been declining steadily. So that whereas there are certainly a great many people of the type to whom you refer, the overall statistics indicate that the trend has been generally downward.

Secretary WIRTZ. I would like to subscribe to the general point, Mr. Widnall, which your question implies.

There is no question in my mind but that we, meaning we the people, we the administration, we the economists, have done the poorest job of providing work and service opportunity for older people, of any job that we have turned to in this area. Putting it differently, I count it the least developed area of policy for the country, the economy and the administration.

Representative WIDNALL. I think it is a pretty sad state of affairs when people who are physically qualified, mentally qualified, are forced into retirement today as they are in many instances.

Secretary WIRTZ. Mr. Widnall, I suggest—

Representative WIDNALL. Let me speak about one in Government. There is compulsory retirement of a postmaster at age 70. But if that postmaster is retired at age 70, a new one can be hired at age 70, who can continue on for a number of years.

Secretary WIRTZ. I did not know that.

Representative WIDNALL. It is absolutely ridiculous.

And you have the same situation obtaining in many other areas. I noticed so much that people who are in retirement then go and get jobs as guards in the bank, guards around factory plants, something like that. Also many union men who work a short week, 30, 35, 38 hours, to 40 hours, they get a second job. And they will get a nonunion job for the second job. They want the combination income.