INDUSTRY AND THE OLDER WORKER*

1. Nature and Extent of the Problem


Relates recent developments in pensions in collective bargaining to the overall problem of old-age dependency. Discusses ways of meeting the need and considers briefly the importance of increasing employment opportunities for workers between the ages of 45 and 65.


Discusses the economic and social implications of the trend toward an older population with particular emphasis on the problems of support and increased social services.


Analyzes population trends in the United States in terms of their effects upon the size and composition of the labor force. With reference to older workers in the labor force, the author emphasizes effects of the trend toward earlier withdrawal. “The drop in the projected percentage of men 65 and over in the labor force is equivalent to a loss of about 5,500,000 worker-years during the decade 1950-60, by comparison with the number that would result from the maintenance of the 1940 percentage. An additional loss of about 500,000 worker-years is implied by the projected decline for men 60 to 64 years old.” He suggests that labor force policy should be coordinated with social security policy “so as to achieve the fullest utilization of potential labor supply that is consistent with the principles of security and a reasonable claim to leisure in old age. . . .”


A detailed analysis, based on 1940 census figures, which considers both occupational status and employment problems.

*Items from this list should be ordered directly from the publisher. Addresses are given in connection with each reference.

Gives a statistical breakdown by states and geographic areas showing number of persons 65 years of age and over in 1940 and 1948. "Older people will continue to increase both in absolute numbers and as a portion of the total population. It would be the better part of wisdom to make provision for their growing needs."


Based on a field study conducted by the Bureau of Old-Age and Survivors' Insurance during 1941 and 1942. "Only about 5 per cent of 2,380 men receiving old-age benefits . . . said they retired and filed for benefits because they wished to do so and while they were in good health. More than half of the men . . . reported that they were laid off by their employers, and about a third stated that they had quit working because of illness or failing health."

2. Characteristics of Older Workers


Reports a research study of several hundred semiskilled workers based on the administration of ten different tests and an interest inventory. "The results indicated that the abilities of the older workers are comparable to those of younger ones in speed tasks which involve neither precision nor complex mental processes, and in tasks which involve familiar materials and operations. Inferiority of the older groups was manifest in tasks which involve the abstract and the complex. No significant change in interests was found with the exception that the older workers preferred jobs at a somewhat higher occupational level than did the younger workers."


Of particular interest to those concerned with the older worker in industry are the papers: "Industrial aspects of aging personnel," by Lydia G. Giberson; "Performance in relation to age," by Walter R. Miles; and "Intellectual changes with age," by David Wechsler. Other papers cover various psychiatric aspects of old age.


Report of a detailed study of work records of about 17,800 workers in 109 manufacturing plants over a period of at least six months. Find-
ings indicated that "The only disadvantage of older workers . . . is that their disabilities last longer once they are injured. But they are, on the whole, less likely to be absent as frequently and perhaps less likely to be injured than younger workers."


Presents findings of a study at the Hyatt Bearings Division of General Motors Corporation which emphasize the increasing importance of a knowledge of gerontology and geriatrics to the industrial physician, the importance of more frequent and more complete physical examinations of older workers, and the need for more industrial medical facilities as the working population becomes older.

3. TECHNIQUES AND PROGRAMS FOR MEETING THE PROBLEM


Describes a technique developed at the Kaiser shipyards during the war. "Selective placement requires evaluation of the worker's experience, skills and physical capacities in relation to the demands of the job. . . . Job reengineering and rehabilitation also enter into the problem. . . ."


Suggests the establishment of a job re-allocation department to deal with problems growing out of the aging of employees, and outlines the functions of such a department. In pointing out the advantages of this plan the author states that it would make possible "a higher standard of performance by placing the judgment of job achievement and job obsolescence on an objective basis. It is also a method for retarding job obsolescence, and for cushioning the effects of the latter when it occurs, by setting up three categories of obsolescence; job, vocational and human."


Stresses the importance of planning for retirement five years or more before it occurs, taking into account such factors as living on a reduced budget, expanding interests, pleasant surroundings, and a productive life.

Describes an experimental course in "The problems of older age" which was developed at the Walkerville plant of General Motors of Canada, Ltd.


Examines the problem of improving self-support and reducing dependence among the aged. Among the constructive measures suggested are improvement of social security benefits by deferment of retirement and investment of part of reserves in suitable, self-supporting housing facilities, provision of incentives to individual saving and employment through tax policy, and purchase of life insurance and annuities.


Describes briefly various remedial programs and recommendations for resolving the conflicting trends toward increased longevity of older workers and their elimination from the labor market to make room for younger people.

4. Surveys of Company Practices and Experience


Summary of a survey of company practices conducted jointly by the Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers among 279 member companies.


Reports results of a survey among 450 member companies of the Industrial Welfare Society as to employment of an experience with "workers of pensionable age."


A survey of company practices regarding compulsory retirement, preparation of employees for retirement, and company-sponsored, post-retirement activities.


Gives excerpts from management replies to a survey regarding hiring age policies, and comparative quality and quantity of production, cooperativeness, and dependability of older workers.