

Birmingham Man, Jobless, Over 40, Discusses Group's Problem

Tells of Program in Getting Back Lost Employment

(The man over 40 has a realiable worker, for once unemployed, it is often difficult for him to get a job again. In this week's Forum, a Birmingham man, unemployed and over 40, tells what his group is up against. The authorship is kept anonymous.—The Editor.)

ANONYMOUS
During the past few years we have all heard considerable talk about the unemployment problem in general with perhaps particular emphasis on the greater difficulties encountered by workers, both men and women, who have reached the age of 40 or more, in their efforts to solve this problem for themselves. Such discussions generally show agreement by all concerned that workers of 40 and over do encounter greater difficulty in finding employment than those in

lower age groups but do not always indicate agreement regarding two other matters equally important: Is such discrimination justified in what means are being employed to bring about a solution to this problem?

Discrimination Widespread
A census taken in 1930 showed that of 6,633,805 who were 65 years of age or older, 2,204,997 were gainfully employed. These figures showed that 58.3 per cent of men had employment and 8 per cent of the women. It is interesting that 3,964 of these persons were 100 years old or more, 62,497 were in the nineties and 740,145 were in the eighties. Seventeen and five tenths per cent of 1,913,190 who were 75 or older were employed. A survey made by the Massachusetts Department of Labor showed that of 3,781 industries, 310 had no men of forty-five or over on their pay rolls and 1,283 had no women of such ages.

A New York State Legislative Committee report showed widespread discrimination against workers over 40 in nearly all industrial areas. To offset these somewhat gloomy reports is one from the Sales Executives Club in New York City showing that a survey made by them brings out the fact that about 80 per cent of their members, representing some of the foremost groups of sales executives in New York, prefer men over forty. Also the announcement by General Electric Company that it has no bearing on its re-employment so long as persons are qualified for work and are physically able to do their tasks.

Coming a little closer home, the

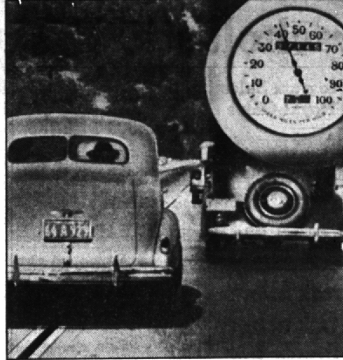
present writer has in the last month called on some 40 of the officers of corporations in and near Detroit asking co-operation in so far as they felt able in solving the employment problem for men of 40 or more, and has met with 100 per cent assurance that their companies had no policy against employing men of past middle age. Several of these executives mentioned instances in their own firms of recent employment of men of middle age or more, one of a man of 72. Although there is evidence that a few of these employers have a policy publicly of having no prejudice against employing men over 40 and another privately of actually never employing anyone of that age, there is no doubt that a large majority of them are actually in the matter of age of them are greatly interested in helping to find a satisfactory solution.

Is It Justified?
Now to get on to consideration of the justification for discrimination against workers of 40 and over. Occasionally we find that an employer who otherwise would be open to all to employing workers over 40 does refuse to do so because he has a retirement plan which provides for a life annuity only after the employee has in a minimum of so many years service with the company. When this is so he hesitates to employ anyone who would be obliged to retire before he would be eligible for the annuity. When a great deal of evidence which appears to prove the absurdity of such a policy is brought to his attention ceases at the age of 40 or any where near that age.

Mr. Griffith, who was mentioned above as being re-employment director in the American Legion, speaking to commanders and adjutants of the Legion's 50 local and territorial departments during a three-day conference at Indianapolis about a year ago said: "Life begins at 40 in the matter of workers' usefulness to industry—this is no longer assets to industry has been disappearing since the prime of his usefulness. This report said, "Skill and experience are required to reach the deftness and speed. Practically all progress in industry, government and all other lines of human endeavor can be traced to the thought born of the experience of the older mind and future progress dependent upon the wisdom and experience." He said further that experiments at Harvard and elsewhere showed that men from 40 to 55 were earning more money than those in any other age bracket and were less liable to accident.

Genius in Old Age
As proof, if any is needed, that age has nothing to do with ability beyond increasing it, the Christian Science Monitor, from which much of this material was taken, pointed out in its issue of February 23, 1938, that Plato wrote and taught until 80. Titian completed his famous "Battle of Lepanto" at 98, and was painting "Pietà" a year later. Michael Angelo developed sculpture and architectural plans up to 89. Sir Isaac Newton was still active in mathematic theory and practice when 85, as he had been in his fifties. Florence Nightingale directed major charity work until her eighties, though confined to her room. The counsel of Thomas Jefferson was eagerly sought up to his passing at 83. Noah Webster finished an enlarged edition of the dictionary at 82 while laboring at an appendix at 84. Cato the Elder is said to have begun the study of Greek at 80. Charles W. Eliot is credited with more than 80 articles and addresses between his 50th and 89th years, inclusive. Thomas Hobbs did much of his controversial writing on mathematics and physics in the 12 years prior to his 90th and made a translation of Homer at 86. Benjamin Franklin, who was often referred to as the "Father of the Constitution," was 81 at the time of the constitutional convention and was consulted on every important national and international question until his passing at 84. Galileo, though blind, studied mechanics and projectiles after 74. Verdi gave us "Otello" at 74. "Faust" at 80 and "Ave Maria" and "The Deum" when about 75. John Philip Sousa wrote his book "Marching Along" at 74 and continued to tour the world with his band. Thomas A. Edison was still experimenting at 84. John Adams represented Massachusetts in the

Police Camera Weakens Alibis



The old one about "barely going 20" won't hold good anymore when California gets its "traffic analyzer" camera in action. This sample shot shows suspected car and also pictures speedometer of patrol car to indicate speed involved. Car at left is running at legal highway speed, but is violating law by crossing double line on pavement.

Constitutional convention at 85. Elihu Root was on the council working to help cut the cost of government at 87. Dorothea was premier of England at 76. President Von Hindenburg began eight years of service to Germany at 78. And so on. One can continue indefinitely with hundreds of examples of creative work done in the past and being done now by men and women way past 40.

What is Being Done
But it is interesting to know what means are being employed to bring about a solution to the problem of unemployed workers over 40. Mr. Griffith, who was mentioned above as being re-employment director in the American Legion, stated that the last year the veterans of the Legion have made the finding of jobs for world war veterans in civil service and private industry a major part of the program. He also said that the directors of the Manufacturers Association had recommended that members not establish an upper age limit for employment "below which might be fixed for permanent retirement." The National Committee on Employment of Older Workers referred to above has recommended a series of changes in public and private employment policy to lessen the difficulties now experienced by older persons in finding jobs.

Remedies suggested by the Committee included: Adjustment of private pension plans to do away with minimum service requirements and limitations on age at entrance, thereby eliminating the inducement to lower costs by not hiring older workers. Revision of employee contributions to group insurance plans in order to cover higher premiums for older workers. Abolition of age limits for entrance into Government Service except for positions requiring physical strength and endurance. Absorption of the Government's retirement system by the Social Security system, and suspension of the 15 year service rule now required for qualification for pension rights under the Civil Service Retirement Act. Study by the United States Employment Service of jobs or type of jobs most suitable to the middle aged worker, with an offer of training facilities to enable him to adapt his skills and techniques to the new opportunities. Re-examination by employers of their hiring policies in the light of the Committee's report to determine what occupations in their plants are particularly suitable for the employment of older workers. Action by employees themselves through union contacts to break down prejudices against older workers.

"Any policy, private or governmental, which arbitrarily discriminates against employees or applicants on the basis of a fixed age is undesirable from the point of view of employees, employers and the public as a whole, and is not justified by the findings of the Committee," the report emphatically states.

Sec'y Perkins Suggests
Specific steps to break down a growing American tendency to limit a man's working years to the quarter of a century when he is between the ages of 18 to 45 were suggested by Secretary of Labor Perkins. She offered the following, admitting some of the proposed remedies might be impractical and others inadvisable: Education of the worker to protect himself by acquiring more skill; by keeping in good health; by union membership; and by efforts to attach himself to a steady business. Possible programs embracing adult education and education

dealing with this problem is the Forty Plus movement which made its beginning in Boston in June, 1928, with only six members. This organization has made such a success of its work of finding jobs for its members that it has now spread to between 50 and 60 cities throughout the United States, Canada, England and Scotland, where chapters of the parent organization known as "National Forty Plus Association, Incorporated," are functioning. Qualifications for membership in Forty Plus are that the applicant must be forty or more years of age, must be unemployed and must have worked as an executive with a salary of \$4,000 or more per year. He must also be a citizen of the United States and must be willing to give part of each week to the Club's activities in behalf of the group as a whole. Calls are made on potential employers to acquaint them with the Club's policies and for the purpose of uncovering openings which might be filled by someone in the Club's membership. When an opening is reported to the Club, a member of its Committee which has charge of the placement of its members calls on the employer and submits the requirements of whichever members are fitted to fill the position, and if he is interested in any one or more of those submitted, arrangements are then made for an interview. This procedure has resulted in 1,000 positions being uncovered by the Boston Club alone and has resulted from 10,000 calls on employers there. Results which compare favorably, according to the length of time in operation, are reported from other cities. Detroit now has a chapter functioning.

So, all in all, it does seem that something practical is being done toward solving the problem of the unemployed worker of forty or over.

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