

and amend the regulations of his Department so as to eliminate all age limitations up to the statutory retirement age. In the future, then, employment of individuals by the State of Maryland will be based entirely on their physical and mental fitness and not on age limitations.

This is a step calculated to carry out the State's responsibility to take the lead in giving consideration to the problems of older persons in the area of employment. It is my profound hope and my sincere belief that this forward step by your State government will serve as an example to employers and that it will never be necessary in Maryland, as it has been in some other states, to enact legislation prohibiting age discrimination in outside employment.

An educational campaign—such a one, indeed, as we find in this conference—can bring about a recognition and an acceptance of the potential of the older worker. Such a change in public attitude eventually would correct the inequities that now exist. With this change in attitude will come also a re-emphasis of the fundamental American concept of the dignity of man. When our people cannot, by reason of age alone, achieve the employment they desire and need, we are not upholding that great concept which is the foundation stone of our society—the inherent dignity of man.

Of course, I consider this action taken by the State as an initial step only in our effort to find a solution to what is termed “the problems of the aged.” As you all know, much more remains to be done. These problems are financial, social, educational and organizational. They involve questions of employment, housing, medical service and recreational activities of elderly persons.

I am informed that in Maryland persons 65 years of age or older constitute eight and one half per cent of the total population. This means that there are approximately 200,000 persons in the State in this age group. I am advised, also, that the ratio of this group to the total population is expanding by about one-third of one per cent annually, so that, about 9,000 to 10,000 persons 65 years old or older are added to our population each year.

One of our tasks is to obtain community acceptance of and adaptation to this social phenomenon. Meanwhile, there remain those problems of financial assistance, health, employment, housing and recreation. Through it all, we must remember that these people are not looking for a dole. They have contributed to the general wealth of the community and therefore have justifiable demands upon the community. Their productive capacity has diminished little, if any, and our society weakens itself when it fails to utilize that productivity.