

strong social pressure within the workplace, sometimes originating from management, to retire early — to “make way for the young”. In cases where contractual protection is not available, furthermore, older workers are vulnerable to replacement by younger workers, hired at entry-level salaries, to do the same or similar work.

The implications of the data on long-term unemployment would appear to be confirmed by what the Committee heard, repeatedly, about the experiences of unemployed older workers. These workers, the Committee was informed, encounter pervasive biases against the aging on the part of employers, sometimes frankly expressed and sometimes clearly implicit in remarks not directly alluding to age. Furthermore, when unemployed older workers turn to Canada Employment Centres for assistance, they may encounter attitudes, or more tangible responses, not markedly different from those in evidence among employers.

According to officials of the National Advisory Council on Aging, negative age-based stereotyping currently influences a significant proportion of hiring, job assignment, training and promotion in Canada (11:24). Requirements of a specified number of years of experience can serve as a pretext for avoiding the hiring of older, more experienced workers; training programs are often geared to the requirements and abilities of younger workers; and younger workers in entry-level positions are often viewed as the only group in which managers can be developed, leading employers to channel investments in training and promotion away from the aging. “The longer-term effects”, the Committee was told, “are demoralization, career slippage and possible termination of work.”¹⁵

A British Columbia group — The 45 Plus Committee for Mid-Life Work Options — provided evidence from one of its component associations, directly involved in seeking employment for older workers, which strongly confirms the general observation of the National Council on Aging. Experience with 3,600 older worker clients in a range of occupations is reflected in their statement that:

For most, it is an astounding thing that because of their age, employers are not seriously considering them for employment. These job-seekers (average age 53 years) become aware that the value of the knowledge, skills and experience brought to the workplace by middle-aged workers is being underrated. It is devastating for them...¹⁶