

abolition of mandatory retirement, with the sole exception of a limited class of occupations directly involving the public safety (Recommendation 11).

2. Employment Issues

Several witnesses who addressed the issue of mandatory retirement also devoted specific attention to other employment issues related to the elderly. Illustrative of this tendency were the comments of representatives of the Senior Citizens' Forum (Montreal) who, after calling for the complete elimination of mandatory retirement, also called for the wider availability of a series of measures to increase workplace flexibility and multiply options for the elderly.²⁰ Among those mentioned were phased-in retirement arrangements and the option of progressive reductions in workload, both before and after the age of 65. One witness noted, for the Committee's attention, that life-cycle theories of economic behaviour, as well as surveys of older people, show that many in this group wish to remain in the workforce, but working only part-time. This tendency is resisted by employers who associate such measures with higher labour costs. The same witness, noting that demographic trends suggest that the number of elderly persons desiring some form of involvement in the workplace is destined to substantially increase, declared: "The elderly should not be used as they have historically been used, really as a pool of cheap labour" (11:28).

The task of better adapting the conditions of work to the needs of elderly workers has multiple dimensions and, in the view of the Committee, ranks high on the list of issues warranting further study. Among the matters which need to be addressed are the costs and feasibility of pro-rating benefits for part-time workers, and the possibility of enhancing the availability of part-time work for the elderly.

B) The Adequacy and Fairness of Services

1. Health and Social Services

The Committee heard a great deal of evidence concerning the treatment of the elderly in hospitals and nursing homes, and the premature placement of elderly Canadians into these relatively high-cost forms of institutional care which results from what was portrayed as a continuing underemphasis, within the Canadian geriatric care system, on preserving the independence of elderly clients and enabling them to continue to function, with appropriate assistance, in the home environment.