

workers through Canada Employment Centres, and for overcoming prejudice on the part of some employers against the hiring of older workers (Recommendation 5). Thousands of unemployed older workers across Canada continue to face bleak prospects of re-employment, while those around them enjoy the new levels of affluence produced by five years of economic recovery. These people deserve no less than the very best efforts of which public institutions are capable in seeking to develop effective remedies.

The demographic and labour market trends reviewed in previous chapters, combined with the probability that international competition will continue to propel economic restructuring, suggest that the older worker problem is not going to go away on its own. Its persistence during five years of general economic recovery, and its demonstrable tenacity even in regions where supply shortages affect many occupational sectors, suggest on the contrary that an immediate and concerted effort is necessary.

Corporate takeovers, rationalization and plant closures will remain particularly significant sources of the predicament of older workers. Troubled industries reduce their intake of younger workers, and eliminate proportionally greater numbers of younger workers during early incremental lay-offs, thus creating seniority-protected populations of older workers who suffer mass lay-offs upon major rationalization or bankruptcy. An era of intensified global competition and major economic dislocation is thus likely to involve older worker unemployment problems of special severity.

It is the view of the committee that, while the enhanced employment programs recommended above are urgently needed, they are unlikely to be sufficient, by themselves, to remedy the special predicament of the laid-off older worker. In the absence of mandatory closure notification, closures can happen overnight, preventing workers from making long-term arrangements to move or acquire different skills. The absence of notification can also prevent workers from making financial arrangements, which may be critically important if severance pay is inadequate. Takeovers can have the same effects and, as recent cases have shown, can also involve the absorption of pension funds, thus depriving individuals of their pensions. The impact of this on older workers, who may have been employed by the same company for many years and be dependent on a single pension fund, can be devastating.

There may, furthermore, be ways of reducing the incidence of plant closures, without impeding longer-term corporate adjustment. The use of