

one hand, and on the other, specific competitiveness problems, both in the workplace and on unemployment rolls. While further study is needed to determine the precise roles each of these factors play with respect to the various groups within the "older worker" category, so that precisely targeted responses can be developed, the Committee believes it is a reasonable assumption that initiatives are needed to deal with both general problems.

Second, in the view of the Committee, it is vitally important that Canadians recognize that many of the problems of labour market competitiveness alluded to above would appear, themselves, to be products of age discrimination. Witnesses have alleged that some employers are reluctant to invest in training and skills upgrading for older employees because they believe that the costs of such investments will not be recovered before older workers retire. We have also been told that some employers are sceptical about the ability of older employees to benefit from training. We have been told, as well, that such attitudes can still be encountered in Canada Employment Centres, although we were gratified to hear from departmental officials that the problem has been recognized, and that recently instituted internal training programs contain components designed to better attune counsellors to the needs and capacities of older workers.

While we cannot comment on the extensiveness of age-based restrictions of training and retraining opportunities, we wish to emphasize that the attitudes alleged by witnesses reflect the kind of thinking on which discrimination thrives. Such attitudes substitute age-based generalizations for considerations based on individual merit, and express negative stereotypes which, it will be seen in a subsequent section, are substantially refuted by contemporary research.

With these concerns prominently in mind, the Committee wishes to offer the following recommendation:

We recommend that the Canadian Human Rights Commission investigate and act in respect to age discrimination, including that experienced by employed as well as unemployed older workers, with vigour (Recommendation 3).

Keeping in mind the universal right to an opportunity to work, and to access to work-related educational programs, we believe that the special needs and circumstances of the older worker justify a series of proactive