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18

December 16, 1958

The Honorable Lister Hill
Chairman
Committee on Labor and Public Welfare
United States Senate
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The recession, perhaps more than any other factor in our recent experience, has emphasized the severe problems facing the aged and aging. In these months of economic hardship, it has been the age group over forty-five that was the first to suffer; and all appearances indicate it will be the last to recover.

In my own State of Michigan, we are confronted with an unemployed list of almost 300,000 people, whose chances of returning to work are slim. The Michigan Employment Security Commission informs me that a major portion of this number is made up of workers past 45, whose skills are slight. This situation, of course, is not confined to Michigan.

From my own experience, I know that this number is matched and perhaps matched again by other large groups who have long been removed from the lists of unemployed. Most of these now endure an economically perilous existence, dependent upon inadequate public assistance or the private charity of relatives, friends or religious and fraternal organizations. For those between 45 and 65, this tragedy is compounded by the discriminatory employment patterns of commerce and industry. Sure of their own ability to contribute with vigor and good result, they find the door of the personnel office closed because of their age.

As we know, also, there are more than 14 million persons who are 65 years of age or over. This total is expected to climb to 21 million and more by 1975. The problems that exist among our elderly citizens, problems which will become even more acute as this segment of our population increases, cry out for attention.

These problems, and their solutions, are the proper business of the Congress, and the particular business of the Senate Committee

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Page #2

on Labor and Public Welfare. I believe that a Subcommittee on the Aged and Aging should be established during the coming session. It should be charged with recommending the public action needed to insure that our senior citizens have an equal opportunity for employment, adequate medical care and living conditions in retirement, and those other means to a life of dignity.

The situation I have mentioned briefly in this letter has long been of concern to me, both as a citizen of Michigan and as a member of the Senate. It was, incidentally, a major part of my campaign program in 1954, and I feel it is my duty to do what I can to work toward solutions to these problems.

If my suggestion for the appointment of a Subcommittee on the Aged and Aging meets with the approval of you and the Committee, I respectfully request that I be appointed chairman of the Subcommittee. I am prepared to outline to you and the Committee a proposed program, resolution and budget for the Subcommittee which I believe necessary in conducting the study.

Thank you for your consideration of this subject.

My very best wishes to you.

Sincerely,

PAT. McNAMARA, U.S.S.

JLS/faj