

# Retiring Workers Express Attitudes

## Pensions Welcome But Insufficient to Provide Economic Security for Declining Years

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The history of man, personally and as a race, has been a constant striving toward security. Individuals and man at various stages of history have not always had to struggle for the same securities. Man in a primitive setting, be he a cave dweller or a citizen of a modern war-ravaged nation, seeks physical security to insure mere existence. To some "social" security is important, to others spiritual security comes first, but to most American workers and their families the chief objective of their dily labors is economic security. An increasing number of these men and women are hired to work for an employer rather than for their own private businesses.

### Economic Insecurity of Wage Earners

"It is insecurity which confronts the mass of our citizens who are entirely dependent upon a wage or salary for their livelihood . . . Economic security is their paramount problem," states Abraham Epstein, "because their lives, their standards, their health, and their culture depends almost entirely upon the size and steadiness of their wages; and the slightest interruption or reduction of their wages or any increase in expenditures immediately condemns them to defenselessness and poverty."\*

Financial security is not easily attained even in America, which has so much of the meat and so little of the husk of the world. Among slightly varying estimates, a typical one is that 80 per cent of Americans earned less than \$2,000 annually before the war. That is slightly over \$165 monthly! A survey by the Department of Agriculture and the Federal Reserve Board reveal that "in the first quarter of 1946, 39,000,000 bread winners, whose typical economic status was represented by a median income of

\$1,850 and savings of \$363, constituted 85 per cent of the total number of 'spending units (typical wage earners)'.\*\*

"It is a conservative estimate that at least 40 per cent of those reaching the age of 65, are dependent for their support upon relatives or public and private charity," wrote Mr. Epstein.\*

### Where It All Started

An employee retirement plan is one of the most fair and orderly methods by which younger employees can be given new job opportunities and through which older employees can be helped toward the goal of economic security and independence. It is interesting to note that the first formal industrial pension system in America was organized in 1874 as the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada Superannuation and Provident Fund Association. In 1911 the first contributory pension for all state employees was adopted in Massachusetts. The federal retirement act was passed in May 1920. In 1945 the Oregon state legislature passed our state retirement act.

### "Vox Pop"

July 1 and December 31 this year for the first time mean formal retirement for Oregon state employees 65 years of age and older. To poll the opinions of retiring employees, we requested the chapter press correspondents to contact some of them.

Objections voiced by retiring employees seem to fall generally into three categories. Those who still feel physically and mentally capable and who wish to continue working, those who feel that the starting retirement pensions

\*From "Insecurity, a Challenge to America," by Abraham Epstein, 1933, Smith & Haas.  
\*\*"Survey Graphic," June, 1947, "Are we in for depression?" by D. S. Gillmor.  
\*Ibid.