

GM, Ford unsure about change in retirement age

By MIKE SCANLON

Trading in a 1913 Cadillac on a new model?

Most people would call it crazy.

Trading in a circa 1913 Cadillac employee?

General Motors calls it good business.

But not for long.

All that stands between most of today's 65-year-old workers (born in 1913) and retirement is President Carter's expected approval of a bill raising the mandatory minimum retirement age for most workers to 70.

The bill, which is approved by Carter will take effect Jan. 1, 1979, includes exemptions for employees covered under an existing labor contract, as well as for university professors, who won't be affected until 1982. It's a move that seems to generate

more static than electricity among area employers.

"We wish we knew" what the impact of the increase will be, said a General Motors spokesman.

"We've got a task force to look at it," he added. "A lot of the fine points haven't been spelled out. It's probably going to take a few years to understand it."

One thing GM knows already is that unless something drastic happens, the increase won't affect many rank-and-file workers.

In 1976, just 11 per cent of GM retirees were older than 65. Present mandatory retirement age in the auto industry is 68.

Meanwhile, 60 per cent of those who retired in 1976 were between 55 and 64, and another 29 per cent were under 55. Executives will have to retire at 65, under the terms of the new law, if they're entitled to an annual pension of

\$27,000 or more and have held "bona fide executive or policy-making position(s)" for two or more years.

What worries GM most about the hike are employees who aren't executives under that definition, but who are still vital to the corporation.

"One retirement in a small department can often mean as many as half a dozen promotions (for) younger guys who've been waiting. What that's going to do to morale is something that's going to have to be looked at," said the spokesman.

At Ford Motor Co., only one employee in 10 who retired in 1974-76 retired because of age, said a spokesman.

"It'll have some effect on us, but not a great effect," said the spokesman.

"At a time when you've got high unemployment," he added, "it seems only fair to give the younger guys a crack."

Low-income youths to get jobs

A two-pronged employment program administered by the Oakland-Livingston Human Service Agency will give 63 low-income youths to work in the two counties.

"The \$250,000 Michigan Employment Program, aimed at public and private employers, is divided into two segments: work training experience and on-the-job training.

OLHSA staff will match employer with employee in the first segment. Upon completing the necessary training, the trainee will be hired as a regular employee.

The cost of the training is covered under a grant from the state Department of Labor.

The second segment, on-the-job training, is aimed at youths with little skills and some good work habits. Trainees must have the desire to learn work skills. OLHSA pays 70 per cent of the wages. The remainder and the benefit package is paid by the employer.

The work experience training segment will train 40 youths and the on-the-job segment will train 23 youths.

Eligibility requirements for the program trainees are:

Resident of Oakland or Livingston county;

—17-25 years of age.

—Be from a family whose income is 125 per cent of the poverty level, the income for a family of four may not exceed \$2,312.

Prospective employers or employers should contact John King, OLHSA

coordinator of employment, at 858-5130.

King said he is looking for the following types of jobs, among others: medical assistant, clerical/secretarial, maintenance, machine operators, tool and die workers, and retail personnel.

Michigan's taxes high, but it's worse elsewhere

As you grumble over 1977 tax returns, perhaps you'll take comfort in knowing that residents of 11 other states carried a heavier tax burden in 1976.

New Yorkers were the most heavily taxed in the country, says David Verway, research professor in Michigan State University's Graduate School of Business Administration.

In terms of percentage of personal income paid to state governments, Michigan ranked 25th during 1977, with a figure of 6.9 per cent. Compare that to Alaska's rate of 18.7 per cent. But residents of New Hampshire paid only 3.6 per cent of their income to the state.

Michigan collected \$4.8 billion in taxes, which averages out to about \$325 per person, making the state 12th in per capita taxes.

Per capita taxes were greatest in Alaska, \$1,902; and least in New Hampshire, \$256. New Hampshire is the only state with neither a general sales nor a general personal income tax.

Michigan was tied with Maryland for 18th place in local taxes as a percentage of personal income in 1976. District of Columbia residents, who paid 11.9 per cent of personal income to local government, headed the list, while New Mexico residents paid the lowest, two per cent.

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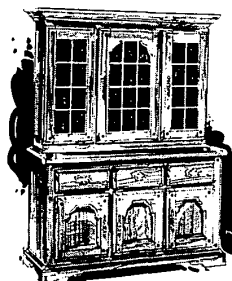
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