Book Reviews

Promoting the Placement of Older Workers. (Pp. 96; illustrated; 14s.) Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. 1967.

It is with shattered morale, stiffening fingers, and a barely conquered feeling of overwhelming personal inadequacy that the reviewer grasps his pen to write somewhat shakily about this booklet—for the definition of 'old' is 'over 40 years of age'. Old age, like its predecessor middle age, tends to be a chronologically receding concept. The striking thing, surely, tends to be what elderly people do rather than what they do not do, and how well some of them retain the flexible outlook characteristic of youth. Two examples from personal experience come to mind—one, a man of 85, who until a few years ago used to refer to men and women in less good fettle than himself as 'those old people' and another, of 67 who 'retired' two years ago, since when he has accepted the chairmanship of two Boards and who, in addition, cultivates single-handed a quarter of an acre of mixed garden on a steep hillside.

Our difficulties with this subject derive from the fact that distinctions are not drawn in industrial thinking between chronological, physical, and psychological ages which are only loosely connected. There is, moreover, another reason for approaching the review of a subject like the placement of 'older' workers by an international body such as O.E.C.D. with a certain caution. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development is an international body, and international schemes are often (like committee solutions in general) less satisfactory and more complicated (like its title) than those of the ablest individual members of the group. Road traffic signs and classification schemes for the radiology of pneumoconiosis illustrate the point.

Most of this booklet is about the counselling methods of placement used in the United States or about the elaborate and expensive social services at the disposal of Sweden. Is this how we want, or are able, to do it in this country? Are these methods really practicable in countries like Turkey and Spain which are both also members of O.E.C.D.? The employment of old (*i.e.*, over 40 years of age) people is part of the problem of full employment as a whole, and in this country it is largely a function of the Government and its Ministry of Labour.

This booklet, however, has something sensible to say, particularly to employers, about prejudice due to age. Harum-scarum youth is often preferred to the greater stability, reliability, and efficiency of effort of the older worker, and on many levels of clerical and secretarial work he or she often has much greater know-how as well.

The booklet is divided into seven chapters which define the problem and set out the reasons for concern, lay down a model publicity and educational programme, discuss the existing services, and describe an elaborate counselling system and a medical and psychological testing and training scheme; finally, how employment may be found is set out.

It is all a little elaborate and academic for a country such as Britain, but it would undoubtedly be justified if the whole organisation described was itself staffed by old people.

R. C. BROWNE

Kinetic Methods of Manual Handling in Industry: Occupational Safety & Health Series No. 10. By S. Himbury. (Pp. 38; 19 diagrams; available from International Labour Office, Sackville House, 40 Piccadilly, London, W.1, free of charge) Geneva: I.L.O. 1967

This is an excellent instructive pamphlet written for the International Labour Office by S. Himbury, the Demonstrator in Human Kinetics Ergonomic Group, Division of Occupational Health, New South Wales Department of Public Health, Sydney, Australia.

It does not state whether Himbury is a doctor, physiotherapist or gymnastic instructor. However, the text is very clear and describes not only the principles of kinetic lifting, as set out by McClurg Anderson, but goes into details of how to apply them to a large oil drum, a gas cylinder, lengths of material, boxes and bags; it also goes on to describe the correct manual handling in activities such as pushing and pulling, shovelling and digging, handling sheet materials, and removing objects from shelves. It gives a good account of group lifting but omits any instruction on how to give an order in such a way that all the group lifts simultaneously. The simplest method is for the leader, and there must always be a leader, to say, 'we lift on three'—'One, two, three'. Provided that each member of the group understands the English language, this method works very well!

The author goes on to describe how to run training courses for manual handling and lifting for instructors and supervisors and a one-hour course for manual workers. I would criticize the suggestion that the course for company instructors should occupy only two days, as I have found that a minimum of one week, preferably a five-day residential course, is a bare minimum for teaching men how to lift and how to teach lifting. This booklet can be strongly recommended for anyone engaged in the problem of teaching people how to lift,