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## Business Aims at Middle-Age Group

**B**ACK in the 1960s, when college-aged young people were demonstrating for whatever cause was current, it looked like folks over 30 years old might be phased out.

Today, these youngsters are approaching middle age and they are not quite as noisy as they were. A recent estimate indicates that more than half the nation's present population was born after WWII, but the ratio of older folks is gaining.

Merchandisers are shifting their sights. Whereas they formerly aimed at the free-spending youth market, business reports say the affluent middle-age group is becoming more attractive.

It might not be as much a change of age group target as it is the merchants following the same age group through life.

Postwar youngsters have been riding a wave of inflation ever since they got their first allowances. Many have been paid maximum wages for minimum work and they know an abundance of nearly anything is available for a price. Why

worry about tomorrow?

Traditional standards have been challenged and, in many cases, distorted or destroyed. These include monetary values, moral qualities, living customs and attitudes toward freedom.

According to The Wall Street Journal, business promoters reason that the middle-aged market offers an expanding potential because "they have the wherewithal to buy the goodies."

"In many of the 25 million U.S. households headed by someone 45 to 64, the husband is at the peak of his earning power, the wife has returned to work, the grown children are leaving home and the couple has the security of generous retirement plans," it is noted.

This realization could mean considerable shift in some merchandise patterns, such as movies, records, cars and clothing. We could be seeing promotions previously aimed at the youth market directed more toward middle-aged people.

The assumption is that parents

now are more self-centered, more willing to spend what they have on themselves than to save money, watch it depreciate in value, then leave the residue to their children after tax collectors have taken large slices.

In another decade or two this middle-aged group will become senior citizens. That is what is worrying those responsible for business, government and private pensions and for Social Security.

It seems that retired people are living longer, whether or not they have adequate incomes. The proportion of people over 65 is increasing. If the "spend it now" attitude persists, the burden upon workers and businesses paying into Social Security and pension funds is bound to get heavier and heavier.

Obviously, the trend is for individuals and families to become less responsible for their own financial futures and to rely more and more upon government or other pension plans to do their saving and investing for them.