Manuscript: Radio talk, A defense of old age, November 27, 1936

Tarbell, Ida M.
There is a species of embargo raised against old age which sometimes amuses, sometimes chagrins me. I have friends who feel I am committing a social solacism when I admit my years. Others remind me that the Bible limits work to three score years and ten and warn me that if I go on to four score years there still will be labor and sorrow. After three score years and ten, streaked with more or less labor and sorrow, why should I expect anything else and what poor stuff I would be if I had not learned to take it.

Then there are the people who contend that anybody who works after sixty five is taking bread out of the mouth of the unemployed. But suppose my income does not cover my needs and that I do not come under anybody's pension scheme, even the generous one of the Government's, am I to be regarded as a poacher if I pick up a dollar or two now and then?

My chief chagrin comes from younger friends who insist I am putting up a bluff when I tell them I am finding these latter years a fine adventure. They contend that I am initiating youth or middle life. I deny it. I am living in
the 1930’s not in the 1890’s. Not long ago I sat at lunch with three old friends. Our average age was seventy eight. We are all still active in our professions and all our talk was of the present world.

It is by sharing in the activities of a period that it becomes interesting and fertile, reveals its possibilities, opens up its pleasures. No, I refuse to be idle. Moreover, I insist that the Biblical limitations of three score years and ten and all the silly taboos it has bred should be revised. It should be made to fit man’s lengthening years, his expanding outlook on life.
The species of embargo that is raised against old age sometimes amuses and sometimes chagrins me. I have friends who feel I am committing a social solacism when I admit my years. Others tell me Holy Writ limits me to three score years and ten and that if I go to four score years there still will be labor and sorrow. They seem to think that ought to scare me to inactivity. After three score years and ten, streaked with more or less labor and sorrow, why should I expect anything else and what poor stuff I would be if I had not learned to take it.

Then there are the people who contend that anybody who works after sixty five is taking bread out of the mouth of the unemployed. But suppose my income does not cover my needs and that I do not come under anybody's pension scheme, even the Government's, am I to be regarded as a poacher if I pick up a dollar now and then? I think not.

My chief chagrin comes from younger friends who insist I am putting up a bluff when I pretend to find my latter years something of an adventure. They contend that I am imitating youth or middle life, but I am not patternning my present years, say after the 1890's, I am trying to live in the 1930's and I...
do not find the problems or the hopes of the two so different. The chief difference is that I am inclined to give more time with both to the solution of the problems and the realization of the hopes.

No, I refuse to be idle because I have passed a line the making of which I had nothing to do. I insist the Biblical limitations of three score years and ten and all the silly taboos born out of it must be revised, made to fit man's expanding outlook on life.