

By ROBERT CLANCY

In all the hubbub about old-age pensions, there seems to be no doubt at all, on all levels of society, that there *should* be pensions. If any leader raised his voice to say "Away with pensions!" he would be condemned as a monster and strung up peremptorily.

Amid this general accord, the only disagreement is, "Who's going to pay for the pensions?" And, my goodness, what a furore can be kicked up over this detail!

So, the big three are left to battle it out—big labor, big business, big government. Labor goes on strike for pensions. Management discusses pension schemes for those fortunate enough to be chained to one job all their lives. And for those outside the pale, Father Townsend raises his voice once more, and there are public prayers—for more taxes, more spending more government.

Truly, that imaginary denouncer of pensions would be a monster indeed if he postulated this world in all its current cruelty. Even hardened criminals don't want to see grandma perish in a snow bank. But—is this the best of all possible worlds?

Is the demand for pensions—part of humanity's heartfelt cry for security—leading to the right solution? If the regulated welfare state is the only answer to security, should not the demand be for something greater—for equality of opportunity, in short? And would not this goal carry with it, as a matter of course, all the security that humans reasonably crave? What a pitiful thing is the wail for a puddle of pensions when all might have enough in an ocean of opportunity!

Just visualize the state of things where natural opportunities were released from monopoly control. Would it then seem desirable to freeze oneself in an industry for life just for a paltry pension? Would not the greater freedom of movement, the ability to work where opportunity beckons, where there are higher rewards in the here and now, be ever so much more attractive? And finally, would there not be more demand for the work of older people, still fit and willing to work, but now cast aside in a struggle where only the strongest survive?

The clamor for pensions is taken as a sign of progress—as a development of our social sense. If the "old folks," who in former times spent their declining days in peace,

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(Continued from Column One)

must now beg for pensions, where is our progress?

A more convincing development of our social sense would be a vigorous demand for opening the floodgates of opportunity—an event that would effectively wash away the cry for the insecure "security" of pensions.