

Satisfaction not Guaranteed

ROBERT CLANCY

THERE has been much talk among social scholars of "job satisfaction." Do workers derive from their jobs not only a living but also the satisfaction of filling a vocation? Are they working at something that interests them and enables them to feel they have a place in society?

Studies rather reveal the opposite. Particularly in large industrial settings where workers are massed together, a mood of futility and frustration prevails which even periodic increases in salary cannot overcome. The worker, repeating endlessly one fraction of a procedure, finds himself closed in, a cog in a machine. After all, one human desire is to feel like a human being. Defective merchandise and equipment have been traced to deliberate sabotage by workers who feel they must do something different for a change.

With a worsening unemployment problem, the focus is on the availability of any kind of job, let alone one that gives satisfaction. The present situation gives a clue as to the problem of job dissatisfaction. Even in times of "prosperity", the threat of unemployment is never far away. People tend to look for jobs on the basis of security rather than satisfaction, and so square pegs in round holes are not uncommon.

In a chronic condition of insecurity, labour seeks security in a variety of ways. One principal way is through labour unions, which agitate not only for higher wages but, with increasing emphasis, for job security and retirement benefits. Nor is this limited to blue collar workers. The ambition of most college graduates is to get a job with a big company and stay with it until retirement. This can only lead to less mobility of labour and a more stratified society.

Besides unions, people have turned to government for the guarantees they want - unemployment benefits, labour arbitration, retirement pay and subsidies to certain industries in order to maintain jobs; and people also expect

government to provide them with the jobs when private enterprise does not offer them.

But now even this last resort is faltering. In the U.S.A., city and state governments are now in the process of laying off massive numbers of civil servants because of budget crises. This Big Daddy, this *deus ex machina*, has feet of clay.

Where then does one turn? It may be time to go back to fundamentals.

Labour itself is not desirable. We have to work in order to procure for ourselves the wherewithal in order to live and satisfy our desires. But there can and should be satisfaction in doing the job well and enjoying the fruits of our labour. In a society where exchange and division of labour develop, there is no reason why job satisfaction should not be continued, even enhanced, with each



participant finding his proper niche in the scheme of things.

But - unless we submit to the ant colony of a planned economy - such a state of affairs presupposes certain conditions: freedom of choice and availability of opportunities, among other things. The most basic opportunity - access to land and natural resources - must be present. Otherwise the picture becomes distorted - into the shape it is today. The emphasis is on any job and on security in an increasingly insecure world.

With so many erroneous measures failing, it would be gratifying to find the world seeking a more fundamental solution.

Dealing with Nature's Monopolies

RONALD MARRE

WHAT ARE your views on State intervention? This is a question which might have been designed to separate constructive thinkers from those who habitually repeat half-understood ideas. (Why not try it on your next parliamentary candidate?). Those who reply that they are for it or against it fall into the trap of answering the wrong question. The sensible question is "under what circumstances, and how, should the State intervene in the market." A readable and clearly reasoned summary of the economic arguments needed to answer this question is provided by a 65-page booklet recently published.*

The existence of a monopoly provides a reason for state intervention, because then the market mechanism cannot on its own ensure economic efficiency. A 'natural' monopoly which cannot be combated by normal anti-mono-

poly legislation, provides the classical reason for direct government intervention. But it does not follow that State ownership, or even regulation, is the most efficient solution. The booklet's treatment of the case for State intervention in the use of radio waves provides an interesting example of the author's approach. Free access to radio waves is not technically feasible because of the interference between adjacent stations. Radio waves must therefore be regarded as a scarce resource, because the quantity which people would like at zero cost is greater than the quantity available. When resources are scarce a definition of property rights becomes necessary. For radio waves it is suggested that the government should calculate the optimum number of stations and should then sell franchises by auction. The monopoly profits of operating a station would thereby be appropriated.

It is a pity that the author

*Government and Enterprise, Ivy Papps, Institute of Economic Affairs, 75p.