

Guaranteed Employment

by Charles T. Byrd Jr.

The concept of guaranteed employment has been introduced as an economic salvation for the welfare system in existence

individuals cannot receive the benefit of programs designed to raise their earning power if they are outside the labor force. Naked realism dictates that some persons because of age, lack of education and training, poor work habits or previous deprivation cannot be brought up to creditable levels of productivity. If they can no longer be educated or trained, the errors of the past are irreversible.

There are two ways of providing income for these people. The first is to guarantee them jobs and sheltered employment. Another is by direct income transfers.

The wages paid by guaranteed employment would be primarily concerned with the distribution of income and not productivity. Therefore this concept embraces both a work-creation program and a direct income transfer plan.

Since there are many conflicts in private industry that would complicate the subsidy and the competition with employed workers, the National Commission on Technology, Automation, and Economic Progress has suggested that guaranteed jobs be created in public services and private non-profit institutions. Finding useful jobs for unskilled persons would not be difficult in schools, hospitals, conservation programs and city sanitation. Although wages would exceed productivity a needed service would be provided therefore reducing the real cost. The present system provides a "something for nothing" plan. A major benefit of guaranteed employment would be to eliminate the "welfare stigma" by the resultant self-respect of the worker.

There are three major objections to guaranteed jobs: (1) employed workers might feel intimidated by the subsidized workers, (2) a class of dead-end jobs might be created that would be unacceptable by the poor and stigmatized by the affluent, and (3) public services would be hindered because of inefficient labor forces.

The first objection could be overcome by creating private industries; the second, by creating training programs for those who show ability to use them. The third objection cannot be overruled. Society must decide whether the benefits of the guaranteed employment program exceed the costs of inefficient operations in the public services.

Know Your Merchant Or Your Goods

In an effort to head off some of the complaints the Better Business Bureau (BBB) usually receives in regards to Christmas purchases and to make the season a little brighter for both consumers and merchants, the BBB offers the following suggestions.

One often heard gripe involves merchandise that is returned to the store after Christmas. While many merchants will accept returned merchandise as a service to their customers, the BBB points out that there is no requirement for them to do so. The merchant incurs considerable expense when an item is sold. Sales clerks must be paid, records must be kept. What is more, when an item is purchased for Christmas, lies under the tree for several weeks, and is then returned to the store, the merchant may have missed several opportunities to sell it to someone else.

Stores which accept returned merchandise do so as a service and not as an obligation. Obviously that service should not be abused, and consumers should make every effort to avoid unnecessary returns and exchanges. Store policies regarding refunds, exchange, lay-aways, etc., vary from store to store and the smart shopper should find out at the time the purchase is made exactly what that store's policy is on returned merchandise. And he should hang on to sales slips to prove purchase.

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