

they want. Mankind has never discovered a basis for human relationships, other than competitive bargaining, which so encourages a person's own self-interest to operate to the benefit of others.

When a person voluntarily offers his goods or services for exchange, and when another person voluntarily agrees to the terms of the offer, exchange will take place. Both parties find satisfaction. It's not a question of one's gaining at the other's expense. The exchange works to their mutual benefit. Both gain. How much will each gain? Leave that to the judgment of those who practice competitive bargaining and who are directly involved in any specific transaction.

Trade occurs when both parties agree as to the price—when both see an advantage in trading. The terms of such trade are not anyone else's business—at least, not within the framework of truly competitive bargaining. There is no third party; even the government is supposed to keep its hands off except where someone tries to substitute violence for free choice in the market. Any other test of fairness for prices or wages is an abandonment of the private enterprise system.²

The Right of Refusal

ONE OF THE IMPORTANT features of truly competitive bargaining is that a person has the right of refusal. He doesn't have to trade

at another person's price. A man may keep what he has if he isn't satisfied with the other fellow's best offer. Such a refusal to trade is quite a common thing in any market place. It is typical of the competitive system. It is a vital part of the bargaining procedure. It is as fair and just as the day is long. But a refusal to buy or to accept the terms offered certainly is no excuse for violent retaliation against the rightful owner or against any other person who might be willing to accept the owner's terms of trade.

A person may choose to quit a job if the wage or other conditions of employment are not satisfactory, just as a shopper returns a can of peaches to the shelf if the price is too high for her. Yet the housewife, by that act, does not pretend to have acquired a claim of ownership to the peaches. The next shopper who wants them may claim them at the price agreeable to the seller. An unhampered market will function in exactly that same fashion with respect to opportunities for employment.

Competitive bargaining has brought many benefits to the creative and highly productive men and women of America, just as all men and women can gain if they are willing to assume the responsibility of being free. But freedom to bargain is being forfeited by Americans who do not perceive that such freedom is based upon respect for the rights of others. The advantages of bargaining and trade are not to be found in the kind of col-