

labor hierarchy to impose a similar strait jacket on management and employees in this country in the guise of "total security."

Decked out in the full panoply of expensive union propaganda, the term has an undeniable seductiveness: it is all-encompassing, impatient with logic and history. It promises everything to the worker and asks nothing; seemingly, he can't lose.

The Obvious Strategy

The strategy of implementation is becoming clearer day by day. You can see it in the attempt to focus attention on a few untypical situations as universal models, and in the increasing number of theoretical articles being published in those reliable bellweathers, the journals of opinion. "See — it works!" says the first. "And it's an intellectually respectable concept, too," says the second.

Take the case of the total job security program recently negotiated by the United Steelworkers of America with Alan Wood Steel Company. In itself, the program for the 2,500 employees of the small Pennsylvania steel firm would have little if any repercussion on the economy. As a pattern for negotiations with the can industry, steel industry, and all industry, however, it has been moved to the center of the labor arena

with deliberate fanfare by United Steelworkers' president, David J. McDonald. Here, he has said in effect, is the shape of things to come.

The basics of the contract are familiar to everyone by now. For each worker, a guaranteed average rate of earnings which will "protect" him from a reduction of more than 5 per cent because of demotion or other job changes by management; a guarantee of 38 hours pay for each week in which an employee works, even though he is on the job only part of the time; payment to each worker with 10 or more years tenure of the equivalent of 85 per cent of his pay should he be laid off, until retirement; and sharing with all employees 32.5 per cent of savings achieved through labor or materials efficiencies.

No Mention of Weaknesses

In "selling" this program to the country, labor spokesmen make no mention of the many factors in the program which have caused disillusionment abroad, such as the worker's loss of mobility and versatility, the discounting of incentives, the sapping of individual initiative, and the inability of companies to compete or even stay in business under this kind of financial burden.

Instead, any suspicion as to the economic feasibility of the program is to be allayed by the intellectuals. Providing an ideological base from which to influence the mass media is their role in the strategy of implementation. And just what is the philosophical justification for "total security"? Just how is this concept to be structured into American life?

Here is Robert Theobald, author of *Free Men and Free Markets*, writing in *The Commonwealth* of September 4, 1964: "... we had to develop a new, human and constitutional right — the right to an income. . . . Every citizen who has resided in the United States for a period of five consecutive years should be guaranteed the right to an income sufficient to enable him to live with dignity. No government agency, judicial body or other organization whatsoever should have the right to suspend or limit any payment assured by this guarantee."

As Mr. Theobald candidly states, this concept "justifies income without toil."

And how is this total security to be paid for?

By penalizing each employee who has the ambition and initiative to develop and market his skills beyond an arbitrarily fixed point. To quote Mr. Theobald, "We should establish the principle that the portion of income required to maintain a reasonable standard of living should be tax free. Taxes should only be paid on incomes rising above this level."

Here, then, is the cost which labor is to pay for "total security": regimentation, abrogation of the right to enjoy the fruits of one's labor, atrophy of skills, and a universal but minimum standard of living at a "reasonable" level.

Is it not ironical that just as labor in Asia, Europe, even behind the Iron Curtain, seeks to cast off the confining restrictions of "total" systems and gain some of the mobility and freedom of the American worker, the latter should be offered this same tired and withered concept as his shining hope? ♦

IDEAS ON LIBERTY

Legislated Security

THE INTRODUCTION of compulsory social insurance in cases of sickness, or compulsory social insurance in cases of unemployment, means that the workers must be subject to examinations, investigations, regulations, and limitations.

SAMUEL GOMPERS (1916)