Job Opportunities

SO FAR as the individual employee is concerned, he bargains for his job with only one person—a person who is in a supervisory capacity within the hired management of the company. That supervisor either needs help in his store or he doesn't.

Let us assume that a store manager believes he could improve the net earnings of his store by adding a meat department. The customers want meat. The manager, then, needs the services of a meat cutter. And no matter how many stockholders may stand behind him, the store manager must either find a slave or else compete with all other employers for the services of a free man. Let's assume again that it takes a wage offer of $100 a week to attract a good meat cutter away from alternative job opportunities. If the manager believes that this employee can bring enough added business to the store to cover costs, including the $100 weekly wage, and still leave a profit for the store, then it is to the manager's own interest to hire the man. If the manager doesn't operate his store profitably, someone else will soon be serving the customers. It doesn't make the slightest difference, so far as the dealings with the meat cutter are concerned, whether the store is entirely owned by the manager or whether the manager is in turn the employee of hundreds of stockholders.

Some persons, as we have observed before, want to abandon the competitive system of bargaining because they say there is not "perfect" competition. They fear for the meat cutter, and for other workmen, because they say there is not a "perfect" mobility of labor. And it certainly is true that some persons do not move as quickly as do others in response to an opportunity for higher wages. Home and family and church and community and all sorts of ties influence any decision to move. There may be a loyalty to one's present job which isn't measurable in dollars and cents. And there may be other barriers to mobility, such as seniority privileges and tied-up pension rights, which in many instances have grown out of a perversion of the free market. Both management and labor have been guilty of thus abandoning the market method of wage determination, and now the critics want to discard the competitive system completely because of those perversions. They forget that the market system, even in the absence of perfect mobility, has afforded individuals in America a greater freedom to move than others have ever known under any other system. Some of those other systems allow the "workers" no choice at all.

In the business world, if there is a job vacancy to be filled, it must be filled by an individual workman, a laborer for whose services other employers are free to compete. And