to be made with respect to the given population for whom the pensions are intended. Actuarial soundness is, therefore, as a leading actuary has said, "an extremely inchoate field." [166] Moreover, every other context in which pensions occur is heavily infused with comparable political, nonpension elements. The history of old-age protection under social security reflects one expedient compromise after another. "The great majority of articles on the Federal old-age benefit plan are very critical of its provisions," Witte reported in 1937.[167] It took a shattering depression to bring about enactment of a minimum public program. After enactment "the consequences of the failure of Congress to change the old-age and survivors' insurance system as required by changed conditions," Witte said in 1949, were "well nigh tragic." [168]

But collective bargaining may have some affirmative attributes favoring rational pension outcomes. It makes possible diversified and relatively rapid adjustments to the changing economic situation. The shortrun time horizon of collective bargaining makes possible experimentation at relatively little incremental risk.[169] If an arrangement doesn't work out it can be changed at the next negotiations, or in the case of the pooled funds, at the next meeting of the board of trustees. In any case, a relatively small number of workers are affected. The power of incremental changes to achieve major alterations has been demonstrated in the liberalization of vesting, the widening scope of pension portability, the strengthening of funding, and the accretion of alternate and supplementary benefits. At the same time experience decreed the passing of the OASI offset and the tempering of union demands for joint administration. Collective bargaining also makes possible more flexible arrangements as among diverse market structures and groups of employees. Nor have the unions or management had to rely solely on commonsense but have been able to turn increasingly to a corps of experts for technical guidance and advice.

It was feared that progress in negotiated pensions would be made at the expense of the proportionately greater loss in social security pensions.[170] In point of fact, the first major revision of the Federal old-age insurance system only came *after* the negotiated pension takeoff. And as this is written the unions once again constitute the major force behind the current push for improvement in the Federal system. To be sure the union pressure for improvement in social security reflects a social policy objective; it also reflects a pressure-group strategy of shifting to the public system part of the cost currently carried as a charge against the wage increase increment so as to maximize the collective bargaining "buying" power in pension benefits. There is some evidence already that the unions are asking for insurance improvements to replace the medical-care benefits for retirees now covered by the "medicare" provisions of old-age system.[171]

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[166] Dorrance C. Bronson, *Concepts of Actuarial Soundness in Pension Plans* (Homewood, Ill.: Irwin, 1957), p. xi.

[167] Edwin E. Witte, "Old Age Security in the Social Security Act," *Social Security Perspectives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1962), p. 46.

[168] Witte, "The Bug-a-Boo of the Welfare State," in *ibid.*

[169] This discussion of incrementalism owes much to Robert A. Dahl and Charles E. Lindblom, *Politics, Economics, and Welfare* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1953), pp. 82–85.

[170] Arthur Butler, "The Relationship Between Public and Private Economic Security Plans," *IRRA Proceedings*, 1957, p. 142; Kerr, "Social and Economic Implications, etc.," *op. cit.*, p. 7.

[171] Kathleen Meyers, *First Adjustments of Employee-Benefit Health Plans to Medicare*, U.S. Social Security Administration, Research and Statistics, note No. 7, 1966.