

erance for inflation, price increases become unacceptable long before a job is available for everyone able, willing, and seeking to work. If the latter promise of the Employment Act of 1946 were to be made real, even in a period of low general unemployment . . . the government would have to guarantee public service jobs to those experiencing long-term unemployment.

Garth Mangum justifies this proposal with reference to the Works Progress Administration experience of the 1930's and, in so doing, hides the truly revolutionary nature of the proposal. In the 1930's, there were many with high levels of skills and abilities who were ready and able to carry through any form of meaningful activity which was made available to them. Mangum and the Commission are now proposing that the Government create jobs for large numbers of people who are least capable of finding positions within normal private or Government employment.

The dynamics of such a program can be clearly foreseen. Government civil servants would be confronted with hundreds of thousands of individuals with low skills and inadequate education, with life histories making them unaware of the requirements for holding a job. From its inception, the program would be characterized by problems stemming from low morale and high absenteeism. Congress would react with outrage as it has done toward the similar problems of the poverty program. One can easily conceive of a highly restrictive series of rules which might state that anybody more than 15 minutes late for work would lose a day's pay and that in order to provide for administrative "efficiency" no person would be allowed to change his job within the program more than once every 6 months.

Kurt Vonnegut, in his novel *The Piano Player*, has traced the end result if such a first step would be followed through to its logical conclusion. He has shown that fewer and fewer people would be required in the productive activities of the society and that more and more people would be compelled to work in meaningless "jobs." Those with creative or functional work would be the new aristocracy in a society of controlled peons carrying out pointless activity.

Any alternative to this job-at-any-cost approach must deal head-on with the major, imminent problem of an incipient societal split between the creative people, those necessary to the functioning of the emerging socioeconomic organization, and those who will need to have new roles developed for them if they are to be meaningfully occupied. Any approach must provide not only an environment for creative activity but also the underwriting of the reentry into the socioeconomic system for those who have already been abandoned by it. The "guaranteed income," or "basic economic security," as I prefer to call it, meets these criteria fully. First, it will serve as the socioeconomic approach to the social and cultural self-devaluation of the currently unemployed and those who will become unemployed as cybernation develops. Second, it will underwrite the activities of creative individuals and improve our methods of financing education for it will provide a basic income for all students.

Basic economic security (BES) is a general economic principle applicable to every member of the society. It underwrites his status as a full member of the society and should not, therefore, be seen as a mere economic mechanism which enables an individual to remain alive even though society has virtually ceased to recognize him as one of its members.