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Letter to the Editor—Comments on Preceding Note

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and also the reduction of waiting lines, could perhaps, by a system of queuing charges, be rationed in some reasonable way, thereby diverting the interest of some to other activities and other pleasures in which they are more able to compete. Unfortunately great economic disparities exist in society and most of the queuing facilities that I have in mind have to do with the satisfaction of basic needs.

Some, including Mr. Leeman, have given several examples to illustrate the present use of such a charge system. I suggest that these be looked at carefully. For example telephone rates were made lower at night not just to diminish the size of the queue during the day but to get people to use the system at a time when much of it used to remain idle. Miami Beach hotels are cheaper in the summer because fewer people want to go there in the hot season and lower rates advertise their greater availability. In any case, these are not essential queues in my sense of the word.

Facilities essential for basic needs also find that the more people there are to use them, the greater the turnover, and the lower are the costs. If supermarkets wish to lure people to use the facility at night, they must offer merchandise at lower rates, leaving the option to the individual and not to a penalty system or to schedules published in a newspaper.

Some have argued that the man ahead in a queue imposes a cost on those who wait behind him and must pay for it. But I say that he has already paid for it by coming earlier.

Many of the investigators of queuing theory work for organizations whose concern is to reduce the size of queues and shorten the waiting and idle times and for whom public service is paramount. Profit, which in part is the *raison d'etre* of these organizations, also inspires certain types of solutions, but it is not the sole motivating device and the public has the means to show dissatisfaction. L. Edie solved the New York Tunnel toll-booth problem through greater efficiency and imaginative planning, using common sense and knowledge acquired through the analysis of many varied queuing situations over the years. Every man is an economic being and no imaginative individual would hesitate to use practicable economic means to solve his problem. A priority system through pricing is a well-known approach to workers in queuing theory, but I doubt its effectiveness for essential queues without the use of other substantial modifications.

COMMENTS ON PRECEDING NOTE

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MR. SAATY makes one valid point: Reduction of queues through the use of price may have undesirable effects on the distribution of income. This may be a good reason for not using prices in some situations. In other situations a queue-reducing price may be decided on, with this device accompanied by fiscal measures to redistribute income. Mr. Saaty presses his point too far: Carried to its logical extreme his position would require us to forego all price changes that had an adverse effect on lower-income people and require us to introduce an elaborate system of rationing. Market-clearing prices have a good deal more to be said for them than Mr. Saaty is willing to recognize.

Mr. Saaty, in his discussion of telephone and resort hotel rates, fails to recognize that excess capacity of plant and equipment is a queue. Lower telephone rates at night reduce the obverse queue of daytime callers and the reverse queue of nighttime excess telephone capacity. They are the exact counterpart of higher prices on Saturday haircuts, which reduce the obverse queue of Saturday customers and the reverse queue of idle weekday barbers (and idle weekday barber chairs).