

# The Industrial Question *and the* Bishops' Pastoral Letter

## Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor and Relations of Both to the Public Set Forth in Official Pronouncement of the American Hierarchy

This leaflet gives nearly all of the section on Industrial Relations in the Pastoral Letter of the American Hierarchy issued early in 1920.

Pope Leo's Encyclical on the Condition of Labor, the Bishops' Program of Social Reconstruction and the Bishops' Pastoral Letter are three great landmarks of Catholic social teaching.

The complete Pastoral Letter, a booklet of eighty pages; Pope Leo's Encyclical on the Condition of Labor, and the Bishops' Program can be secured from the National Catholic Welfare Council for fifteen cents. Further copies of this leaflet may be secured free of charge.

Send for these important pronouncements; study authoritative Catholic teaching on this great question; compare the various industries and American industry as a whole with the teachings of the Pastoral Letter; and do your part to put these teachings into effect.

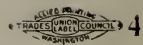


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THE elements of the conflict now raging are unmistakable, in the vast expansion of industrial pursuits and the marvelous discoveries of science; in the changed relations between masters and workmen; in the

**Pope Leo  
on the Con-  
dition of Labor**

enormous fortunes of some few individuals and the utter poverty of the masses; in the increased self-reliance and closer mutual combination of the working classes; as also, finally, in the prevailing moral degeneracy." How fully these statements apply to our present situation must be clear to all who have noted the course of events during the year just elapsed. The war indeed has sharpened the issues and intensified the conflict that rages in the world of industry; but the elements, the parties, and their respective attitudes are practically unchanged. Unchanged also are the principles which must be applied, if order is to be restored and placed on such a permanent basis that our people may continue their peaceful pursuits without dread of further disturbance.

**A Moral  
and Religious  
Question**

"It is the opinion of some," says Pope Leo XIII, "and the error is already very common, that the social question is merely an economic one, whereas in point of fact, it is, first of all, a moral and religious matter, and for that reason its settlement is to be sought mainly in the moral law and the pronouncements of religion." These words are pertinent and their teaching as necessary today as they were nineteen years ago. Their meaning, substantially, has been reaffirmed by Pope Benedict XV in his recent statement that "without justice and charity there will be no social progress." The fact that men are striving for what they consider to be their rights puts their dispute on a moral basis; and wherever justice may lie, whichever of the opposing claims may have the better foundation, it is justice that all demand.

## **Rights of the Public**

In the prosecution of their respective claims, the parties have, apparently, disregarded the fact that the people as a whole have a prior claim.

To assume that the only rights involved in an industrial dispute are those of capital and labor is a radical error. It leads, practically, to the conclusion that at any time and for an indefinite period, even the most necessary products can be withheld from general use until the controversy is settled. The first step, therefore, toward correcting the evil, is to insist that the rights of the community shall prevail and that no individual claim conflicting with those rights shall be valid.

Among those rights is that which entitles the people to order and tranquility as the necessary condition for social existence. Industrial disturbance invariably spreads beyond the sphere in which it originates and interferes, more or less seriously, with other occupations. The disorder which ensues is an injustice inflicted upon the community; and the wrong is the greater because, usually, there is no redress.

When such a temper asserts itself, indignation is aroused throughout the country, and the authorities are urged to take action. This, under given circumstances, may be the only possible course; but, as experience shows, it does not eradicate the evil. A further diagnosis is needed. The causes of industrial trouble are generally known, as are also the various phases through which it develops and the positions which the several parties assume. The more serious problem is to ascertain why, in such conditions, men fail to see their obligations to the public, or, seeing them, refuse to fulfill them except under threat and compulsion.

## **Obligations of Capital and Labor**

Pope Leo says: "Religion teaches the laboring man and the artisan to carry out honestly and fairly all equitable agreements freely arranged, to refrain from injuring person or property, from using

violence and creating disorder. It teaches the owner and employer that the laborer is not their bondsman, that in every man they must respect his dignity and worth as a man and as a Christian; that labor is not a thing to be ashamed of, if we listen to right reason and to Christian philosophy, but is an honorable calling, enabling a man to sustain his life in a way upright and creditable, and that it is shameful and inhuman to treat men like chattels, as means for making money, or as machines for grinding out work."

The moral value of man and the dignity of human labor are cardinal points in this whole question. By treating the laborer first of all as a man, the employer will make him a better workingman; by respecting his own moral dignity as a man, the laborer will compel the respect of his employer and of the community.

<b>Rights of Capital and Labor</b>
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The right of labor to organize, and the great benefit to be derived from workingmen's associations, was plainly set forth by Pope Leo XIII.

In this connection, we would call attention to two rights, one of employees and the other of employers, the violation of which contributes largely to the existing unrest and suffering. The first is the right of the workers to form and maintain the kind of organization that is necessary and that will be most effectual in securing their welfare. The second is the right of employers to the faithful observance by the labor unions of all contracts and agreements. The unreasonableness of denying either of these rights is too obvious to require proof or explanation.

The right of labor to a living wage, authoritatively and eloquently reasserted more than a quarter of a century ago by Pope Leo XIII, is happily no longer denied by any considerable number of persons. What is principally needed now is that its content should be adequately defined, and that it should be made universal in practice, through

whatever means will be at once legitimate and effective. In particular, it is to be kept in mind that a living wage includes not merely decent maintenance for the present, but also a reasonable provision for such future needs as sickness, invalidity and old age.

Capital likewise has its rights. Among them is the right to "a fair day's work for a fair day's pay," and the right to returns which will be sufficient to stimulate thrift, savings, initiative, enterprise, and all those directive and productive energies which promote social welfare.

### **Arbitration**

A dispute that cannot be adjusted by direct negotiation between the parties concerned should always be submitted to arbitration. Like the law court, the tribunal of industrial arbitration provides the nearest approach to justice that is practically attainable; for the only alternative is economic force, and its decisions have no necessary relation to the decrees of justice. They show which party is economically stronger, not which is in the right.

### **Share in Industrial Management**

In his pronouncement on Labor, *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Leo XIII describes the advantages to be derived by both employer and employee from "associations and organizations which draw the two classes more closely together." Such associations are especially needed at the present time. While the labor union or trade union has been, and still is, necessary in the struggle of the workers for fair wages and fair conditions of employment, we have to recognize that its history, methods and objects have made it essentially a militant organization.

The time seems now to have arrived when it should be, not supplanted, but supplemented by associations or conferences, composed jointly of employers and employees, which will place emphasis upon the common interests rather than the divergent aims of the two parties; upon coopera-

tion rather than conflict. Through such arrangements, all classes would be greatly benefited.

The worker would participate in those matters of industrial management which directly concern him and about which he possesses helpful knowledge; he would acquire an increased sense of personal dignity and personal responsibility, take greater interest and pride in his work, and become more efficient and more contented. The employer would have the benefit of willing cooperation from, and harmonious relations with, his employees. The consumer, in common with employer and employee, would share in the advantages of larger and steadier production.

### **Revival of The Guilds**

Deploping the social changes which have divided "society into two widely different castes," of which one "holds power because it holds wealth," while the other is "the needy and powerless multitude," Pope Leo XIII declared that the remedy is "to induce as many as possible of the humbler classes to become owners" (*Rerum Novarum*). This recommendation is in exact accord with the traditional teaching and practice of the Church.

When her social influence was greatest, in the later Middle Ages, the prevailing economic system was such that the workers were gradually obtaining a larger share in the ownership of the lands upon which, and the tools with which, they labored. Though the economic arrangements of that time cannot be restored, the underlying principle is of permanent application, and is the only one that will give stability to industrial society. It should be applied to our present system as rapidly as conditions will permit.

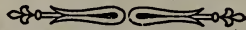
For revolution, though, there is neither justification nor excuse under our form of government. Through the ordinary and orderly processes of education, organization and legislation, all social wrongs can be righted.

**Education,  
Organization,  
Legislation**

Whatever may be the industrial and social remedies which will improve themselves to the American people, there is one that, we feel confident, they will never adopt. That is the method of revolution. For it, there is neither justification nor excuse under our form of government. Through the ordinary and orderly processes of education, organization and legislation, all social wrongs can be righted.

**Study  
Pope Leo's  
Encyclicals**

Pope Benedict has recently expressed a desire that the people should study the great encyclicals on the social question of his predecessor, Leo XIII. We heartily commend this advice to the faithful and, indeed, to all the people of the United States. They will find in these documents the practical wisdom which the experience of centuries has stored up in the Holy See; and, moreover, that solicitude for the welfare of mankind which fitly characterizes the Head of the Catholic Church.



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