

## ON TEACHING

It often seems as if a few more days  
Of helping little minds to see the light  
Are past endurance—yet the teacher stays,  
Knowing, to help them is a treasured right.  
She calms their quickened tempers with a glance,  
Explains some problem which has baffled all,  
Describes, perhaps, the iron mines of France,  
A theorem, phrases, Latin, where was Gaul.  
And so each day, filled with a varied lot  
Of many different things, makes up the year;  
And as school closes, 'tis a pleasant thought:  
"Now surely each has learned a little here."  
Thus teaching, with its tears, and smiles, and cares,  
Can help one get to Heaven, unawares.

—MILDRED MacISAAC '49

## WHAT ABOUT STRIKES?

All America fears strikes, which have caused great material loss in goods and services, and have generated clouds of ill will and suspicion between employees and employers. The number of strikes in our day has increased so rapidly, and some of them have produced such evil effects, that a great number of people are seriously questioning whether strikes can be defended at all, or if they can be defended in particular instances; or whether they should not, on account of their general tendency to occasion of continual disturbance of industrial relations, be condemned as constituting a real menace to society. Some would go even so far as to say that strikes constitute such a serious menace to society that they call for prohibitory legislation by the state, if not on the score of their intrinsic immorality, at least because, under the present circumstances, they constitute a grave menace to the common welfare of the state. If a strike can be condemned on the grounds that it is intrinsically immoral, then there is no further necessity of entering into a detailed consideration of the various elements that are involved in a particular strike. However, I shall endeavour to point out that the strike is not intrinsically immoral, and so cannot be condemned of that point; and also that most strikes are morally justifiable and so cannot be condemned. In a word, it will be my endeavour in this essay to defend the just strike, and the laborer's right to participate in such a strike.

Strikes are nowhere declared to be intrinsically immoral, either in the encyclical "Rerum Novarum" of Pope Leo XIII,—which may be called an official formulation of the Church's teaching on the moral issues involved in the labor problem, or in the writings



of Catholic moralists. There is no positive divine law or ecclesiastical law against strikes, nor any civil law. Thus, they can be condemned only as intrinsically immoral if they necessarily involve some violation of the natural law. Such a claim, however, can in no way be substantiated. Under certain conditions, or in particular instances, it is true such a violation may occur, but the blame must be laid to extrinsic relations, rather than to the intrinsic nature of the strike itself.

Let us now consider the reasoning upon which the claim that the strike is not intrinsically immoral is based. The strike could be condemned as intrinsically immoral if any of its essential elements were immoral. However, neither of the three essentials of a strike is immoral. The first of these elements, the cessation of work, scarcely requires a formal justification, for every man has a clear and full right to resign from his job at any time he wishes, provided that he does not violate any other person's right in so doing. The individual has the right to quit work for any reasonable cause. This is especially true if the conditions of work are unjust, or if the employer refuses to accede to reasonable demands on the part of his employees.

The second essential element, the cessation of work in an organized movement, involves no immorality; it is but an exercise of the natural right of association. The need of association on the part of employees in the economic order is not only natural, but also necessary in order to safeguard the individual employees against injustices. And so we may conclude that labor has a moral right to unite to obtain better terms from their employers. Here it is presupposed that the demands to be enforced are of such grave character that the good to be obtained will offset any hardships that the general public may be called upon to endure in consequence of the strike.

The third essential element in the constitution of the strike, the enforcing of certain demands is, by its very nature, morally indifferent. Whether such demands are immoral or not will depend on the nature of the demands enforced by any particular strike. The conclusion is that the object of the strike must be morally good and the means used morally justifiable. If these conditions are fulfilled, then there is nothing in the nature of the strike that demands its condemnation. Thus we see that the strike cannot be condemned as being intrinsically immoral.

There are many people who do not analyze a strike, but by a mere consideration of its effects, maintain that it cannot be justified. This is a very unwarranted conclusion to draw. I do not propose to justify every strike, for it is certain that some strikes may be unjust. Nevertheless, I contend that in the majority of cases strikes are just, and that consequently the laborer's right to participate in such strikes cannot be denied.



When laborers have recourse to a strike, it is frequently because they consider their wages insufficient, working conditions unsatisfactory, or the hours of labor too long. When laborers go on strike to enforce either of the three demands mentioned above, the strike is called a "contract strike." This is the most difficult strike to settle, because both employees and employers consider themselves justified in their stand. It is morally right even if economically tragic. Nearly all strikes fall in this classification. The recent strikes in the steel, coal, and other industries, are examples of this kind of strike. Let us now consider each of the demands involved in the contract strike.

That strike will always be just which seeks to raise wages that are below the minimum required by justice. This demand cannot be refused by the employers without violating justice. In case an employer refuses this request, then the employees are perfectly justified in having recourse to a strike in order to enforce their demands. Thus, if the general price level increases, and employers refuse to grant corresponding increases in the wage level, the employees may use the strike weapon to obtain their demands.

The question of working conditions is another frequent cause of strikes. Laborers have demanded, and rightly so, that they not only be given an adequate wage, but that they be not forced to earn that wage under conditions which might imperil their health, life, or morals. If the laborers have recourse to a strike to ameliorate unjust conditions of work, such a strike is just. At present there is no standard available to determine precisely at what point such demands would become reasonable. At least adequate protection against moral evils, as well as against accidents and disease, may always be demanded. Both justice and charity require that employers concede this much at least, and if they do not, then the laborer may strike in order to secure it.

A demand for reasonable hours of labor forms a just cause for a strike. Daily labor must be so regulated that it may not be protracted for longer hours than the strength of a man permits. In our present economy, many strikes are called to secure a shorter working day. This seems a fair average for most occupations, and sentiment in the country is crystallizing around that number. Therefore, those who are compelled to work unreasonably long hours which seriously endanger their health or curtail their family and social life, are justified in resorting to the strike.

Now, we have seen that strikes in themselves are not immoral. We have seen, also, that when the demands are just and the means used to enforce such demands are just, the strike is morally right. Therefore, we must conclude that a just strike cannot be forbidden by law, for in such a case the strikers are using their natural right of self-defense against the injustice of their employer. Those who claim that the state should, by prohibitory legislation, abrogate



the right of the laborer to strike must consider that this cannot be done without substituting protective legislation for the laborer. Herefore, the state has not only failed to restrain, but to a great extent it has shown itself an ally of employers. It is largely because the state has failed in its duty towards the laboring classes that we have strikes in our economy to-day. Should the state, then, by absolutely prohibiting all strikes, remove from the laboring classes the right to strike, it would be doubly guilty. In the case of a just strike, neither the strict rights of the employer, nor of society, are violated. Only the striker's rights have been violated, and against such violation it is the state's duty to protect the laborers, rather than wrest from them their only weapon of defense. To forbid strikes would constitute violation of the sacred right of the laborers which the state has the solemn obligation to safeguard. Therefore, we must in all justice conclude that unless the state provides adequate machinery for the settlement of disputes, we shall continue to have a chasm of divergent interests separating employers and employees. At present, with the balance of economic power in the hands of the employer, we can expect more strikes. As long as remedial measures are not provided by the state, the laborers cannot be prohibited from participating in strikes.

—FRANCIS BOLGER '47

## PRINTING A NEWSPAPER

Strange thing about a newspaper plant—no matter how busy the workmen are, they always find time to show visitors around the premises. How about letting me be your guide on an imaginary jaunt around a newspaper office and show you just how a daily newspaper is printed? Okay, here we go.

See that strange looking machine over yonder? No, it's not a typewriter. In a printer's language, that is a linotype machine. Attached to the back of it is a large iron pot full of lead, which, as it hardens, is conducted into the linotype in the form of slugs. The man at the keyboard types out the words on these slugs as they roll by. They are then mechanically arranged under one another and ejected from the machine by means of a small chute. This is how columns are formed for the newspaper sheet.

Oh, oh, I see that the linotype operator made a mistake in the typing of a sentence. How do I know? See that man who picked up the column? He is the proof-reader. He takes the columns to his desk, inks them with a small roller, places a clean white sheet of paper over them, presses the paper onto the columns with another roller, and presto! he holds in his hands a printed column exactly as it was on the slugs, the exception being that while the sentences are printed backwards on the forms, they are now in the correct