

CATHOLIC SOCIAL PRINCIPLES

A Commentary on the Papal
Encyclical
RERUM NOVARUM

by
LEWIS WATT
S.J., B.Sc.(Econ.)

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A COMMENTARY ON THE PAPAL ENCYCLICAL
QUINQUEM NOVARUM

BY

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PREFACE

IN May 1891 Pope Leo XIII issued his encyclical letter on the condition of the working-classes, often known by the title *Rerum Novarum*, from the two words with which it begins. It has exercised a profound influence which can be traced even in some of the clauses of the Peace Treaties which closed the Great War. The principles it lays down are not simply the personal views of the Pope, but the fruit of centuries of reflection by Catholic theologians and social philosophers. Later Popes have made it clear that those principles have an eternal value, and can never become out-of-date. In 1903 Pope Pius X explicitly reaffirmed them. In 1919 Pope Benedict XV stated that time had neither diminished the relevance of the encyclical nor weakened its force, and urged that it should be studied with renewed attention. The first encyclical of Pope Pius XI rebuked those who acted as though the teachings of Leo XIII had lost their authority. The encyclical *Rerum Novarum* is then a living document, worthy of the

careful study of all who are interested in social reform.

There are not wanting those who maintain that economic and social questions are outside the legitimate province of the Christian Church, and demand that her representatives should refrain from any expression of opinion about them. Pope Leo XIII lends no countenance to this attempt to confine the influence of the Church within the limits of the sacristy. He points out that Christian teaching has the whole of life for its province, since this life is a preparation for the next and must be put in right relation to it. Many of the details of economic and social organisation must be left to experts, but there are moral principles of conduct which it is the bounden duty of the Church to declare. Nor is her function that of moral teacher only. Her co-operation in practical social reform has been extremely valuable in the past, and will be readily given in the future.

This little book is an attempt to apply the principles of the encyclical to some of our modern problems.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL PRINCIPLES

RÉSUMÉ OF THE ENCYCLICAL *RERUM NOVARUM*

The Social Problem.

The condition of the working-classes is now the subject of constant discussion. The workers feel that they are treated with great inhumanity by avaricious employers, and are looked upon as little more than profit-making machines. The destruction of the old-time guilds left the workers defenceless, and the evil has been increased by the practice of rapacious usury and the concentration of the control of industry and commerce in the hands of a few, so that a small class of very wealthy men has imposed upon the multitude of workers a yoke little better than slavery. Although there will always be labour and suffering in the world, it is essential to protect the workers from those who, in their desire of gain, would treat them as mere chattels for the production of profit. Lest this great evil become incurable owing to delay in dealing with it, action must be taken at once by the

State and by employers and workers. The Church, which has done so much to improve social conditions in the past, will never be lacking in her assistance, and the clergy must apply their full ability and energy to the task.

Reason and revelation alike teach that man's duty is to prepare himself by a life of virtue in this world for eternal life hereafter. Hence the supreme importance of the soul, whose life consists in the knowledge of truth and the love of what is good. From the spiritual point of view, all men are equal; all can practise virtue, and in virtue the true dignity of man consists. But for the life of virtue, material goods are necessary; not that the mere possession of them has any moral value, the important thing is to use them aright. The Catholic Church, while condemning inordinate desire for wealth and thirst for pleasure, desires to raise the standard of life of the indigent. She insists that all classes have not only rights but also duties. Without a return to genuine Christianity, there will be no solution of the social problem.

Class-war and Class-harmony.

Men differ in natural gifts, of both mind and body, and thence arise differences in their temporal condition, and differences between the functions they are called on to discharge

in social life. It is a fundamental error to hold that by their very nature the classes are destined to be in perpetual conflict with each other. It is according to the designs of nature that the different classes should co-operate harmoniously, for the class of the well-to-do and that of the workers need one another. Concord between them produces social order ; perpetual conflict necessarily leads to unsocial confusion. As a result of social changes, two great classes have arisen : on the one hand, the group which is powerful because of its wealth, and which, dominating industry and commerce, directs the flow of wealth for its own benefit, and has no small influence in the State ; on the other, a needy and powerless multitude, embittered and ever ready to create social disturbance. In order to lessen the gulf between these classes, the State should foster the diffusion of ownership, especially of land. The teaching of Christianity tends of its nature to draw the classes together, by reminding them of their mutual duties. The workers are bound to fulfil all equitable contracts into which they have freely entered, not to attack the person or property of their employers, to avoid violence and sedition in defending their own interests, and not to follow the lead of unscrupulous men who deceive them with

baseless hopes and exaggerated promises. The employers are bound to respect the dignity of the workers as men and Christians, and not to look upon them as slaves ; to pay them just wages and not to overwork them. The wealthy are reminded that temporal goods are to be used not merely for the benefit of their owners, but also for that of those in need ; and the poor, that there is nothing disgraceful in poverty. Finally, rich and poor are taught that they are children of the same Heavenly Father, called to the same eternal reward, redeemed by the same Saviour, and made brothers in Christ.

Organisations of Employers and Workers.

These can do much to solve the social question and to promote class-harmony. To form such associations is a natural right, and the State has no right to forbid them unless they are formed for a wrongful purpose. If existing organisations of workers are hostile to religion, Catholic workers should form Catholic associations, the object of which should be to assist their members to improve their condition, both spiritual and temporal. In addition to their provision of mutual aid, workers' associations should concern themselves with negotiations with employers for fixing conditions of labour and for settling disputes.

Wages and Hours.

The principal duty of employers is to pay just wages, and it is a grievous sin to deprive workers of what is due to them in order to swell profits. Although it is right to settle wages by negotiations between employers and employed, it must be remembered that there is a minimum wage fixed by natural justice, viz. what is sufficient for the decent maintenance of the worker. If he is forced to accept less, justice is violated. He must not be treated as a mere profit-making machine. To exact so much work from him that his soul is deadened and his body worn out by fatigue is against both justice and humanity. His hours of labour should depend on the nature of the work and on his strength. In the mining industries, for example, the arduousness of the labour should be compensated for by shorter hours. The season of the year, and the age and sex of the worker, should also be taken into account. Especial care should be taken not to employ children in factories until they have sufficient strength of soul and body ; and certain occupations are not suitable for women.

Private Property.

There is a natural right to own private property, which should be safeguarded by the

civil law. The instincts of animals, under the guidance of which their nature develops itself, can be satisfied by the mere use of things, without their stable possession. But man is not guided by instinct alone ; he is furnished with reason, by the light of which, derived from God, he guides himself towards his perfection, considering not only his present needs but also those which will arise in the future. Consequently he has the right not merely to use but also to own things ; and not merely to own things which perish in the use, but also those which can be used over and over again, as the need arises. Thus he has the right to own the land itself, as well as its fruits. This right precedes any rights of the State. The fact that God gave the earth for the benefit of all mankind is no argument against private property in land, for this right does not prevent mankind from living on the fruits of the earth. A further argument in favour of the right to own land is that he who cultivates and improves the land puts his labour into it, so that to deny him the right to own land is to deny him the right to the fruits of his labour. Again, if man be considered as the head of a family, it is very natural that he should wish to make some provision for his children after his death, and this he cannot do unless he has the right to

own things which do not perish in the use. The family has the right to its own self-preservation and proper independence and to what is necessary for this, a right which the State may not infringe. Finally, to destroy private property would be to destroy a stimulus to exertion which would bring about a cessation of production and would lead to social discord. Not merely should the civil law safeguard private property, it should promote its wider distribution and encourage the desire for ownership in the non-owning classes. This would diminish class-antagonism, increase production and check emigration. To abolish private property would be no remedy for social evils. It would be against the interests of the workers, for it would deprive them of the power to increase their resources. Although there is a natural right to own private property, there is no right to do whatever one likes with what one owns. There is a moral obligation to assist those in need out of what remains after providing for the proper maintenance of oneself and one's family, and to use all the gifts of God for the common good.

State Intervention.

Political authority comes from God, not for the benefit of rulers but of subjects. The State

must protect the natural rights of the citizens, and promote the common good. It must not absorb the individual or the family, but leave to them full freedom, so far as the general welfare permits. If a family falls into distress, the State should assist it; and if, within a family, mutual rights are violated, the State should step in to protect them; but it must not interfere arbitrarily with domestic life. It must protect the rights and foster the welfare of all classes, but particularly of the workers, since these render important services to the community and are less able than the wealthy to defend their own interests. The State should intervene to remedy bad conditions of labour and to enforce fair wages and hours, so far as these matters cannot be arranged by negotiations between organisations of employers and employed. With regard to industrial disputes, which do harm to employers, workers and the community, the State should do what it can to remove their causes and to preserve public peace and order. The State should protect associations of workers, but not intrude into their organisation and administration. It has no right to abolish private property, though it may regulate its use in the interests of the community. It must be moderate and equitable in its imposition of taxes.

The complete text of the encyclical will be found (in English) in *The Pope and the People*, published by the Catholic Truth Society, 72 Victoria Street, London, S.W.1. It is also published by the Catholic Social Guild, Oxford, in pamphlet form under the title of 'The Workers' Charter,' price 3d.

CHAPTER ONE

CLASS-WAR AND CLASS-HARMONY

MESSRS. A. J. COOK AND J. MAXTON, in their recent attack upon the Labour Party (*Our Case for a Socialist Revival*), tell us that the basis of the political creed of socialism is the recognition of the fact that present-day society is divided into hostile classes, that these classes are engaged in a constant struggle with each other, and that the way to socialism lies in the conscious waging of this struggle by the working-class. They claim that Labour activities in the trade union movement and in Parliament should be conducted in the spirit of class-struggle. The aim, they say, must be 'to substitute the rule of the capitalist class by that of the working-class.' They reproach the British Labour Movement with the gradual abandonment of the class-struggle, as shown by the readiness of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress to enter into negotiations with employers, and by the official programme of the Labour Party. Their pamphlet is a

plea in favour of a war on capitalists and capitalism.

All this, of course, is quite in accordance with the spirit of Marxist socialism. Marx claimed that all history is the record of a struggle between social classes, between oppressors and oppressed. This struggle he considers to be the key to social evolution; it is the force which drives mankind along the path of progress. It would be incorrect to say that Marx *desired* a class-war: just as inaccurate as to say that he desired the earth to revolve round the sun, or water to find its own level. It is not enough to state that he asserted the fact of class-wars in the past. He went further, and held that there must necessarily and inevitably be a struggle between classes until the final stage of social development, perfect communism, is reached. His position is like that of a scientist who from observation of facts establishes a law of nature. For Marx the class-struggle is a law of social nature, and whether we approve it or not is nothing to the point. What we have to do is to open our eyes and recognise that it is an evitable law, from which there is no escape save through the gate of communism.

It is against this theory that Pope Leo XIII enters an emphatic protest. The fundamental mistake in this matter, he says, is to believe that

in the very nature of things one class is destined to be in perpetual conflict with another. Catholics who loyally accept the teaching of the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* are not infrequently accused of socialism, both in this and other countries. When they protest against social and economic abuses, when they recall not only the workers but also the employers to a sense of their duty and social responsibilities, when they put forward suggestions for social reform, they are not unaccustomed to hear the parrot-cry of 'socialism' raised against them. Paradoxically enough, they are sometimes exhorted to mend their ways, and model themselves on the teaching of Leo XIII. Such exhortations can only come from those who are utterly ignorant of what the Pope has said, for it would be difficult to denounce social abuses in stronger terms than he employs. But to denounce social abuses and to suggest remedies, to deny that everything is perfect in our social system, does not make a socialist in the sense in which either Marx or Messrs. Cook and Maxton use that word. If it did, some of the most eminent statesmen of recent times, to say nothing of Popes, Cardinals and Bishops, would find themselves in strange and unfamiliar company.

Socialism is, without question, a very

ambiguous word in Great Britain to-day. There are many calling themselves socialists who would repudiate the Marxist doctrine of the 'class-struggle'; indeed, the gist of the complaint made by Messrs. Cook and Maxton against the British Labour Movement is that it is in this position. There are many who describe themselves as socialists because they consider that this is the most apt of current political terms to express their general attitude to economic and industrial problems, although they refuse to accept the materialist philosophy of Marx. Whether they are well-advised to adopt the label 'socialist' is a matter with which we are not here concerned. The point is that they are not socialists in the Marxist sense, since the doctrine of the class-struggle does not form part of their beliefs. It is the falsity of that doctrine which must now be demonstrated.

The natural purpose of any association or society is to enable its members to achieve some common purpose by mutual assistance. Why should men form associations if they can attain their objects equally well in isolation? Trade unions are associations intended to protect and improve the working condition of their members by the power of organised effort. Friendly societies exist to put the resources of

a group at the disposal of individuals who, for one reason or another, are in need of assistance. The greatest association of all, in the temporal order of things, is civil society, organised as a State. Like other associations, it exists in order that all its members may attain their temporal welfare by their co-operative efforts more certainly and more easily than if they lived as isolated individuals or families. The need for it is implanted so deeply in the nature of mankind that from the earliest days of which we have any record to the present time we find men living in civil societies. It is frankly incredible that internal conflict should be an essential law of an association based upon a natural need for co-operation; conflict and co-operation are in their very essence contradictory to one another. It is incredible to anyone who believes in God that He who formed human nature and adapted it to social life should have implanted in civil society, as the motive power of its development or as an essential element of its composition, the disruptive and destructive force of class-hostility. It is as reasonable to say that in the human organism one member is naturally antagonistic to another as to say that one class is naturally hostile to another, for some kind of class-distinctions will always exist owing to differences in the natural

gifts of men, and the functions they perform in social life.

The need for co-operation between men is perhaps nowhere more obvious than in the sphere of economic production. Here capital of one sort or another is necessary: manual labour is necessary: management is necessary. All these factors must and do co-operate in the work of production, and they are all supplied by human beings. Whether they are conscious of it or not, these human beings, even though belonging to different classes, are co-operating to one common end, production. Their relations as producers are relations not of discord but of harmony, and to say that men as producers are necessarily in a state of conflict is to fly in the face of the facts.

If, however, we consider them not precisely as producers but as recipients of the results or rewards of production, grounds of discord begin to appear. It may seem that there is a clash of interests between them, for the larger the share taken by any one of the agents of production the less there will be for the others. If the shareholders receive dividends at the rate of 30 per cent there will be less money available for wages and salaries than if they were content to take a modest 5 per cent. If wages are doubled, it would seem that

dividends will have to be reduced. From a clash of interests it is but a step to a feeling of hostility, and from class-hostility springs the class-struggle. It might therefore appear that after all the class-struggle is rooted in the very nature of the economic process.

But if this is true, it must also be true that every kind of productive co-operation must lead to a conflict between those who have co-operated, on account of the fact that there is always this apparent clash of interests as to the division of the fruits of the combined efforts, so that co-operation would always lead to conflict. No Marxist could take this view without abandoning his faith in a future communist society in which there will be entire harmony, and if it were true one would have to question the fundamental rationality of the universe. Moreover, experience proves that conflict does not always arise out of productive co-operation, and when it does arise the common judgement of mankind does not blame the fact of co-operation for it, but holds that selfishness has overruled the spirit of fair-play, and that one or more of the co-operators is trying to get more than a just share of the fruits. A Marxist would say that such selfishness is a necessary accompaniment of class-organisation.

Undoubtedly it is selfishness which produces

conflict, and that of its very nature, but it is not class-organisation which gives rise to it, nor would the disappearance of classes destroy selfishness. The selfishness of a class arises from the selfishness of its members, from their misconception of their true interests, and the only cure for it is the practice of the anti-selfish principles of justice and charity. In the absence of any other freely-made arrangement between the parties, the principle which should govern the division of the fruits of co-operation is that each co-operator must receive a share proportionate to his contribution to the common effort. This is, of course, a moral principle, for here as elsewhere the principles of the moral law harmonise the interests of one man or group with those of others. Man is a moral being by his very nature. This does not mean that he necessarily puts into practice what the moral law enjoins; but that he is necessarily subject to the precepts of morality which he can only violate at his own peril and to his own loss. To obey those precepts is not only his duty but also his best and highest interest, since by doing so he fulfils the law of his own being and thereby develops himself towards that perfection which alone can satisfy the deepest cravings of his heart. It cannot be too often repeated that the true

interests of man include obedience to the moral law. If he seeks to ignore it in the pursuit of partial and selfish interests, such as mere profit-making or pleasure, he will inevitably pay the penalty sooner or later.

Nor must it be thought that this penalty will be exacted only in a future life. To some extent at least it will have to be paid in this life, and that although there may be no law of the State to exact it. To take the example which has been used above, if shareholders demand more than their fair share of the product of industry, so that wages are unjustly forced down, there will be a reaction on the part of the workers. In most cases their physique will suffer, so that their efficiency is lessened and the quality and quantity of the product of industry are lowered. Their resentment at being unjustly treated will result in their work being done less willingly and in a readiness to strike for better conditions, so that once again production suffers. A loss of quality or quantity in the product of industry will mean a loss of dividends for the shareholders; a loss from which, under the circumstances supposed, they have only themselves and their violation of the principles of morality to blame. Similarly if workers succeed in increasing their own share of the product of industry beyond the limits

set by justice they will find that capital deserts them, and that they have gained but a barren victory. Of all the laws which govern mankind, whether as individuals or as societies, the first and foremost, the most firmly established and the least to be ignored with impunity, is the moral law. It is to the interest of everyone that it should be faithfully observed, and by its observance the interests of all are brought into harmony. The clash of interests between the partners in any co-operative enterprise is only an apparent clash, which vanishes when we remember that it is to the true interest of all of them that each should receive just treatment during the course of the enterprise and in the division of its fruits.

Having thus shown that neither in class-organised civil society nor in the economic process is the class-struggle inevitable, it may be frankly admitted that there have been class-struggles in the past and that we shall see more of them in the future so long as the social claims of morality are neglected. To say nothing of class-struggles in ancient Rome, there were conflicts between organised bodies of masters and journeymen in the Middle Ages; there were also conflicts between the merchants and the craftsmen, and between the town-capitalists and the country-capitalists, but, as Professor

Unwin has pointed out, these were not conflicts between employers and workers over the division of the product of industry, but competitive struggles between capitalists. To-day, in the opinion of one of the most authoritative writers on trusts and cartels, Professor Liefmann, the most significant economic characteristic is the struggle between the organised sellers of goods and the organised buyers. One might also draw attention to the demarcation disputes between trade unions as examples of struggles between classes, but these, like competitive struggles between rival groups of capitalists, are not class-struggles in the Marxist sense of the term. They are not conflicts between oppressors and oppressed. On the other hand, when we find a group of employers threatening to lock out all the workers in an industry because of a local strike for which the majority of the workers have no responsibility we feel that only a class-war philosophy can justify their action, just as it is appealed to in justification of a general strike.

For these unfortunate manifestations of class-hostility, the remedy is, as the Pope points out, primarily a moral one, though the organisations to be discussed in the next chapter have their part to play, and an important part, in expelling the evil spirit. The encyclical reminds

both workers and employers that they have duties as well as rights. If workers have made equitable contracts with employers, they have an obligation of justice to fulfil what they have undertaken, and employers have no right to force upon their employees contracts which are inequitable. They are bound to pay just wages, and they have no right to impose excessive hours of labour, points to be dealt with in a later chapter. Of course no employer would admit that he regarded his employees as slaves ; but it is not impossible to treat a man as a slave even while paying lip-service to freedom, as the history of the Scottish miners proves. It is of the essence of slavery that a man or woman or child is treated not as a human being, with the rights essential to human personality, but as a chattel, to be used or disposed of according to the good pleasure of the master. The Pope reminds all employers that the workers are as much human beings, and have the same human dignity, as they themselves, and that they must not be treated as mere machines for producing profits. He by no means denies the right of the workers to defend themselves from exploitation, but he insists that economic self-defence has its proper limits, that it must not pass over into acts of physical violence or sabotage. He adds the wise caution that the

workers should not allow themselves to be led astray by irresponsible demagogues, who urge them into positions indefensible both economically and morally, a piece of advice which would be heartily echoed by responsible Labour leaders in this country.

But the observance of rights is not enough to secure active co-operation between employers and workers, though it will remove the main obstacles to that co-operation. We have rights because we are each of us individuals of equal spiritual dignity, distinct and separate persons. Co-operation requires that we should think less of our individual separateness than of our corporate union. Between men there is the common bond of one human nature, in which all share; and the virtue which impels men to recognise that bond in thought, will and action has received from the ancient philosophers the name of friendship. Nobler still is the common bond which Christianity has revealed to the world, participation in the life of grace by which we become sons of God and co-heirs with Christ; and the virtue which impels men to recognise each other, both in theory and in practice, as members of God's family is the virtue of charity. These two virtues are the antidote to selfishness, for they move men to seek the good of others for the sake of those others.

As a concrete example of their operation, the Pope chooses the right use of property. As we shall see, he is quite uncompromising in his assertion of the right of private ownership. He is equally uncompromising in his insistence that property-owners cannot do what they like with their own. The needs of mankind are best satisfied when the right of private property is respected, but the limits to that right and the duties of owners are to be determined by the natural purpose of all property, which is to satisfy the needs of mankind. From this follows the duty of those who have to assist those who have not. The form in which the assistance is given must be decided by circumstances. For instance, the establishment by employers of a fund for the assistance of workers whose families are unusually large is an excellent method of providing assistance.

If all the duties which charity and justice impose were fulfilled there would be no more talk of class-war. Hostility between classes may arise from resentment at injustice, from fear of aggression, from envy of the wealthy, from contempt of the poor or indifference to their welfare. The virtues mentioned cut at the very roots of this hostility.

The responsibility for the practice of these virtues, in industry as in life as a whole, lies

with individuals. A class as such has neither vice nor virtue ; these are qualities of the individuals who compose the class. So far as social reform depends on moral reform, it is individuals who must take the initiative in resisting to the best of their ability any action by others of their class which their conscience disapproves. The maxim ' My class, right or wrong,' is morally indefensible. It may be that in asking for this moralisation of social relations we are demanding a spiritual revolution, but at least we are but echoing the words of Christ's viceregent on earth. It is a revolution for which every Christian prays when he repeats the words of Christ, ' Thy kingdom come !'

CHAPTER TWO

ASSOCIATIONS OF EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYED

ALTHOUGH, as was said in the preceding chapter, the initiative in reform lies with the individual, this does not in any way exclude group-action. In fact, without group-action as a result of individual initiative efforts at social reform will lead to little. The three agencies for this corporate action are, according to Pope Leo, the Church, the State and organisations of employers and workers. The Church's function is to define moral principles and urge their application. The function of the State will be discussed later. In this chapter we shall treat of trade unions and employers' associations.

The orthodox British economists of the later eighteenth century, followed by their successors of the nineteenth, and the Physiocrats in France, were opposed to all associations of producers as preventing that complete industrial and commercial liberty to which they pinned their faith. Their teaching led, in Britain, to

the passing of the severe law of 1799 against combinations, and in France to the suppression of the *corporations* or guilds by Turgot in 1766. It is true that after the fall of Turgot the *corporations* were revived and reorganised, but they were again abolished in 1791. On this side of the Channel trade unions ceased to be illegal in 1824, but in France the penalty for coalition was not removed from the Penal Code until 1864.

It is interesting to recall the attitude of Catholics on this question in countries where their numbers have enabled them to develop a social programme. In the thirties and forties of the last century two of the pioneers of the Catholic social movement in France, the Vicomte de Melun and the Vicomte de Villeneuve-Bargemont, consistently advocated the revival of the *corporations* in a modernised form. In the middle of the century the famous Belgian economist Périn added his voice to theirs, but it was Ozanam, the founder of the Society of S. Vincent de Paul, and the Comte de Mun who made the restoration of the old guilds a central point in the Catholic social programme in France. Without going into detail, it must suffice to mention that the importance of associations of employers and workers is emphasised also by the Catholic social school of

Belgium, Holland, Germany, Austria, Spain, Italy and Switzerland.

The demand for liberty of association was supported by the powerful authority of Leo XIII against those who in the name of liberty of commerce desired to suppress all industrial associations. He insists that there is a natural right to form such associations for all legitimate purposes, and that the State acts unjustly if it attempts to forbid them. (This right of association was expressly recognised in the Peace Treaties after the Great War.) After a few words in praise of the mediæval guilds, he warmly commends existing associations, not only those which comprise employers and workers but also those the membership of which is confined to the workers only, and he expresses a desire that they may increase in numbers and efficiency. On this point, as on so many others, he is entirely opposed to the spirit and teaching of the classical economists. He rejects the individualistic idea of society which they accepted, and reasserts the traditional Catholic view of civil society as a community made up of smaller communities and societies. The encyclical has made it impossible for any Catholic to question in future the right of combination for a legitimate purpose.

Turning from the question of right to that of

utility, the advantages of trade unions to the majority of the workers are evident. It is all very well to demand freedom for employers and workers to make such mutual agreements about conditions of labour as they please, but the fact remains that the worker who is not supported in the negotiations by a trade union is usually free only in name. He is free to accept such terms as the employer offers him, or to have no work at all. The ordinary worker has no reserve of capital to support him and his family, nor has he any security to offer for a loan large enough to tide him over any but the very shortest period of unemployment. In the absence of trade union organisation, he has to face the competition for jobs of a host of other workers, in the same desperate dilemma as himself. The employer is, in the nature of the case, in a very different position. If workers are unorganised, it is extremely unlikely that none of them will be prepared to accept work even at starvation wages; and if that very improbable situation arose, the employer can usually await the surrender of the workers much more comfortably than the workers the surrender of the employer. He has more capital and more credit. To talk of freedom of contract under these circumstances is an abuse of

terms ; freedom implies the absence of coercion, whereas the unemployed worker is coerced by the needs of himself and of those who depend upon him. Trade union organisation, then, is necessary in order that the average worker may be on a more equal footing for bargaining with the employer. So true is this that experience has proved that where it is difficult or impossible to organise industrial workers the only way of avoiding the sweating system is for the State to interfere with so-called freedom of contract by setting up Trade Boards.

Employers themselves are coming more and more to recognise that trade union organisation is far from being without its advantages from their own point of view. It is much easier to negotiate about wages and other conditions of labour with a union than with a large number of unorganised workers ; and the determination of a standard wage-rate and uniform conditions of labour throughout an industry not only protects an employer from the unfair competition of his rivals but also enables him to carry on his business with a greater sense of stability, and to forecast his costs of production with greater accuracy, than if no such standard rate or uniform conditions had been determined. The State, too, has found the trade unions useful in carrying out the provisions of the

Unemployment Insurance Act of 1920 and the National Health Insurance Act of 1924.

The Pope does not explicitly refer to associations consisting only of employers, but there can be no doubt that he would have given entire approval to such associations, so long as their objects are not immoral. The employers have certain legitimate interests in common, and have a perfect right to unite for the defence or promotion of those interests. In Great Britain, in addition to the employers' associations which exist in all our chief industries, there are the Association of Chambers of Commerce, the British Empire Producers' Association, the National Confederation of Employers' Associations and the Federation of British Industries. The last named was formed in 1916 to represent the manufacturers and producers of this country as distinct from the merchants. It includes nearly 200 associations and over 2000 individual firms, and it has district offices in the leading industrial centres. Abroad it has a number of whole-time or part-time representatives and correspondents. 'Besides being an organ of information and advice regarding the specific views of manufacturers, the Federation is of assistance in the distribution of commercial intelligence to its members, while its overseas representatives work in contact with the over-

seas officers of the Department of Overseas Trade.' (*Final Report of the Committee on Industry and Trade*, 1929, p. 174.) The National Confederation of Employers' Organisations came into existence after the National Industrial Conference in 1919, and after many attempts by the F.B.I. to establish a body to co-ordinate the activities of the various employers' associations dealing with labour matters. It works in close liaison with the F.B.I., the latter being primarily concerned with economic and commercial questions, the Confederation with labour questions.

In the Labour movement there is a great deal of suspicion of these two organisations, and it is obvious that such powerful groups of capitalists could bring enormous pressure to bear on the Government in their own selfish interests. When one hears trade unions denounced as a danger to the community on account of their economic power, it is well to remember that the unions are not the only organised force in the world of industry, and, furthermore, that the strength and influence of an organisation are not to be gauged solely by the number of its members or by the records of its activities which find their way into the newspapers. Whether the suspicions referred to are justified or not, there is no reason in the nature of things why the

great organisations of capital and labour should be hostile to each other. On the contrary, by sincere and cordial co-operation they could render invaluable service to the cause of a better social order. We have seen how trade union organisation can be of real service to employers. It is worth noting also that labour has recently seen the advantages to the worker of employers' associations. So long as the General Council of the Trades Union Congress was in negotiation with Lord Melchett and a few like-minded leaders of industry, it had no assurance that employers as a whole would accept any of the conclusions of the Mond-Turner Conference; but when the matter was taken up by the Federation of British Industries and the Confederation of Employers' Organisations, with the assent of their constituent members, an entirely new basis was given to the discussions, for organised labour had got into contact with organised capital.

It is this contact which it is most essential to secure, and without which the organisations of employers and employed may prove a stimulus to class-hostility, rather than its antidote. By means of this contact the *de facto* co-operation which, as we have seen, is inherent in the industrial process will be completed by a consciousness of mutual interests, by what we

may call a corporate sense. This corporate sense was possessed by the mediæval guilds, and it is the desire to revive it which inspires the social programme of many Catholics on the Continent. They would like to see all persons exercising the same trade or profession organised in a professional 'corporation,' as doctors and lawyers are organised in England to-day, though they differ as to whether membership of this corporation should be made compulsory. The corporation would include all the classes engaged in the occupation, shareholders, managers, clerks, manual workers, etc., and its function would be to protect the rights and advance the interests of all engaged in the trade or profession. It would not exclude the formation of trade unions or employers' associations within it; on the contrary they would be encouraged, and would send representatives to a council representative of the whole corporation. This is not intended to be a full and exhaustive account of the scheme, but simply an illustration of the attitude of the predominant school of Catholic social reform on the Continent towards associations of employers and employed, and the importance they rightly attach to a corporate spirit as opposed to a mere class spirit.

The recommendations of the Whitley Com-

mittee were entirely in harmony with these suggestions. The Joint Industrial Councils which the Committee proposed would be a first step towards the corporate organisation of industry. In principle their plan seems to meet with the approval of all who are not committed to opposition to the entire system of capitalism, but in the details there are certain differences of opinion. In the original Whitley Scheme a threefold system of councils was suggested, national, district and workshop, on all of which both employers and workers were to be represented. Of all these councils the last, the works committee, was the most important, and unfortunately the number of these committees had steadily declined since 1920. The Committee on Industry and Trade in its final report expresses its desire to see some form of works committee established as a normal part of great industrial undertakings, but thinks it better not to insist on their being linked up with district or national Industrial Councils. It lays special emphasis on the fact that works committees should be considered as supplementary to the ordinary machinery of collective bargaining, and not as superseding it, for 'a works committee will fail if the workpeople have any ground for suspecting that its object is to weaken their trade organisation.'

A great difference of opinion exists as to whether the agreements arrived at by Joint Industrial Councils should be given legal force throughout the industry concerned. The Report just referred to is adverse to the suggestion, except in the matter of fixing the minimum rates of wages for the lowest paid grade of workers in the industry. Without attempting to pass a verdict on a controversy which divides even those most competent to give an opinion, it is enough to say that the main principles of the Whitley Scheme are in entire accordance with the views of Pope Leo, who suggested the formation of committees to settle all questions between employers and employed, and added that the State should be appealed to for its sanction and support, should circumstances so require. He would, therefore, be in no way opposed to the legal enforcement of the decisions of Industrial Councils, should the weight of expert opinion finally settle in favour of such a measure.

Amongst the objects which the Pope mentions as proper for a trade union to set before itself is that of trying to arrange for continuity of employment for its members. An interesting recent example of trade union activity in this direction is furnished by the history of the dockers. It is well known that the dock

transport industry suffers more than any other industry from the plague of casual labour, 'the product of a mistaken and short-sighted policy in past times,' as the Committee on Industry says. Dock work is subject to violent fluctuations which occur not merely seasonally but from day to day, owing to climatic, tidal and other conditions, and the dockers are engaged on short-term (frequently half-daily) contracts of service, so that they are often out of employment. Their numbers are swollen by unemployed persons from other occupations who drift down to the docks in search of work. The result is that many dockers are constantly under-employed and unable to earn a living wage, and also that the efficiency of the industry is reduced. From the time of the dockers' strike in 1889 the problem of decasualisation has occupied the attention of all concerned. In 1912 a joint committee of employers and trade union representatives at Liverpool instituted a registration scheme which met with partial success, and the idea was adopted at a conference in London between the Port Labour employers and the trade unions affected after the dockers' strike of 1924, a joint committee being set up, under the chairmanship of Sir Donald Maclean, to develop and strengthen the system of registration. This committee is still in existence, and

has already done something towards solving the problem of casual labour at the ports.

Trade unions must be particularly active in their efforts to secure continuity of employment when a scheme of rationalisation is mooted. There is no reason for the workers to oppose such schemes, which if successful will redound to the benefit of industry; but they are perfectly entitled to demand that the employers take into account the effect of rationalisation upon their workers, both in the shape of unemployment and of increased demands upon their strength and energies. Since the purpose of rationalisation is to increase the profits of industry, it is only fair that the employees should share in these, and that those whose services are dispensed with under the scheme should receive some compensation. The principle laid down by the Christian Trade Union International is that the dismissed workers should receive an indemnity proportionate to their length of service with the firm, and this principle has been admitted and acted upon by the Margarine Trust in Holland (see *L'Internationale Syndicale Chrétienne*, 1929, No. 4). This does something at least to assist those who are thrown into involuntary unemployment by industrial progress, but of course it does not solve the very difficult problem of the reper-

cussions of rationalisation upon the workers. On the whole question it is extremely important that employers who are contemplating schemes of reorganisation should take the trade unions of the workers affected into their confidence, and in consultation with them endeavour to discover the best method of dealing with surplus workers and facilitating their reabsorption into industry. Otherwise rationalisation will simply be a new cause of irritation and hostility, causing friction and trade disputes, and thus defeating its own end of improving industrial efficiency.

One final point remains to be noted. The Pope insists on the duty of Catholics to refrain from joining unions which are hostile to religion. In Germany the question arose as to whether Catholics could belong to trade unions which were not distinctively Catholic. Pope Pius X, while expressing a preference for all-Catholic unions, permitted German Catholic workers to belong to non-Catholic unions, provided that they also belonged to one of the Catholic workers' groups called *Arbeitervereine* and that they abstained from any theories or actions in contradiction to the teaching or discipline of the Church. In Great Britain, of course, Catholics are permitted to join the existing undenominational unions, but it is worth con-

sidering whether we should not have some sort of organisation in addition corresponding to the *Arbeitervereine*. It would have the advantage of bringing Catholics together both as Catholics and as trade unionists, and would not only serve to strengthen their religious principles but also to stimulate their interest and active participation in trade union activities.

CHAPTER THREE

WAGES AND HOURS OF LABOUR

AFTER quoting a passage from the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, Professor Shields writes, 'The seeds of future minimum wage enactments were sown by this manifesto, which secured international publicity on account of the pre-eminence of its author' (*The Evolution of Industrial Organisation*, p. 170). It is indeed on the question of the living wage that the Pope most clearly departs from the teaching of the classical economists. For them the ideal way of fixing wages was by negotiations between individual employers and workers, since in this way the price of labour, like the price of other commodities, is determined by the forces of supply and demand. This assimilation of labour to such commodities as tea, sugar or coal has been definitely repudiated by the Great Powers who signed the treaties of peace after the Great War, for in the sections of the treaties which deal with labour it is recognised as a guiding principle that 'labour should not be

regarded merely as a commodity or article of commerce.' But long before these treaties or the war which gave rise to them, the Pope had attacked the commodity-view of labour.

Having briefly explained the thesis of the classical economists he says that it fails to carry conviction, for it leaves out of account certain very important facts. Undoubtedly labour-power is the personal possession of the worker, and from that standpoint he is perfectly free to accept for it whatever price he likes. But there is, as ever, the moral question to be considered. Self-maintenance is a moral duty, and the ordinary worker can only maintain himself by labour and the wage he receives for it. Consequently there is a limit set by morality below which wages cannot fall without injustice, and that is the amount of money necessary to support a thrifty and well-conducted worker. If the worker is forced by his necessities to accept less than this because the employer will give him no more, he is the victim of coercion, and justice is violated.

Before proceeding to discuss the controversies between Catholics to which these words gave rise, it is worth while pointing out that the Pope does not say that a living wage is always a just wage. He is establishing a minimum below which the wages of a normal adult man

cannot fall without injustice, under ordinary conditions. It may well be that in many cases the just wage is more, even considerably more, than this minimum ; it cannot under normal circumstances be less. Moreover the minimum so established is not a mere subsistence wage, sufficient to keep body and soul together, and no more. This is evident from the fact that the Pope assumes that a worker could, if forced, live on an even lower wage.

The section of the encyclical which deals with the living wage is relatively short, and makes no attempt to enter into details. It fulfils its main purpose, that of protesting against the commodity-view of labour, but it leaves unsettled several incidental and not unimportant points. The chief of these is whether the minimum wage which *justice* demands should be sufficient to maintain the worker's family as well as himself, or the worker only ; and on this question a difference of opinion arose.

Some argued that the Pope explicitly refers to a wage sufficient for a thrifty and well-conducted worker, but says nothing about the worker's family in this connection. They argued further that the labour-power sold is the labour-power of the individual worker, not of his family. Its equivalent in money, therefore, is what will provide the worker with a decent living, and

this equivalence is what justice requires. Of course they admitted that the family of the worker must not be left without means of support ; both charity and considerations of the general welfare forbid this. Therefore the employer, or in his default, the State, should provide for the families of those workers whose wages are insufficient for their maintenance ; but this is not an obligation of *justice* in the strict sense of the word. They urged a further proof of their argument. Natural justice requires that the same wage should be paid for the same labour-power, by whomever the labour-power is exercised ; but if the minimum wage is to be sufficient for the support of the worker's family, it will vary according to the size of the worker's family, with the result that the same wage will not be paid for the same labour-power. Pressing this point, they maintained that the family-wage theory is based upon the admittedly erroneous idea that justice considers equivalence between what a man receives and what he needs, whereas it is concerned only with what he receives and what he gives in exchange.

In reply, those who held that natural justice requires at least a family-wage began by denying that they committed the error on the nature of justice just referred to. They said that

normally an adult man's work was worth at least a family-wage, that naturally it had the value of being able to support a family. They admitted that they deduced the natural value of his labour from his normal needs, but they urged that this determination of value in no way prevented them from holding correct views on the nature of justice. The worker gives the employer labour-power sufficient to support a family, so he ought in justice to receive a family-wage.

The Pope himself, they pointed out, proceeded in exactly the same way, for he argued from the necessity of self-maintenance to the just wage. They did not of course deny that explicitly he spoke only of the maintenance of a thrifty and well-conducted worker; but they said this obviously meant the maintenance of a worker in the normal circumstances of a worker, i.e. with a family to support. An 'individual' wage will be insufficient for the maintenance even of the worker himself if he has to use part of it for his family. In the encyclical itself the Pope seems to assume that the just wage will suffice for the worker's family, for he says: 'If a workman's wages be sufficient to enable him to maintain himself, his wife and his children in decent comfort, he will easily be able to save something.' They also drew

attention to the fact that just as the Pope when speaking of wages refers to the moral duty of self-maintenance, so earlier in his encyclical he mentions a father's duty to provide for the needs of his children; and although he says nothing about a man's duty to support his wife, still he specially commends household work as more suitable for women than work in industry, which implies that the housewife must be maintained by her husband. On the principle therefore that a man's wage must at least suffice for the discharge of his normal duties, he is entitled in justice to a family-wage. It is true that his labour is the labour of an individual and not of a family, but it is the labour of an individual who has a natural right to marry and have children and a natural duty to support them and his wife. The difficulty that justice cannot demand different wages for the same amount and kind of labour they answered by saying that this was quite true; and that the family-wage ought not to vary with the actual number of the worker's children, nor ought it to be refused to men who had no family to support. There is, at any given time and in any given place, a normal number of children dependent on the married worker, a number determined by nature so far as her laws are not impeded. It is this number which the family-

wage must take into account ; and even unmarried workers are entitled to it, since nature intended them to have the right to marry and has given them no less power of labour than their married comrades have.

With a view to obtaining an authoritative decision on this question, the Archbishop of Malines (Cardinal Goossens) in 1891 submitted the controverted point to Rome, where it was referred to Cardinal Zigliara, O.P., for his opinion. When this was given, it was found not to be free from ambiguity on account of the wording of the question submitted. It led to further controversy, and to a letter from Pope Leo XIII to the Belgian Bishops in 1895 in which he insisted on the importance of union between Catholics in their work for social reform, recalled the main lines of *Rerum Novarum*, and forbade the acrimonious discussions on the point we have been considering to continue. As a consequence, a Catholic is left entirely free to hold either of the two theories on wages above described, but whichever of them he adopts he cannot claim to be faithful to the instructions of *Rerum Novarum* unless he desires, and does what lies in his power to obtain, for every honest and industrious worker a wage at least sufficient to enable him or her to live a decent human life, together with

the means to support his or her family. Those who believe that justice demands no more than an individual wage must not forget that there are other virtues besides justice which impose obligations, and that neither employers nor the community in general can remain indifferent to the welfare of the workers' families without offending against these virtues. If they think that a scheme of family allowances is a practical method of supplementing the individual wage and of enabling employers and the State to perform their duties in this matter, they should do their best to secure its introduction. Those who are convinced that justice is not satisfied unless the family-wage is paid should not overlook the fact that this assumes conditions in industry to be normal. Without surrendering their principles, therefore, they should be ready to promote any scheme which shows reasonable promise of improving the conditions of the workers, more especially if it has the support of trade unions as well as of employers' associations.

It would be infinitely deplorable if a speculative difference between Catholics should stand in the way of their hearty co-operation in working for the social reforms so strongly advocated by the Pope. It is pretty generally admitted that in certain industries the level of wages is too

low to secure for the workers a decent human existence, and it has been estimated by reliable authorities that the urban population of this country includes nearly half a million workers with families of three or more children and an income of less than 60s. a week. This means, as Mr. E. D. Simon (*How to Abolish the Slums*), has pointed out, that they cannot afford the rent of a standard minimum house, to say nothing of other privations involved. For this state of things no one remedy is sufficient. All those mentioned by the Pope are needful, and as Catholics it behoves us to set our hands to the task of endeavouring to secure their application. In modern large-scale industry, where the worker is a mere cipher amongst a thousand others and where even the directors and managers are but the agents of a host of shareholders all crying out for dividends, it is easy to forget the human personality of every worker, to look upon him or her (in the words of the Pope) as 'a mere instrument for the production of profits.' It is this attitude, often only half-conscious, to the workers that we must combat. The term 'wage slave' has sufficient basis in the attitude of many shareholders and employers (including those of black-coated labour) to explain its ready acceptance by the workers to describe

their status, even though it may not be defensible in strict logic.

From the fact that the workers, like other human beings, have a personality which must be respected, there follows the duty to observe Sundays and holy days as days of rest from labour. The Pope is careful to make clear what he means by rest in this connection. He does not think of Sunday as a day to be spent in racing about the country on a motor-cycle, nor has he any sympathy with the sluggish individuals who love to lie abed till midday, idle through the afternoon, and devote the evening to the study of the Sunday papers. To put it on the lowest ground, this is no way to refresh body or soul. But the Pope places himself on higher ground than that of mere utility. Just as he insists that employers should treat their workers as human beings, so he demands that the workers should treat themselves as human beings. As such, they have definite duties to God and to themselves, and amongst these the most important are to develop the spiritual side of their nature and to render to God that worship which only a human being can give Him. The necessity of making a living by hard manual labour amongst surroundings which tend to obscure the spiritual side of things is full of danger to man's soul. To correct this over-

emphasis on the material aspect of existence the Church added to the weekly day of rest enjoined by God other 'holidays of obligation.' Amongst the blows which the destruction of the ancient Faith dealt to the working-class in this country, not the least was the loss of these holidays. The bank-holidays imposed by law in recent times are a very poor substitute for the feast-days of the Church, and the spirit in which they are kept is not the same as that which characterises the Christian feasts. If used aright they may refresh the body, but they carry no message for the soul.

In reading the encyclical it is easy to pass over the passages which deal with rest from labour as expressions of a truism which no one would deny, the proposition that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. But this is to overlook their real significance. Perhaps nowhere in the encyclical is the difference in spirit between modern industrialism and Catholicism seen more clearly than in their respective attitudes to repose from work. By the one, repose is looked upon as necessary for greater productive efficiency; to the other, it is chiefly an opportunity for the exercise of spiritual activities which are cramped or stifled by the struggle for existence. Not that the Pope forgets or underestimates the need for purely physical

repose. What he does is to put it in its proper place, subordinate to the welfare of man's immortal soul.

One sees this clearly by studying what he says about hours of labour. His general principle is that 'neither justice nor humanity permit the exaction of so much work that the soul becomes deadened by excessive labour and the body succumbs to exhaustion.' The importance of not injuring the spiritual life is first emphasised, and then the needs of the body, its instrument, are considered. For physical efficiency, we are reminded in words which follow the principle just quoted, it is not enough to exercise our strength; we must have proper periods of rest. In other words, it is not merely a crime to neglect the Christian law of repose, it is an economic blunder.

This has, of course, been confirmed over and over again by modern researches into industrial fatigue. The U.S.A. National War Labour Board says, 'An abundance of testimony tends to show that shorter hours heighten efficiency, which springs from improved physical health and energy, together with a change of attitude towards work and employers.' According to the final report of the Committee on Industry and Trade (1929), 'It has been abundantly proved that excessive hours of labour have an

injurious effect on the health and consequent efficiency of the worker, which is, generally speaking, reflected in increased cost of labour.'

In fixing the optimum length of the working-day, the nature of the work and the age and sex of the worker must be taken into account. It is hard for us nowadays to realise that it required an Act of Parliament to fix the maximum hours for children in the cotton trade at twelve per day (in 1819), and that this limitation did not apply to women till 1844. For the legislative Ten Hours Day we had to wait till 1847. The Washington Conference of 1919 has set the standard of an eight hours day or a forty-eight hours week. Without passing any opinion on the controversies which have arisen over this Convention and especially over the attitude of the British Government to its ratification, it must be said that some workable international scheme to secure uniform conditions of labour is in the highest degree desirable, as much in the interests of employers in this country as of the workers everywhere. Without it, our industry is constantly exposed to the competition of foreign goods produced under sweated conditions, with the inevitable consequence that our workers' standard of life is menaced. As long ago as 1893 Pope Leo XIII wrote to M. Decurtins, 'It is obvious that the

protection given to the workers would be very imperfect if it were secured only by national legislation, for on account of international competition the regulation of labour conditions here or there would lead to the expansion of the industry of one nation to the detriment of that of another.'

With regard to the nature of the work done, it is interesting to observe that the Pope specially selects mining as an industry with particularly strong claims for a short working-day; and on the point of the worker's age he utters a grave warning against the employment of young children in industry. His words are echoed in the Peace Treaties, which formally approve the principle of 'the abolition of child labour and the imposition of such limitations on the labour of young persons as shall permit the continuation of their education and assure their proper physical development.'

CHAPTER FOUR

PRIVATE PROPERTY

THE encyclical with which we are dealing falls into two parts, one destructive, the other constructive. In the destructive part, with which the Pope commences, he refutes those socialists who deny the right of private property; in the constructive part he treats of the main agencies for the reform of existing social abuses and with some of the remedies which they should strive to employ. One of the consequences of the order in which the encyclical is arranged is to leave the impression on some readers that it is chiefly a manifesto against socialism, that its main object is to defend private property, and that everything else it contains is simply an enlargement on this theme. It is to avoid this misunderstanding of the encyclical that a different order has been followed in these chapters.

The Pope does not attempt to discuss the various programmes and suggestions which have been labelled, either by their supporters or

their opponents, with the title of socialist. He has one particular theory in view: the theory of those who preach the class-war, who attack the rights of the family and who deny the right of private property in land and other material goods. If a man chooses to call himself a socialist simply because he believes that municipally-owned trams are preferable to those owned by a private company, we may think his choice of a name inept, or we may disagree with his views, but we are not entitled to say that he falls under the condemnation of socialism pronounced by the Pope. Some one once said, in fretful mood, that the devil had got hold of all the best tunes. It would be much truer to say that he has managed to establish a lien on some very good labels. Who has a better title to be called a rationalist than a Catholic? Why should the title of free-thinker signify the tiny minority who do not believe in God? The word socialist suggests some one who has the interests of society at heart; if this were its only meaning in the world to-day, we could say that no one is a better socialist than Leo XIII. Unfortunately it is used to describe some systems which are essentially opposed to social welfare, and for that reason it is discarded by many who would otherwise claim it.

The anti-social doctrine of the class-war was discussed in the first chapter. The rights of the family will be examined in the next. We must now consider what the Pope calls 'the main tenet of socialism,' the socialisation of private possessions. 'Socialists are striving to do away with private ownership of goods, and in its place to make the property of individuals common to all, to be administered by municipalities or the State,' he writes. He mentions several objections to this destruction of private ownership; it would do the worker harm by preventing him from investing his savings in productive property and by confiscating his investments if already made; it would involve the State in action outside its proper sphere; it would introduce social disorder, and above all it is against justice. The last objection is the one which concerns us at present. The destruction of the right of private ownership is against justice because 'to possess private property as one's own is a right given to man by nature.' This right includes not only the power to use material goods, but to keep them in one's possession, whether they be goods that perish in the use or not. It is a right which applies to the soil itself, as well as to its fruits.

It must, of course, be noted that the Pope does not deny that municipalities and States

have the right to own property. What he asserts is that they are not the *only* subjects of that right; individuals have it too. Nor does he say that an individual can use his property just as he likes, or that the State has no right to forbid the private ownership of certain kinds of goods. He does not say that every individual *must* own land or other means of production. His contention is that the private ownership of land and of other goods is entirely consonant with human nature; it is in his own words, 'in accordance with the law of nature.' No one therefore can be accused of injustice, or of having robbed the community, simply because he or she owns capital. Every human being has an innate natural right to acquire goods, even productive goods, and to hold them as private property. There are wrong ways as well as right ways of acquiring them, and the wrong ways include robbery; but that is a different point. There are right ways and wrong ways of using the property one has acquired, and the wrong ways include robbery (as, for example, charging excessive prices); but again that is a different point. As we shall see, the Pope is insistent that the ownership of property implies certain duties, and entirely rejects the idea of irresponsible ownership. This is not the point on which he joins issue

with socialism. It is the denial of the natural right to own productive property which he in turn denies.

The argument on which he lays chief stress is that the individual ownership of land and other goods is an obvious method of providing for present and future needs. Animals can satisfy their needs without any more effort than that required to find and use the object of their very simple appetites. Man's needs are much more numerous and complex, and their satisfaction requires a considerable expenditure of mental and physical labour. Moreover, if the wild animal loses its strength owing to sickness or old-age, or if its food supplies are cut off by frost or drought, it can no longer satisfy its needs, and so it dies. But man has the power of foresight; it is his duty to make provision so far as he can for the hazards of the future as well as for his present needs. A hand-to-mouth existence does not befit a human being for many reasons, not least because it stunts that spiritual growth the possibility of which marks off man from the beast. If from the produce of his labour he can gradually set aside a store of savings, a store which he has the right to keep from others (unless they be in extreme need), the problem which nature sets him may be solved. In other words, *some*

right of ownership is evidently conceded by nature itself.

The question still remains, to what goods does this right apply? The answer will depend on the kind of goods necessary to satisfy his needs, present and future. What must his store of savings contain if it is to fulfil his purpose? It is not enough that it should contain goods which are destroyed by the mere act of using them. To say nothing of the fact that such goods (e.g. food) are usually highly perishable, or of the difficulty of acquiring a stock of such goods even in the more enduring form of money sufficient for all possible contingencies, there is the further fact that many of our needs are for less perishable goods, goods which can be used over and over again, for houses, clothes, books, cooking utensils, tools, etc. So far all but the most extravagant of communists would agree, and would admit that a man or woman has a right to own these goods in moderate quantities. The controversy really arises over the right of the individual to own instruments of production, and more particularly the land, with which alone the Pope explicitly deals, though his reasoning is applicable to all forms of capital.

It is not merely that certain socialists look upon the private ownership of instruments of

production as inexpedient in modern industrial societies. They go further and denounce it as rooted in injustice.

'The institution of private property in land and capital has been the foundation of organised society for so long that men's conceptions of honesty, of justice, or morality, have all become attuned to it. . . . Socialism is an attack upon the institution of private property in land and capital. We Socialists advocate the expropriation of the landed and capitalist class. . . . This it is which our opponents describe as confiscation and robbery. . . . It is private ownership of land and capital that is confiscation and robbery, daily and continuous confiscation, enabling the proprietor class to quarter themselves in perpetuity upon the labour of the nation, to live by levying tribute, by stripping industry of wealth as fast as industry produces it.' (Fred Henderson: *The Case for Socialism*; published by the Independent Labour Party. Revised edition, 1924.)

Mr. Henderson's argument is that private ownership of land and capital enables the owners to exact a tribute of rent and interest from those whom they allow to use that land and capital; that it is unjust to exact this tribute; and that therefore the institution of

private ownership of land and capital is unjust. In opposition to this, the Pope would reply that the private ownership of land and capital is not unjust, and that therefore it is not unjust to charge rent or interest for the use of it, though his reference to 'the evil of rapacious usury' shows that he would admit that the charge made is often excessive and *on that account* unjust.

The ownership of instruments of production, he would say, is a method sanctioned by nature for supplying the owner's needs, present and future. That he *can* supply his needs by using land and capital to produce goods is obvious. That he cannot satisfactorily provide for the risks of the future unless he owns productive goods is equally clear when we remember the impracticability of laying up a store of consumption-goods sufficient for all possible contingencies. As Mr. Henderson (*op. cit.*) remarks, 'It is not in the nature of wealth to remain intact, even if nobody consumes it. All the wealth upon which men live is perishable. . . . The products of human labour . . . begin to decay as soon as you have produced them.' Even if Mr. Henderson slightly exaggerates the perishability of wealth, the fact remains that a store of consumption-goods is perishable, and in any case would have to be enormous if it

were to suffice for security against the manifold risks of human existence. The land, however, does not perish, but endures as a storehouse for the production of utilities. In the absence of legislation hostile to landowners, nothing gives such material security as the ownership of land.

To sum up the Pope's chief argument, then, nature intends man to make provision for his present and future needs. If he is to do this satisfactorily, he must be able to acquire consumption-goods and instruments of production as his own property. Of all the instruments of production, the land is the most enduring and affords the greatest security to its owner. There is therefore a natural right to acquire the land and other means of production as private property.

Henry George objected to private property in land on the ground that the land is God's gift to the whole human family, intended for the general welfare, and that therefore individuals have no right to appropriate any part of it. To this the Pope briefly answers that God has indeed given the land to mankind, so that all may draw sustenance from it; but that the institution of private property in land does not, of itself, interfere with this intention of the Creator. Nor can any proof be adduced that he forbade men to divide the land amongst

private owners by law, or in the absence of such laws, to acquire land as private property by their own exertions. This leads him to another argument which has special force against George and those who admit that a man has a right to own what he has himself produced by labour. The land will not bring forth fruits for the satisfaction of human needs without the expenditure of mental and physical labour on its cultivation, the result of this labour being to improve the condition of the land enormously. If we suppose a man to cultivate a piece of land which belongs to no one, the admission that the improvements which his labour effects in it belong to him, necessarily involves the admission that he has the right to own the land in which they are incorporated, and from which they are inseparable.

Still another argument in favour of the right of private property in productive goods is drawn by the Pope from the nature of the family. Amongst the needs for which a man must provide are those of his dependent children. But since this point is covered by the general argument from needs, already discussed, it is unnecessary to dwell on it. More important is it to remember that the family is a natural society, a group more closely linked than any other group by the bonds of nature, with a

natural end of its own. It has consequently a right to the natural means for securing that end. Productive property, giving some security against the risks of life, is one of those means, so that the father, as representing the family, has the natural right to own it.

The Pope accepts, without developing, other arguments against the abolition of private property. It would lead to social discord, it would destroy the liberty of the citizens, and by removing a necessary stimulus to energy it would lead to a diminution, even a cessation of production. These arguments have so often been elaborated by writers on socialism that we will content ourselves with mentioning them as briefly as the Pope does. The brevity of his reference to them serves as a reminder that he is not writing a treatise on private property; in fact his defence of the institution occupies only about one-eighth of the total encyclical. Nor does he claim that his arguments are novel; even the one which he expounds at length is to be found, in its essentials, in the writings of Cicero. This is not surprising when one considers that long tradition in favour of the institution of private ownership which, as we have seen, even Mr. Henderson admits. In the words of the famous anthropologist Professor Westermarck, 'The universal con-

demnation of what we call theft or robbery proves that the right of property exists among all races of men known to us.'

It is one thing to establish the existence of a natural right to own property; it is quite another to assert that the right is unlimited. The limitations which may be imposed by the State will be mentioned in the next chapter. Something must now be said about limitations which exist quite independently of the civil law. The moral significance of material goods is that they should assist mankind to live the life that men should live, the life of virtue. Given human nature as we know it, private ownership is necessary if this natural purpose of material goods is to be attained; but we must never lose sight of the fact that private ownership is a means and not an end in itself. It is evident that the general welfare would suffer if some individuals in a country possessed all the wealth and the rest possessed none at all. It is evident too that the more nearly the social situation approaches to this the less the institution of private property is fulfilling its purpose. This is not to say that absolute equality of wealth is either possible or desirable; but only that the tendency of wealth to concentrate in the hands of a few, leaving the majority of the community propertyless or almost so, will

destroy the benefits of the institution of private property unless the tendency is checked and regulated. It is to the moral law that we must look to provide guidance for the necessary regulation, and we must discover its precepts in the matter by deduction from the natural purpose of wealth on the one hand and of the right of private ownership on the other. The latter is subordinate to the former, as the means is subordinate to the end, and its just limits are determined naturally by its purpose as a natural institution, the promotion of the welfare of individuals and society.

Admitting that the owner of property may rightly employ it for the satisfaction of his own needs and those of his dependents, admitting too that those needs are not merely for the means of subsistence but for the other commodities which go to make up his 'standard of life,' and allowing for the fact that he is entitled to provide for the future as well as for the present, the Pope asserts the moral duty to give surplus wealth to those who are in need. It is impossible here to discuss all the possible concrete applications of this principle. Evidently a rich man might claim that his standard of life rose as his wealth increased, so that he never had a surplus to give away; but underlying the Christian doctrine on the right use of

wealth there is the assumption that so long as any persons are so poor as to be unable to obtain the means for living a decent life the standard of life of the rich has an upper limit, fixed by their obligation not to frustrate the natural purpose of material goods, viz. the welfare of mankind.

It should be noticed that the Pope, after recalling Christian teaching on the right use of wealth, reminds his readers that it has a wider application, and that whatever natural talents a man possesses must be used not for himself alone but for the good of others. The obligation to employ surplus wealth for the common good is not discharged by haphazard benefactions. It demands the use of intelligence. The principle that we are all stewards of the gifts entrusted to us by God is eternal, but its application will vary with changing social circumstances. It certainly forbids investment in concerns which are known to sweat their workers, or the products of which are intended to serve some immoral purpose. Under certain conditions it may impose an obligation on capitalists to invest their money at home rather than abroad, even though this means some loss of income. 'Support Home Industries' is an exhortation which should be considered by investors as well as consumers.

This country has an unhappy notoriety on account of the excessive concentration of wealth which characterises it. On the basis of the Death Duty figures for 1920-21 Professor Clay has concluded that less than eighteen million people in this country own property, and that 75 per cent of these own less than £100, while 2 per cent own £5,000 and over. Less than one quarter of our property-owners own nine-tenths of the nation's capital. In advocating a better distribution of ownership the Pope is in agreement with all far-sighted sociologists and statesmen, and he urges the State to adopt as its policy the increase of small owners. He refrains from suggesting any measures for effecting this, but it is clear that he attaches great importance to the payment of a family living-wage as the first step towards the spread of ownership amongst the workers.

If wealthy capitalists were more conscious of their moral duties in regard to their property, and were more anxious to pay at least a family living-wage to every adult workman in their employment than to increase their own bank-balance, the tendency to great inequality in the distribution of property would be largely checked. The State-enforced redistribution of wealth by means of taxation for the 'social services' (pensions, sickness insurance, etc.)

is a very poor substitute for redistribution by personal initiative from a sense of moral responsibility. Capitalists may attack the intervention of the State as being 'socialistic,' but the fact remains that it is rendered necessary precisely because capitalism, heedless of the moral obligations attached to wealth and power, has failed to provide the workers as a class with the means of acquiring private property of their own.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE STATE AND THE SOCIAL PROBLEM

WITHOUT a clear notion of the nature of the State it is impossible to form an accurate judgement about the functions which it ought to perform. The traditional Catholic view, accepted by the Pope, is that the State is an association formed by men in order to enable them to pursue their temporal welfare in a more satisfactory way than would be possible to them if they remained unassociated. By mutual co-operation they can satisfy their material needs more completely than they can in isolation. The 'social heritage' (to use a phrase of Mr. Graham Wallas) of intellectual achievement is of incalculable advantage, since it renders unnecessary the effort of each succeeding generation to build up every branch of knowledge and art from its foundations. Others have laboured, and we enter into their labours. Furthermore the framework of civil law, possible in the State and impossible outside it, defines and safeguards the rights which each individual

possesses in virtue of his or her human personality.

The word 'defines' must not be taken to mean that all rights come to us from the State. There are certain essential rights which everyone possesses antecedently to any State recognition of them and independently of such recognition. It is for the State to admit these rights, and to base its legislation upon them, so as to secure the enjoyment of them to the citizens. This is the doctrine of natural rights, which has been sometimes the object of violent attacks. These attacks may justifiably be directed against certain of the methods of explaining this doctrine, but not against the doctrine itself, for it follows as a necessary consequence of the fact that each individual is a person, with a natural end to achieve and the moral power (that is, the right) to avail himself of the means necessary for that end. If he enters into social life, he does not lose the right to these means, since his essential end, the perfection of his own personality for the glory of God, remains the same; but the fact that when living in association with others an individual may use his rights in such a way as to hinder others in the exercise of their rights necessitates the intervention of the State, to define the limits to the exercise of rights. Definition of rights,

then, includes recognition of natural rights and regulation of their exercise in the interests of the common welfare; it does not imply that all rights come to us from the State, though of course it does not exclude the concession of certain rights by the State. The right, for example, to claim exemption from taxation or from service on a jury is conferred by the State; the right of parents to educate their children is a natural right which the State cannot justly infringe, though it may make regulations to secure that parents use their right properly.

The last example serves as a reminder that the family as well as the individual has its rights. As a society it is prior to the State. It satisfies more fundamental needs and fulfils a more essential function. The human race could continue to exist and to develop even though there were no States in the world; if there were no families it would either die out or sink to the level of the animals. The family is the natural organisation for the propagation and fitting education of the race, and the bond which joins the members of a family is more deeply rooted in nature than that which links together those who are but fellow-citizens in a State.

The family is a natural society, for its end,

the means essential to the achievement of that end, and the nature of the bond between its members are determined by nature itself. The State too is a natural society, for the same reasons. But the spirit of co-operation has not exhausted itself when it has led to the formation of these two forms of community. It leads men to form associations to secure various other ends, less essential but not less justifiable, than the end of the family and of the State. The fishing club, the limited-liability company, the Athenaeum, the Trade Union, may seem very far apart from one another, but this at least they have in common, that their ostensible purpose is to promote by organised co-operation the interests of their members in some department of human activity (or inactivity). To such associations as these the advocates of an omniscient State have always shown themselves hostile. Misled by the deceptive philosophy of Rousseau and his naïve faith in a General Will, they have argued that groups within a state distort that Will and make it ineffective; or fascinated by the schematic simplicity of a social organisation governed by an absolute ruler, monarch or dictator, they have seen in spontaneous associations of citizens a threat to unitary sovereignty. Not merely is the conception of the omniscient State

erroneous, it is out of harmony with the British character. (Has it not been said by our foreign critics that if three Englishmen had to live in the Sahara their first act would be to establish an Anglo-Saxon club?)

Given that many perfectly legitimate interests are furthered by association into groups, given too that family-groups are essential to the welfare of humanity, there at once arises the necessity of establishing some wider association, not to absorb these groups but to protect their rights and the rights of their members, and to assist them to attain their ends by the organised powers of the entire community. This, and not some fantastic surrender of individual rights to an absolute ruler (as Hobbes would have it), is the true 'generation of that great Leviathan' which is called the State. As a natural society, it has its natural end, the promotion of the general welfare of the citizens including the protection of their rights, and in order to achieve this end it has the right to make laws, to levy taxes, to establish civil and criminal tribunals, to preserve public order by organised force; to do, in short, whatever is necessary to assist its citizens to live the good life, subject to the higher claims of the Christian Church in the realm of religion and morality. From this brief account of the nature and functions of the State

it is evident that although the authority of the State has behind it the sanction of God, the author of nature, its whole purpose and justification is the good of the community, and that a ruler who uses his power for his own selfish interests abuses his trust.

In the matter of its relations with its citizens, there are two dangers to which the State is exposed. With the development of means of communication it has become increasingly easy for the central government to exercise control over all parts of its territory. It can receive information from the most distant parts in a very short time, and transmit orders equally swiftly. It can move its armed or unarmed forces from point to point with a facility and speed that were unknown and impossible a hundred years ago. It can close the means of communication to all but its own agents owing to its command of the postal, wireless, telephone and telegraph services, and to its power to take control of the railways and ports. The mediæval king was frequently engaged in an armed struggle with some powerful subject, but the superiority in strength of the modern State over the individual citizen is so great that the question of long-continued armed resistance does not arise. From the standpoint of internal peace and order this is all to the good, but it is not

without its dangerous possibilities. The strength of the subject is at least a check on despotism, and when that check is removed the ever-present tendency of the State to exceed its rights may manifest itself again.

The despotism of the absolute monarch passes into the excessive interference of the democratic State with the activities of its citizens, and the armed resistance of the mediæval barons into the organised protests of the modern lords of industry, just as the outcry of the mediæval burghers against infringement of their rights by the Crown or the feudal overlords passes into the demand of trade unions for freedom from prohibitive legislation, and the milder laments of the middle-class taxpayer. The very power of the modern State, less obvious but far greater than that of its older prototype, leads it to misconceive its functions. It has at its disposal a great amount of information about national industry, its successes and its failures; it has a well-organised system of administration; it can make almost unlimited demands upon the public purse; it is expected, and rightly expected, to take active measures to promote the national prosperity. It is easy for its rulers to forget that its function is essentially a supplementary one, that the business of the State is to assist its citizens to pursue their welfare,

not to supersede their activities: to use its authority and powers in their service, not to direct the outflow of national activity towards its own aggrandisement. The party-system does not lessen the danger of this inversion of the true order of relations between the State and its members, for a party newly entered upon political power may find the State committed to undertakings of which its new rulers do not approve but from which they find it very difficult to withdraw.

It is the consciousness of this danger of excessive State-interference which is behind the doctrine of *laissez-faire*, no longer openly professed as a political theory, but stubbornly maintaining its hold over the minds of many, especially amongst our leaders of industry. 'Leave us alone' was the cry of the coal-owners. 'No Government inquiry into the cotton-industry' has been adopted as a maxim by employers in Lancashire. How many times have we been assured that for the revival of industry all that is necessary is that the Government should refrain from interfering? At least as often as we have been assured by another school of thought that all will be well if only the rich will get off the backs of the poor. Such confident generalisations as these

betray a most naïve misconception of the complexity of our social problems.

Before attempting to decide whether State interference is desirable or not in any particular circumstances, it is necessary to go back to first principles and ask whether this interference is necessary to enable citizens to work out their own temporal salvation by their own efforts. If it is a question of defending clearly established rights, the problem is fairly easy of solution. If it is a question of limiting rights in the interests of the community as a whole, it is rather more difficult. If the problem is to know how far the State should take active steps to promote industrial and social development, there is often room for great differences of opinion and need for careful consideration before action is taken.

By way of example we may take the question of private property. In the last chapter it was shown that there is a natural right to own private property, one of the reasons for this right being that men may provide for their future needs. As a matter of fact we find that modern States undertake some such provision for certain classes of citizens, in the shape of old age pensions and insurance against sickness and unemployment, wholly or in part. The question at once arises, is the State exceeding

its powers in so providing? If not, what becomes of this particular argument for private property? But if it is, what is to become of those who own no private property, and consequently cannot provide for the future out of their own pockets? No one who holds the doctrine of the nature and functions of the State explained in this chapter could agree to the entire prohibition of private ownership by the State. By virtue of their nature, the individual and the family have the duty to provide for the future, and therefore a right to acquire the means of doing so. When the State comes into existence, it finds them already in possession of this right, which therefore it cannot prohibit; rather, the State should safeguard the right by law, and do what it can to enable all to acquire property. It follows that the State must not consider the provision of sickness-insurance or other similar benefits as one of its normal functions. In so far as some of its citizens, through no fault of their own, are not able to make this provision for themselves, it is a sign that the institution of private property is not working as it should, and it is the business of the State to find out what is wrong and to correct it. In the meantime, it is its business to see that those who are penalised by the defects of the actual property system are

compensated by society for what society should never have permitted. Consequently, one may approve of State provision for the future as an abnormal measure to meet an abnormal situation, but one should not acquiesce in it as a permanent solution of the problem arising from maldistribution of property in the community.

Whenever the general good of the community requires limitations on the right of property, or on its exercise, the State should intervene to impose them by law. No objection in principle can be taken, for instance, to the recommendation of a Departmental Committee in 1921 that the extension of deer forests in Scotland should be forbidden by statute, or to recent legislation in England dealing with hereditary succession to property, much less to legal regulations concerned with the formalities necessary for the making of a valid will. No objection can be taken either to the compulsory purchase of land for allotments or for road construction, playing grounds, etc., always supposing that the public good requires this purchase. Many other examples could be given of justifiable State interference with private property, but at present the main controversy in this matter turns on State ownership of the land and other means of production.

It is extremely unfortunate that it is almost

impossible to secure a quiet and unbiassed discussion of this matter, largely owing to the fact that it arouses party feelings as soon as it is mentioned. Even those who are quite independent of party affiliations cannot but remember that the nationalisation of the means of production is one of the essential elements in the programme of a movement to which they are strongly opposed on far higher grounds than those of mere party politics. The attempt to see how far the principles established above throw light upon this controversy must, however, be made. The question then is, has the State the right to forbid private ownership of the land and other means of production, and to assume ownership of them itself? With the practical difficulties which stand in the way of collectivism we are not here concerned. They have been described times without number by anti-socialist writers, and have been admirably summarised by Mr. Charles Diamond in his *Why Socialism cannot come and remain*. The question we are now raising is that of the abstract *right* of the State in regard to nationalisation of productive property.

All the rights of the State arise from its duty to safeguard and promote the general welfare of the community. If it has the right to own property of any sort it is because the

general welfare requires such ownership. If it has the right to forbid private ownership of any kind of property, it must be for the same reason. If it has the right to expropriate private owners, again this can only be because expropriation is necessary for the general welfare. In the last chapter it was proved that individuals and families have a natural right to own productive property, so that those who have legitimately come into possession of such property have a real right to it. It does not follow that the State may never expropriate them, for the right of private property is limited by considerations of the common good, which may sometimes require State interference with private ownership; but it does follow that the State may not nationalise their property without compensating them.

From these principles it follows that if the public welfare requires State (or municipal) ownership of property, whether productive or not, there is no moral objection to such ownership, provided that just compensation be paid to rightful owners whose property is transferred to the State (or municipality). To quote the words of the Irish Bishops in 1914, 'The State or municipality should acquire, always for compensation, those agencies of production, and those agencies only, in which the public

interest demands that public property rather than private ownership should exist.' State ownership implies a limitation on the field open to private ownership, and with every extension of State ownership this field diminishes in extent. Since private ownership has many advantages, this diminution is not an unmixed blessing, even though it may be necessary for the common good. Consequently the more the extension of State ownership trenches upon the institution of private property, the more serious is the public advantage required to justify such extension, and the more closely we must examine it to see that the gain to the community outweighs the disadvantage of restricting the field of private ownership. There need be no difficulty about permitting the State to own naval dockyards, munition factories and the like. There is room for discussion as to the advantages of State ownership of railways and mines ; we may conclude that it is undesirable, but we cannot say that it is necessarily wrong as being an immoral infringement of the right of private property. Such limited State ownership still leaves open a wide field for the private ownership of productive property.

But the case is altered when the proposal is made that the State should nationalise *all* the means of production, including the land.

If the main argument of the last chapter proves anything, it proves that the State has no right, under ordinary conditions, to do this. Wholesale nationalisation of productive property would render ineffective the right of the individual and the family to make provision by their own private efforts for their future needs, a right which is antecedent to any rights of the State. It would deprive them too of the liberty and independence to which they have a right even though living in civil society. This could not promote general welfare. To suggest, then, that public ownership of all the means of production is characteristic of a properly organised State under normal conditions is in conflict with the teachings of the Pope. Yet for the sake of completeness it must be added that if an abnormal and extreme state of affairs arose, if, for example, the means of production in a country became so monopolised by a few that the community was exploited and that the ownership of productive property became impossible to any outside the little circle of monopolists, and that nationalisation was the most efficacious remedy, as a step towards a redistribution of ownership on a wider scale, the State would be justified in nationalising, in order that the diseased institution of private property might be restored

to a healthy condition. Such an abnormal condition is not explicitly contemplated by the Pope, but there is a considerable body of theological opinion in favour of the view just expressed.

We have been chiefly concerned in this chapter with defending the rights of individuals and groups against excessive interference by the State. We must be briefer in referring to the other extreme, viz. insufficient interference. From what has been said on the functions of the State, it follows that the less citizens are in a position to defend themselves or to advance their own interests legitimately, the more the State should intervene to protect and assist them. For this reason the Pope explicitly approves factory legislation and other provisions to secure good conditions of labour, though he is careful to remark that the State should step in only when employers and employed fail to come to a satisfactory agreement. With reference to strikes, he urges the State to strive to remove their causes by timely intervention. It will be seen from this that the *laissez-faire* school cannot claim the Pope as a supporter of its doctrines. He considers that the State has a part, and an important part, to play in the solution of the social problem. It must not confine its activities to keeping the ring

while economic and social conflicts rage between its citizens, nor is it justified in neglecting to relieve those who are in distress. Its rôle is not merely that of a policeman engaged in preventing breaches of the peace, though the preservation of social order is one of its essential functions. On the other hand, it is not a sort of Universal Aunt, and it must refrain from unnecessary interference with the rights and activities of its citizens. The problem of statesmanship is precisely to know when interference is necessary and when it is not, and the principles laid down in the encyclical give invaluable assistance in its solution.