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Property and Enterprise

Paul-Émile Bolté, p.s.s.

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porter plus longtemps le poids du régime du salariat sous l'aspect brut où l'a taillé le capitalisme libéral.

« La transformation du climat n'est pas moins nécessaire. Les coeurs se sont figés, durcis, aigris, au creuset d'un siècle de luttes. L'égoïsme et la colère ont marqué de plis amers, où la défiance do-

mine, le visage des diverses classes de producteurs. Que cette tension persiste et les plus beaux efforts de réalisations temporelles seront anéanties. Non moins que les institutions, les moeurs doivent se rajeunir. »¹⁹

(19) ROMAIN, op. cit. p. 144.

PROPERTY AND ENTREPRISE

Paul-Emile BOLTE, p.s.s.

What moral value must be set on the structure and abuses of the modern capitalist enterprise? Such is the question we intend to study in this article so that we may see if it is timely or even necessary to introduce reforms in the structure of modern private property.

Ownership:

Two sociological conclusions are to be drawn from the study of acquisition:

1° The actual system of ownership is not absolutely immutable. If reforms are required as regards modern private enterprise, the argument « tradition » must not be overdone.

2° In speaking of the rights and duties of ownership one must specify: what property he is referring to in each given instance. If it is a question of ownership of a watch, of a plant or of a field, the same principles may not apply.

The right to ownership relates to two requirements: facilitating the development of the person, and serving the community. According to the traditional doctrine of the Church, any system of ownership, whether private — individual or collective — or public ownership, is of value only inasmuch as it ensures a better distribution of the wealth of the world which were naturally created for all mankind and not to be concentrated in the hands of a few individuals. According to the teachings of the Church, *individualism* and *collectivism* are unhuman and unchristian doctrines.

The great title that can justify the acquisition of ownership is labor. All other factors of ownership (occupation, inheritance, etc.) are virtually

founded on labor. But labor may be hired to a given party. « Capital cannot do without labor, nor labor without capital. » It is therefore entirely false to ascribe the results of their combined efforts to either party alone; and it is flagrantly unjust that either should deny the efficacy of the other and claim the entire product. »¹

Enterprise:

Enterprise may be defined as the use of financial, technical and human means, under a single given direction, with a view to an economic production of articles *for the public*.

In every capitalist undertaking the elements *personal profit* and *service to the community* are to be found. « Production enterprise assumes the idea of service to society », stated Mr. Joseph Zaminski in the « Semaine sociale de Toulouse ». « Production must serve profit, but it must also serve the community in all its needs. »

Besides, enterprise assumes an essentially *community* nature. In production there is a natural association. The members of an enterprise are engaged in a common labour for a common purpose.

A distinction should be made here between *personal or private enterprise* and *non-personal enterprise*.

Personalized enterprise, with its essential characteristics, partly has the same structure as the capitalist system with its abuses. « It is subject to the law of profit and the law of competition. Its

(1) Pope Pius XI, « *Quadragesimo Anno* », no. 59.

existence and its life are commanded by an abstract consideration of rentability.»² It serves the employer, and not the community. In such an enterprise the capitalist is the animator of the structure, and in it he invests a part of his riches and the whole of his activities. If the labour contract which binds the worker to the enterprise respects the rules of ethics and human dignity, certain structural reforms may not be urgently required.

Non-personalized enterprise is made up of two main elements: *the joint-stock company* and *the wage-earning*. The world actually owes to the joint-stock company most of the great commercial and industrial progress that has characterized the last century. Among other things it has allowed the extension of the right of ownership to a great number of citizens and it may be said that it represents a trial at appropriation of enterprise by the community associated with a formula for co-management. There is nothing essentially unjust in the wage contract binding together employers and employees within capitalist enterprise. Unfortunately, the capitalist economic regime has grown in an environment of economic liberalism and « the juridical institutions intended to foster the collaboration of the investments by dividing and limiting the risks involved have too frequently given occasion to the most reprehensible of abu-

ses,» according to the very words of Pope Pius XI. A « discretionary economic domination [has been left] in the hands of a few and those few are frequently not the owners, but only the trustees and directors of invested funds, which they administer at their good pleasure. »

In such a system, in which everything is directed towards profit, the employer's concern for his employees is subordinate to the interests of capital. In the joint-stock company, capital, an *inert object*, commands the worker, a *human person*. So that labour may be present at the meetings where its fate is being decided, and in order to comply with the legitimate aspirations of the working class which has become aware of its majority, structural reforms must be achieved, and institutions that will organize the representation of personnel with respect to management must be created.

Conclusion:

It is therefore permissible to believe that the best way to make a communitary reality out of enterprise especially out of large enterprise, is to modify somewhat the wage contract, whenever possible, « by introducing into it elements drawn from the contract of partnership as has already been tried in various ways to the not small gain both of the wage earners and of the employers. »³

(2) G. DESBUQUOIS, P. BICO, « *Les réformes de l'entreprise et la pensée chrétienne* », page 6.

(3) Pope Pius XI, id. no. 72.

Une expérience

SERVICE D'HYGIÈNE INDUSTRIELLE

Gérard DION

A quelques reprises, dans le « Bulletin des relations industrielles », il a été question d'hygiène industrielle et des bienfaits de l'organisation d'un tel service dans les usines. Quelques-uns de nos lecteurs nous ont manifesté le désir de connaître des réalisations concrètes dans une petite entreprise. Des expériences ont été tentées ici et là. Nous croyons utile de reproduire ici, avec la bienveillante permission des parties concernées, le contrat passé entre le Dr Wilfrid LeBlond, professeur d'hygiène industrielle à notre Faculté, et Jos. Morneau

Inc., tel que nous le trouvons publié dans le journal d'usine L'ARBRE.¹

1o. Le médecin s'engage à assurer la surveillance périodique de l'état sanitaire des locaux et lieux de travail ainsi que des annexes, avec rapport à l'employeur.

2o. Le médecin s'engage à faire l'examen médical de l'ouvrier suivant les modalités ainsi fixées :

(1) L'ARBRE, journal d'usine, Jos. Morneau Inc., octobre 1947, pp. 3 et 4.