

Occupational Corporative Order

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Article abstract

The following text is an English translation by the National Catholic Welfare Conference of the address pronounced in January 31st 1952 by His Holiness Pope Pius XII to the Italian Catholic Association of Employers in which he asked for the Christian spirit as the basis for the social order and criticized forced co-determination.

As for Us, gentlemen, We express Our deep appreciation of your work and the spirit directing it. And from Our whole heart We ask God to shower His graces on your labors, yourselves, and your families. *

* Headings are the Editor's.

OCCUPATIONAL CORPORATIVE ORDER

The following text is an English translation by the National Catholic Welfare Conference of the address pronounced in January 31th 1952 by His Holiness Pope Pius XII to the Italian Catholic Association of Employers in which he asked for the Christian spirit as the basis for the social order and criticized forced co-determination.

We thank you wholeheartedly, beloved sons, and We are proud of you. With no less modesty than zeal you dedicate yourselves to a task which We consider of great importance. A lofty ideal, and one worthy of you, has been its inspiration. This undertaking is still young. Nevertheless, during the first five years of its life, it has already produced good results and augurs better and more abundant ones. The promise it holds is guaranteed more by the object of the undertaking and the divine aid it invokes than by the powerful support of men.

Zeal has made you begin your task without waiting until you were many in number or equipped with all the means that might have been desired. Modesty has allowed you to advance prudently, sure of your step, without planning on a grand scale or working out minute details, but with the clarity and precision of thought which animates you.

CHRISTIAN CONCEPT OF BUSINESS

What then is it that you believe? What is this ideal which daily becomes clearer and more enlightening? To Us it seems the clear lofty and Christian concept you have of business. For you it is more than a mere means of earning a livelihood and maintaining the lawful dignity of your position, your individual independence and that of your families. It is more than the technical and practical collaboration of ideas, capital and many types of labor which favors production and progress. It is more than an important factor of economic life, more than a simple — and very praiseworthy — contribution to the carrying out of social justice.

If it were just this, it would be insufficient to establish and promote the complete order because there is no order but the one which rules the whole of life and all activities, material, economic, social and especially Christian, without which man remains always incomplete.

A COMMON ACTION

Without doubt, you have not pretended — that would have been a dream, although a happy one — to bring about this order in a single stroke or even to have outlined its definitive program. We are certain that you have not attempted to do this. But your purpose is clearly determined, and you have no hesitation in this. That is at the heart of the matter. It has taken possession of your minds. You are determined to do your best to follow it, although aware that you can achieve it only step by step in the light of experience.

There is no doubt that you have already obtained results, even though they are nothing more than your meeting, your agreement, your common action and

your progress in understanding, appreciating and carrying out your duties. Your numbers are still few, but significant — each of you working in his own field, but not shutting yourselves off in individualistic segregation.

On the contrary, moved by a most ardent spirit of solidarity and growth, you aspire gradually to increase your ranks by winning over other executives animated by the same desire. Each one will remain within the sphere of his own concern but everyone will cooperate with all the others, looking less to increasing in numbers than towards promoting among yourselves the purity and greatness of your aims and the effective understanding of your duty and your ideal.

THE FULL, LOFTY AND CHRISTIAN MANAGEMENT OF AN ESTABLISHMENT

This duty, this ideal, is, as We have said, the full, the lofty, the Christian management of your establishment, penetrated with human sentiments in the widest and highest sense of the word. Like the drop of oil in the gears, this humane sense must penetrate all the members and all the branches of industry; the executives, the assistants, the clerical employees and the workers of all ranks from the most highly qualified artisan to the lowest worker.

If business firms, effectively penetrated with the truly human spirit, multiply and unite with you one after another, they will become so many large families. If not content with their own separate existence, as in a closed vase, they will unite among themselves, all together, they will tend to form a strong and happy society.

It would be certainly utopian to imagine that this society could be formed by a single stroke. And that is why We have just praised that trustworthy zeal which, without waiting longer, is bold enough to open the way, and that prudence which regulates the advance. Continue in this way. You will certainly labor effectively in bringing about the greater consolidation and expansion of a vigorous, healthy Christian society.

A CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ORDER

The great misery of the social order is that it is not deeply Christian nor really human, but only technical and economic. It is not built on what should be its basis and the solid foundation of its unity — the common character of men by their nature and by being sons of God through the grace of divine adoption.

As for you who are resolved to introduce everywhere this human factor into business, in the various grades and offices which comprise it and in economic and public life by legislation and popular education, you try to transform the masses, who would remain amorphous, inert, unaware of their duty and at the mercy of agitators with an ulterior purpose, into a society whose members, while differing from the other, constitute, each according to his function, one united body.

This is a comparison with which you are very familiar. (Cf. I Cor. 12, 12 ff.) Let it always be your policy and the charter of your organization. Remaining faithful to it, you will be sure of building on the solid Rock Which is Christ, on the rock which Christ gave us as the foundation of His Church.

REFORMING THE STRUCTURE OF INDUSTRY

Beloved sons, there is much talk nowadays about reforming the structure of industry. Those who promote it think primarily of modifications among its members, be they businessmen or employees included in the business by virtue of their labor contract.

THE CHURCH AND THE OCCUPATIONAL CORPORATIVE ORDER
OF THE WHOLE ECONOMY

We cannot lose sight of the tendencies infiltrating such movements. These tendencies do not, as is claimed, apply the incontestible norms of natural law to the changed conditions of the time, but simply exclude them. For this reason, in Our addresses on May 7, 1949, to the International Union of Catholic Employers Associations and in that of June 3, 1950, to the International Congress of Social Studies, We opposed these tendencies, not to favor the material interests of one group over another but to assure sincerity and tranquility of conscience for all those to whom these problems apply.

Nor could We disregard the alterations by which the words of great wisdom of Our glorious predecessor, Pius XI, were distorted. These distortions give today the weight and importance of a social policy of the Church to an observation of secondary importance regarding eventual legal adjustments in the relations between the workers as members of the labor contract and the other contracting party. Meanwhile they pass over more or less in silence the chief part of the Encyclical "Quadragesimo Anno" which contains that social policy — the idea of an occupational, corporative order of the whole economy. Those who set about treating questions relating to the reform of the structure of industry, without taking into account that every single business is by its own purpose closely tied to the whole of the national economy, run the risk of laying down erroneous and false premises with danger to the entire economic and social order. Therefore, in Our address of June 3, 1950, We tried to place in its proper light the thought and doctrine of Our predecessor to whom nothing was more alien than any encouragement to follow the road which leads toward forms of an anonymous, collective responsibility.

But you walk the one, safe road; that which tends to give a soul to personal relationships by a sense of Christian brotherhood; a road that is practicable everywhere and one which moves widely on the level of a business firm. Your aim will render you capable of seeing that the personal dignity of the workers, far from being lost in the general management of a business itself, will increase the efficiency of the business not only materially but also and primarily by gaining the values of a true community.

Go forward, therefore, and labor with confident perseverance under divine protection, in pledge of which We wholeheartedly impart Our paternal Apostolic Blessing to you, to those who are at present or will be united with you, and to all persons and things dear to you.
