

receive at least the rate of wages that "are considered usual and fair in the locality." Not only does it apply to persons interested in a particular dispute, but extends to all persons who are "connected with or engaged in the industry to which the award applies." Similar laws are enforced in Victoria.

The principle advocated by some economists that the standard for fixing wages cannot be made an ethical one is then totally opposed to the belief of those who lived during the five centuries from the fourteenth to the nineteenth, and has lost favor with nearly all unprejudiced people of the present day. Let us now examine the reasons upon which the ethical standard of a Living Wage is based.

The advocates of the Living Wage assert that a laborer has a *natural right* to this remuneration. The right is not social, but personal, belonging to the individual as an individual and not as a member of society. Then it is natural, springing from his rational nature, and not bestowed upon him by any positive law. Now rights are moral means whereby the possessor is enabled to reach some particular end. We call those rights natural which enable the individual to attain the end appointed him by nature. This end, as far as the present purpose demands, is a right and reasonable life, the development of one's personality in accordance with the dictates of reason. To attain this end is man's duty. Nor can this duty be fulfilled unless one takes all reasonable means to preserve one's life. Preservation of life, then, is also a bounden duty; it is a law of nature binding everyone, and all the means necessary thereto are a man's natural rights. In the present order of things, therefore, there is an obligation upon every man to labor, when without doing so he cannot preserve his life. On the other hand, he has a right to a fair compensation for his labor, since this is a means necessary to the attainment of that end.

Man's natural rights flow from his dignity as a human being, and are determined by the end he is to seek. They are as extensive as are the means necessary to attain that end. Some of them are primary, springing from his nature; others are secondary, depending upon special circumstances, but flowing from some original and primary right. To these secondary rights does that of a Living Wage belong. It exists only in an industrial community. Were we living in an age when men obtained their living otherwise than by wages it would have no existence. But being a secondary right it must be founded upon a primary one, and that primary right is the right to subsist upon the bounty of the earth.

That the earth is the common heritage of the children of Adam has been the general conviction of all ages. Even with the established system of private property people have not classed, and do not class as thieves those who appropriate their neighbor's goods as a last resource against starvation. In earlier times the poor and needy were provided for by the bishops and clergy; in later, by the legislation known as poor laws. Underlying these practices was the firm belief that human beings had a strict right to those goods necessary for the maintenance of life. This is only in accordance with reason. For each man is an independent being: he is an end in himself. All persons as persons being of equal intrinsic worth, the preservation of life is of equal importance in all. Now, in the nature of the earth itself there is nothing to indicate that one man has a stronger claim than another to its material resources. So that the right of access to the materials of the earth is equal in all.

To this it may be objected: Where, then, is the right of private property? Has it no existence? The answer is simple. The right of private property certainly exists, but it is only a derived or secondary right. The title of private ownership only shows why this property belongs to one man rather than to another. The right being only secondary must give way to a primary natural right, when the two come into con-

flict. A person who stands in need of any particular good in order to preserve life has a claim superior to that of the private owner, unless the latter happens to be in the same dire circumstances as the former.

So far we have shown only that man has a right to a livelihood, but his claim is of wider extent. He has also a right to what is known as a *decent livelihood*—that is, to those things necessary for a life in keeping with the dignity of a human being. For this he requires not only bare subsistence goods, but also those requisite to a life of reasonable comfort. In short, he is to live the life of a man, and not that of a mere animal. The source of this right is the same as that of a right to subsistence—viz., the dignity, needs, and end of a human being. And like the right to subsistence, it is natural and of equal intrinsic value in every person. "Consequently," as one writer remarks, "When any person is hindered from obtaining access on reasonable terms to this minimum of material goods his dignity and rights are violated, and some other man or men, or some social institution, has committed an act of injustice."

It must be noted that the right to this decent livelihood does not exclude a right to more than these necessities. Here we are only concerned with the minimum that is due. A more precise statement of the theory is that a person has a right to *at least* a decent livelihood. Moreover, as was remarked above, a person has a right to these goods only "on reasonable terms." Being only a derived right it is not so pressing as the primary one to subsistence. It would not, for example, justify the taking of private property acquired by just title. It must also be interpreted in the light of conditions prevailing at the time. In order to render subsistence goods suitable for human use a certain amount of labor is necessary. Any person, therefore, laying claim to a decent livelihood must needs labor to a reasonable extent. But once these reasonable conditions are satisfied, the duty of providing that livelihood binds *in general* the society of which the individual forms a part; *in particular*, the person or persons with whom the laborer is in direct relation.

To sum up, then, we have seen that each man has a primary natural right to live from the bounty of the earth, and that from this flows a secondary, though no less natural right, to a decent livelihood. It remains to show that in the present economic conditions of society and industry this right can only be satisfied by a Living Wage.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

J.V.—Not up to publication standard.

HAWERA SEONIN.—Quite up to your old form. But enclose certificate of sanity next time you write.

BRITON.—Don't be a cynic. Cynic is derived from the Greek word for dog. Get out of the manger even if asses do eat the hay.

LOYAL.—Sorry. But we cannot tell lies even to retain your patronage. If we could we would willingly say that the royal family of England was not a German importation. Facts are facts. It seems that to tell the truth is for people like you to be unpatriotic. Too bad.

LADIES!

A new style of dressing the hair is quite in order, but the purchase of a delicious appetiser, like **MILITARY PICKLE**, is sound judgment. Sold by all grocers. Buy it now.

They spell refinement! "THINKER" Writing Tablets and "GOLDEN RULE" Writing Tablets are the last word in stationery efficiency. 1/- each. All stationers.

RAILWAY TAXI SERVICE—Two up-to-date Sunbeam Cars. Cab rates in borough; outside by arrangement. All classes of work done, including Weddings, Funerals, etc. Trains met day and night. Prompt attention.

'Phone 855

J. J. GILLIES

13 ANDREW YOUNG ST., PALMERSTON NORTH