

Intervention of Cardinal Cardijn, 5 October 1965

Venerable Fathers,

In my previous intervention, I spoke of young people and the Third World. Please allow me today to speak of the workers who suffer around the world

At present, in every country, the number of workers is increasing day by day. The outcome and the future of the world and of the Church depends on their work. Before the evidence of this fact, our Council must address itself to the *workers* of the whole world in terms less theoretical and more realistic. More than other people, they await this message from the Council like the voice of Christ crying out: "I have pity on this crowd".

The Sub-Human Situation of the Majority of the Working World

But the majority and even most of the workers presently experience *deplorable and gravely unjust* working conditions as well as conditions of personal, family, social, cultural and often even political life:

- Wages are often derisory;
- Preparation for qualified and truly human work is non-existent or insufficient; machines force men and also women to work too rapidly and not safely;
- Unemployment or interruptions of work are imposed unilaterally on workers without adequate compensation;
- Trade unions whose role is to defend the legitimate rights and responsibilities of workers at work do not exist or are forbidden;
- Workers are often required to travel more and more frequently without regard for their family life;
- Lodging, food, education and instruction of children are also lacking.

These sub-human conditions of life and work, which we cannot enumerate owing to lack of time, affect *innumerable workers and worker families* and constitute for the present world *a universal and very serious sin* against man and against God.

Whatever is Contrary to Catholic Social Teaching Must Be Considered as a Grave Sin

To create new conditions of work, workers of the whole world, conscious of their solidarity, must unite and collaborate freely and in peace. They must collaborate more effectively with national and international public powers as well as with the leaders of the economic and social world. Because it is certain that workers will be liberated by work and by the workers; and in this difficult effort, *the Church must solemnly manifest her confidence and her approval.*

By this effort workers aspire to conditions which will improve their own life and also the lives of all men, and *above all those* in the third world who suffer the worst conditions.

This Council must beg heads of enterprises to become conscious of their responsibilities with respect to workers and to take into consideration the social doctrine that the Church's magisterium has developed over the course of the centuries, above all from Leo XIII to Paul VI. In the renewal of Christian discipline which will take place after this Vatican Council in line with its constitutions and decrees, it will certainly be necessary that within Christian communities it should be considered as *a grave sin* all that which is contrary to the social teaching of the Church concerning human work.

I will say it again once more: the Church which loves the workers as Our Lord Jesus Christ loved them must be convinced that workers are and must be their own liberators.

As Pius XI said: "The first apostles, the immediate apostles of the workers are the workers themselves." The Church repeats this invitation with love and insistence. The world has been saved by Jesus the worker, Messiah of men and Son of God. Likewise, the world today must be saved by workers taking to heart the salvation of the whole of humanity and the promotion of universal brotherhood under the paternity of God.

All Workers Have Seen the Pope at the UN

Venerable Fathers and Very Dear Brothers,

Forty years ago, Pope Pius XI deplored what he described as the greatest scandal of the 19th century: the loss of the working masses by the Church.

Yesterday, for the first time, all workers of the world saw Pope Paul VI, the greatest missionary of peace and brotherhood, on television; they heard his voice calling for justice and respect for all peoples even the smallest. Today in workshops around the world, workers are speaking of this and they hope that henceforth their work will no longer serve to produce arms which destroy houses and kill children but to build houses, to provide food for children and to better instruct and train young people.

Thus I request that in this Pastoral Constitution we should insert, in a way that our Commission considers opportune, a solemn invitation to all world authorities, religious or political, private or official, national or international to renounce their present dissensions and effectively and without delay to coordinate *all the immense possibilities present in the world created by God as well as people's efforts* for the liberation of young people, workers and the Third World. By doing this, our Vatican Council will fulfil its pastoral mission; those who direct human affairs will render a great service to the common good and to all people; and in this general reconciliation and effective concord, the divine economy will, with God's help, lead to new victories in the history of people.

I have finished.

Joseph Card. Cardijn