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ORGANISED GREED

D.B. KNOX

"THE CHRISTIAN FAITH"

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Strikes come and strikes go. We have just had a strike by prison warders. Before that the latest strike to be reported in the papers, and not all are, was a strike by twelve snowplough drivers at Mount Kosciusko. The drivers timed it well as it was the first real snow fall of the season, right on the weekend when some skiers were leaving and others arriving and all inconvenienced. It was such a small pimple on the industrial face compared to the ugly scars of the waterfront strike or the petrol refinery strike or the train strike that it might seem hardly worth mentioning, though this will not be the opinion of the hard pressed resort operators who have had a bad enough season as it is.

But what about strikes in general which are of such frequent occurrence in the Australian community. Are strikes legitimate? The retort will be made that in a free world a person always has the right to withdraw his labour, but this reflects the error of modern secularism which ignores the fact that we are in relationship to one another and therefore have obligations towards one another. For example, members of Nasa monitoring a moon shot at Houston Texas, are they at liberty to withdraw their labour at their own discretion when three astronauts are in orbit and are relying on the faithfulness of the Houston team for their safe return to mother earth? Plainly there are some situations when it is indefensible to withdraw your labour and the government should legislate accordingly, providing penalties for those who offend. Those who staff essential services have the strongest obligation to remain at their work rather than jeopardise the whole community, and although clearing the roads in the snow fields could hardly be regarded as an essential service, those who have chosen to take up this work have an obligation to those whose plans depend on their faithfulness in it.

The basis of most, though not all, strikes is greed. Indeed our modern economic system may be described as organised greed. Jesus described Christians as the salt of the earth but most of us have lost our savour, being motivated by greed along with the rest of the community. The organised church is not exempt. It manages its properties for what it can get from them. But the Christian principle is service which considers other persons' welfare primarily. Greed looks after number 1 first.

The sad thing is that greed is a perversion of the noblest motive; the seeking a fuller life. In the Garden of Eden God planted the tree of life as the hope and promise that those who in patience and well doing seek for glory and honour will be rewarded with eternal life.

Sinful man seeks power and possessions in the belief that this is where real life resides. He is greedy. He is mistaken as to where life lies. Jesus said "a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things that he possesses". Life consists of relationships, especially relationship with God. Jesus said "this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He sent into the world to be our Lord and Saviour.

Greed is the commonest human sin and it is the one most fiercely denounced in holy scripture. The tenth commandment forbade it, Jesus condemned it in the strongest of terms, and in several places St. Paul warned that the greedy person will not enter the kingdom of heaven. He said that it was the equivalent of idolatry which is the grossest of sins and he warned that the wrath of God overtakes those who are greedy. In a society where organised greed is reflected in company reports, in trade union militancy and in the

aspirations of ordinary people, Christians and the Christian church must witness to service and not self-centredness as the principle for organising human life. Not rights but obligations are to be uppermost. The Son of God was among us as He who serves. Relationships are the all important thing in life. Society consists of relationship. Service furthers relationships, greed destroys them.

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