

WORKING TO EAT.

130

"For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat."

II Thessalonians 3:10.

This rule is usually credited to the Puritans or to Captain John Smith. Both used this rule to make lazy men work. But it is much older than either. Paul was the first to put it in words. But the law is older than Paul; it is as old as the human race.

Some men will quit work when they find they can eat regularly without it. This is the main reason why all communistic plans have failed. It is a harsh and rugged rule. But that is what nature gives us. An empty plate is the only thing that will make some people work.

Did Paul mean that people should stop eating when they get too old and feeble to work? They are doing this in Russia and China today. As long as a person is strong and able to produce he is a valuable member of society. But when he gives out he is persona non grata. Did Paul mean that little children should not eat if they did not work? In his day they did do a part of the labor to provide the food the family ate. In most of the work today they would only be in the way. The machines we use on the farm and in industry today are too dangerous to allow a child around them. If only those who are producing in America today were eating one third of more of our people would be starving. Surely this is not the Christian way.

"But it is so easy today for a lazy person to get out of work." Is it so easy? We have fewer people loafing today than

131

we have had any time since I can remember. We have more people gainfully employed than we have ever had. "But some who are drawing pay are loafing on the job." American workmen are producing so much more per man hour than they are in Europe they can hardly believe it over there. Some people are living on relief checks who should be at work. But most of the ones on relief are living on such poor fare they are barely living. They may eat, but they miss all the finer things that working men have. When they try living on relief awhile they are usually glad to get a job when they get a chance.

One writer says: "What would happen if we tried to apply it (Paul's rule) in our society today? What would happen to the millions who collect unemployment compensation when they could be earning honest wages? What of government subsidies to many who do not need them? What of*** the list is endless, isn't it?"

"There should be*** charity without counting the cost for those who need charity--but not a penny for the lazy, the disorderly, the busybodies, the 'undeserving'. Christian charity should never be governed by sentimentality or emotion, but by careful analysis. Our great responsibility, as Christians, is not to 'get', but to 'give'."

Just why is unemployment insurance called charity? I thought the working men were paying for it. Some writers in late years have referred to old age pensions as charity. I will soon be drawing one, not by choice; mine is compulsory. If I live to reach compulsory retirement age I will have forty two years hard work and between eight and ten thousand dollars of my own money in the retirement fund. Unless I live a lot longer than the average I will not live to draw out the money

I have put in the fund. Many men that I have known have died before they ever drew out one cent. I do not like to hear this called charity.

We have had some ^{cases} ~~of~~ of charity "governed by careful analysis" ^(to the needy) that got there too late to do any good. People who are so loud in the condemnation of Welfare assistance and Social Security were stangely apathetic and calloused a few years back, when old people were being hauled off to the county poor farm to a fate worse than death. Did they hear the cry of these innocent and helpless people who were being starved ~~and~~ and mistreated by poorly paid politicians? I know some of these people had wrecked their own lives and did not deserve much. But there were some whose only crime was they missed the boat.

Who is going to decide when a man is lazy? If there is any good way to force lazy people to work, I am for it. But before I would deny a man the right to eat I would want to know he is strong physically, sound mentally, and that the work is not beyond his capacity. I know some people take advantage of the goodness of their fellow men and ^{pretend} ~~pretend~~ to be ill when they are not. If there is any way to tell the lazy from the sick and infirm, I would be for it. There are some men who take advantage of the writ of habeaus Corpus to escape just punishmnet. But I wouldnot want the writ suspended. Some people take advantage of the Bill of Rights to keep from telling the truth. But I would not want the Bill of Rights repealed. The old maxim of English justice" It is better that ninety and nine guilty persons go unpunished than that one innocent man should suffer" is a good rule. It is better to feed several lazy people than that one industrious man should starve, when he is ill or feeble from age.

In the early days of the Great Depression President Roosevelt bought up some flour to bolster the sagging prices of wheat and distributed it to the hungry who were out of work. This brought a protest from all over the country that shook the state houses to their foundations. Some of the men who objected to this free distribution of flour then would not like to be confronted with their own arguments now. I am sure they would rather the subject were never mentioned again. If it were not to right a wrong that was done innocent people I would be glad to leave it alone. But justice to the ones who suffered demands that the whole story, in all its sordid ugliness, be told.

Most of the big cities distributed the flour through the Red Cross to hungry people out of work. But many of the rural counties turned back the flour. They told the Red Cross it was not needed. Many poor Negroes were dying with pellagra because of a poor diet. But the free distribution of flour would encourage laziness among them. Many of them were forced to work twelve hours a day for fifty cents or less or starge. Some of them almost starved while they worked it. Some of the men who objected so loudly to the free distribution of flour had to take a PWA job before the depression was over.

Many people are very loud in their objections to the Welfare Department taking care of illegitimate children. If there is any way to stop the propagation of illegitimate children in a humane way, I am for it. But I am not willing to starve the child to punish his parents. Several years before the Welfare Department was ^{organized} by a white woman in Alabama drowned her illegitimate child. At the trial she told the judge she had to drown the child or see it starve. She proved

in court such a pathetic story of her own desperate plight that the judge was almost in tears. She is now serving a life term in the woman's prison of Alabama. I would rather feed the illegitimate children than see them drowned to keep them from starving.

If there is any good way to stop people from drawing their unemployment compensation when they do not need it, I am for it. But I would not be willing to deny a man the right to his compensation just because he is offered any sort of job. The job might be one he could not fill. It might be beyond his physical strength or too far away. This is the reason the present law gives the man the right to refuse the job if he is not satisfied with it. No doubt many take advantage of this right and refuse work they could easily do. But I know of no way to compel a free man to work against his will without violating the Bill of Rights. Our unemployment insurance and our Social Security pensions are our strongest bulwark today against another depression. If it were not for these two sources of income we might soon be facing another '29.

Objectors to our social security and welfare agencies speak often of our high taxes. But our social welfare work is not the cause of our high taxes. The real cause of high taxes is wars, past, present and future. Wars are caused by hunger, false propoganda, oppression and slavery. If the United States had no neighbors except the free, prosperous, intelligent English, Danes and Scandinavians we would never have another war. Of whom are we afraid? It is the people who are being robbed of their liberty, starved while they work, blinded by false propoganda. These people do not know who are their enemies. They are so desperate they strike blindly at any one called their enemy.