

## Una Pagina Classica

### Corporate Co-operation

The desire to detach the individual from society, allegedly to make him self-sufficient, leads to a result entirely different from that intended. Some believed that this would strengthen the individual and afford him more freedom of action. The latter proved to be partly true insofar as occasionally more freedom of action and possibility of development is gained. In the main, however, and considering humanity as a whole, the individual detached from society is *lost in the big mass*.

The true fact is that under present conditions it is not the single individual who is confronted by the centralistic state authority, but organized individuals who, in their organizations, are and remain *mass*, and have given up their individuality in order to be mass and thus be effective by the momentum of their number. The organizations are not members of the national body, the nation that is united in the state, but are independent social groups. Their existence does not affect the principle that the absolute and sovereign individual is directly confronted by the sovereign and omnipotent state, except insofar as it renders the situation somewhat obscure.

At present we have a class society with class controversies. The future shall bring us a society arranged according to functional corporations, and a united co-operation between these corporations.

The Pope designates modern society as “organized upon the antagonism of class interests”. What is this state of affairs? As long as society was a well-arranged organism, its structure and form were determined organically by the forces of life. If, however, society has become a big tub into which the mass of millions of socially detached and

atomized individuals has been thrown in confusion, then the organic forces are replaced by inorganic mechanical forces. Among these, one dominates gravity. As a result of prolonged shaking the heavier particles will move to the bottom. We need only ask which force in this instance takes the place of gravity. The answer is not difficult. Experience shows us that lack of means is the leaden weight that attaches itself to man’s feet, pulling him into the depths of the economic void, while ownership is the force that keeps him economically afloat. In the course of time, a separation into layers has taken place, rating men according to the amount of their possessions and finally classifying them only according to possession or lack of possession. As a result, we have at present two distinctly separated social groups which are not organically related to each other; they are not organs of the social body, but accumulations of unrelated parts. These two groups nevertheless engage in a relationship which, however, is essentially antagonistic.

Class antagonism, the mechanistic arrangement of social classes, must be replaced by an *organic arrangement of society*. The word *rearrangement* suggests that we are again forming member groups. These members are the vocational groups “well-ordered members of the social body binding men together, not according to the position they occupy in the labor market, but according to the diverse functions which they exercise in society”.

But why a *corporate* organization according to vocations? This seems to be a fine distinction. Corporate because these social groups, forming themselves according to vocational relations must be developed into true and real organs of the social body.

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Dempsey S.J., New York, The Bruce Publishing Company, 1936. This book is a commentary on the encyclical *Quadragesimo anno*.

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From Oswald von Nell-Breuning S.J., *Reorganization of Social Economy: The Social Encyclical developed and Explained*, English edition prepared by Bernard W.