



## This isn't Labor

Labor is not a man; although cartoonists have taught most of us to believe it is. When we hear the word Labor, we usually think of a muscular man, wearing overalls, carrying a metal lunch-box. We seldom think of an errand-boy, a sailor, a truck-driver, a shipping clerk, a farmer, a storekeeper, a chemist, an engineer, or other wage earners. Actually none of the above is labor; all are men. It is man's energy, and not man himself, that can be called Labor in the scientific sense. And even human energy is not Labor unless it is used to produce material Wealth.

To more clearly understand the difference between man and his energy, let us imagine a man, employed by the owners of a golf course. He is digging a ditch across the fairway. Undeniably, he is laboring, and labor is being performed. Now let us also imagine that ten muscular men have formed themselves into a ring around the ditch-digger. Even though the men are wearing overalls and are carrying lunchboxes, the amount of labor being performed has not increased; in spite of the fact that the number of men around the ditch has been increased by ten. If it is man's energy, and not man, that produces ditches and other forms of Wealth, it must follow that human energy, and not man, is Labor.

But even if these men should exert their energy, that energy would not necessarily be Labor. For example, suppose that some of the overalled men wallop and chase a golfball from one flag-marked hole to another. And others who lack golfing skill do flip-flops and cartwheels over the green. Another builds miniature castles in the sandtrap while another makes mudpies near the creek. Of those remaining, one cuts the hair of his companion who in turn extracts an impacted wisdom tooth from the jaw of another. Certainly a great deal of energy and skill is being expended; and yet, the only Labor being performed is that which is still digging the ditch. The energies and skills of the other men are producing amusement and useful services.

It makes no difference whatever whether or not the men are being paid to behave as they do, nor how tired they become as a result of their peculiar antics; unless their energies are spent in producing some material thing someone else is willing to buy (Wealth), they are not laboring. If this is true, and all economists agree that it is, a Henry Ford who exerts his energy toward the production of automobiles (Wealth) is a Laborer; while a John L. Lewis who is not exerting his energy toward the production of Wealth in any form is not a Laborer.

NEXT WEEK: THE STUFF CALLED MONEY

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