

# Who Owns the Job



CECIL V. GROVE

THAT QUESTION has generated all manner of controversy and frictions over the years.

Labor bosses, presuming to speak for all union members, maintain that jobs are owned by the workers. Although the claim is seldom made in such plain terms, when unions go out on strike, making use of threat and violence to prevent anyone else from doing the jobs they have just refused to perform, it is evident that both union leaders and members consider jobs to be the property of the unions.

Management, on the other hand, tends to argue just the reverse. Pointing out that it is the company or corporation which does the employing and furnishes the necessary capital involved, manage-

ment contends that the job belongs to the company or corporation.

Government, of course, goes them all one better. Regulating both employes and employers and taking its "cut" off the top in taxes, government acts on the assumption that it owns, not only the job, but the human beings involved, as well.

What is the truth of the matter? Who, indeed, *does* own the job?

Well, as usual, when you ask the wrong question, you are likely to get the wrong answer.

In truth, no one owns a job. A job is something to be *done*, not something to be owned. A job is not property. And only property can be owned.

And that, we believe, puts the entire question into its proper perspective.

We can now ask, not who owns the job, but who owns the property

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involved and who should control it?

The employe, as the owner of his own body, life and energy, is the only proper authority to decide how *his* property should be used.

Likewise with the employer. As the owner of the property his capital has bought and paid for (buildings, tools, equipment etc.), he is the only proper authority to decide how *his* property should be used.

Getting the job *done* involves a coming together of the two and the use of the property involved on a basis mutually acceptable to the owners concerned.

And how is this accomplished? The process occurs in the market place based on the principle of voluntary exchange — a place where, and a process in which, *owners* come together and peacefully decide to exchange what is *theirs*.

Who, then, should *do* the job? The answer comes fast and clear: The *owner* who can, and will, do it to the satisfaction of the *owner* with whom he makes the voluntary exchange; both of whom, in a free market, would be free to seek *other* owners who might do it better. 

### ***Production and Wages***

WITH A FREE market, in an advanced economy, most of the returns from production go to the workers — roughly 85 to 90 per cent. Competition *forces* this. If workers are supplied with good tools and equipment, they are more productive and their wage level is higher than it would be otherwise. This is a generalization regarding all workers. The general wage level is higher in a country where there is a relatively high investment in tools and equipment per worker. It is just that simple! In the United States, the investment per worker in tools may be \$20,000, and it is not unheard of to find a particular business with an investment of \$100,000 in tools and equipment per worker.

The road, then, to a higher wage level is through savings and investment in the tools of production. There is no other.

W. M. CURTISS

IDEAS ON



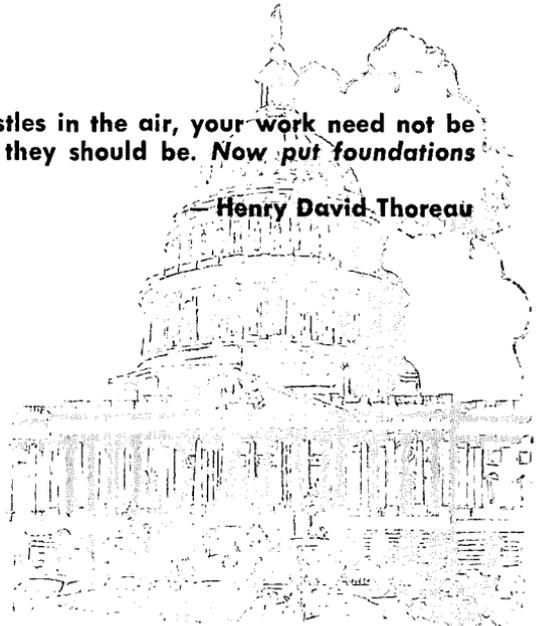
LIBERTY

If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; there is where they should be. Now put foundations under them.

—Henry David Thoreau

# Castles in the Air

LEONARD E. READ



SCRUTINIZE TRADITION and assess it, for it bears witness both true and false; to be blindly guided by it is to risk being led astray. So, beware of conventional thinking; break with tradition whenever reason shows its folly! As Ortega warned:

The so-called Renaissance was, for the moment, the attempt to let go of the traditional culture which, formed during the Middle Ages, had begun to stiffen and to quench man's spontaneity . . . man must periodically shake himself free of his own culture.<sup>1</sup>

Thoreau was a hardheaded

<sup>1</sup> See *Man and Culture* by José Ortega y Gasset (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1962), pp. 72-73.

searcher for truth; he did his own thinking. His comment on castles in the air is a sample, a break with the conventional definition of day-dreaming: "Anything imagined and desired but not likely to be realized."

Thoreau is right. Contrary to popular notions, castles in the air are the birthplaces of human evolution; all progress (and all regress), be it material, intellectual, moral, or spiritual, involves a break with the prevailing ideology. Not to break with the current conventions — to go on our dizzy way — means a headlong plunge into all-out socialism!

Castles in the air might indeed become chambers of horror. On