

On Real Interest In Our Fellow Men

Rudolf Steiner

How many human beings there are today who have an abstract and confused conception of life, of their own personal lives! If they ask themselves, for example, "What do I live on?"—for the most part they do not do this, but if they did it once—they would say to themselves, "Why, on my money."

Among those who say to themselves, "I live on my money," there are very many, my dear friends, who have inherited this money from their parents and they suppose they live on their money, inherited from their fathers. But, my dear friends, we cannot live on money. Money is not something on which we can live. Here it is necessary at last to begin to reflect.

And this question is intimately connected with the real interest which one human being has in another. Anyone who thinks he lives on the money he has inherited, for example, or has acquired in any way whatever except by receiving money for work, as is the custom today—whoever lives in this

way, and supposes he can live on money, has no interest in his fellow men, because no one can live on money.

We must eat, and what we eat has been produced by some sort of human being. We must have clothing. What we wear must be made by the labor of people. In order that I may put on a coat or a pair of trousers, human beings must expend their strength in labor for hours. They work for me. It is on this labor that I live, not on my money. My money has no other value than that of giving me the power to make use of the labor of others. And, under the social conditions of today, we do not begin to have an interest in our fellow men until we answer that question in the proper way, until we have the picture in our minds: "A certain number of persons must work for a certain number of hours in order that I may live within the social structure."

It is of no importance to give ourselves a comfortable feeling by saying, "I love human beings." No one loves people if he supposes that he is living on his money, and does not in the least conceive how people work for him in order to produce even the minimum necessary for his life.

But this thought, my dear friends, that a certain number of persons labor in order that we may possess the minimum necessary for life, is inseparable from another thought: from the thought that we must recompense society—not with money, but *with work in exchange for the work that has been done for us*. And only when we have an interest in our fellow men which leads us to feel obligated to recompense in some form of labor the amount of labor which has been performed for us—only then do we feel an interest in our fellow men.

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