

The use of strikes is surrounded by controversy, and the main trouble with contested issues and concepts is how to set-up satisfactory terms of analysis and debate, let alone come to agreement. Now that the government has published a Green Paper on Trade Union immunities to initiate a national debate over fundamentals, it is an opportune time to have Macfarlane's valuable and novel book, written by a philosophically aware Oxford lecturer in political theory. He inspects the morality of strikes through a number of lenses, ranging from Marxism to economic individualism, in the hope of providing the least bias and a point of entry for the greatest number of people.

However even-handed his assessments are meant to be, Macfarlane can be firm (the right to strike is a fundamental human right, sympathetic strikes can be justified, secondary picketing is strongly discouraged, the health services can never be undermined, there can be no coercive industrial action against an elected government in furtherance of directly political objectives), but mostly he offers *others* the means to analyse and decide. At strategic points use is made of Hare's formulation of the universalization principles of morality, requiring moral judgments to be expressed in universal terms which the judge must be ready to have applied to himself were the roles in the moral judgment situation concerned reversed. He is extremely reticent about legal matters, even about the moral issues involved in applying law at all to this area. Perhaps he is too brisk when it comes to analysing precisely what members of a society have in common, or how someone is 'not a party' to a dispute (and the public may be less 'innocent' than is sometimes

supposed). Significantly, the nature of conflict is thought not to need or not to be amenable to extended scrutiny.

What of the christian contribution? Macfarlane does outline the traditional, and as it happens Catholic, position but one suspects he finds it of rather limited value today; certainly it does not provide him with much analytic guidance. On any reckoning, it was a theoretically impoverished tradition, oversimplifying the bonds between employer and worker and too fond of analogies with war and weapons. Attempts at new and detailed formulations of christian perspectives are slowly emerging, and Macfarlane in fact refers to *The Right to Strike* (CTS 1979) prepared by the Roman Catholic Bishops' Working Party on Human Rights. That text, however, took another approach in concentrating on how an individual might shape his moral decision about a strike. Our basic humanity is not negotiable, and it is encouraging to see both Macfarlane and the Working Party introducing the dimension of human rights into the discussion. The programmatic phrase, 'Man is the origin, the centre and the end of all social and economic life', from Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes*, suggests there may well be a christian contribution simply in insisting that the issues be kept at the level of principles and ultimate values, resisting the pressure on employers, Unions and workers to reduce principles to objectives with a market value subject to bargaining.

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