

THE NATURE OF WORK

Robert LeFevre



WORK means the application of one's energies toward the accomplishment of a given task. In a sense, the application of one's energies, even when there is no task to be performed, is a kind of work. We could say, for example, that a man who is lolling under a shade tree is "employed" in day-dreaming. Normally, we don't refer to actions of this kind as work. When we talk about work, we usually mean that a goal has been established and means are being employed toward the attainment of that goal. However, a man who is engaged in a sport activity is "working" at it. A man who has become destructive and is trying to rob a bank or a filling station is "working." In common usage, we reserve the word *work* for our constructive goals. So,

if the goal is not constructive, we say that the man is playing or loafing. And if he is robbing a bank, we say that he is engaged in robbery and we don't dignify that action by calling it work.

Begin thinking of your child as a worker. Certainly, he is going to play and day-dream and waste a good deal of time. This is only to be expected of any individual who doesn't really know what to do and hence doesn't know which means to adopt in order to employ his energies. The more quickly your child accepts certain goals as his own, the more quickly you can help him learn the proper means for the accomplishment of those goals. Work, as used here, will be limited to goal-oriented procedures of a constructive nature.

Interestingly enough, the child may resist the idea of working at the outset. This is usually because he doesn't understand what he is to do or why he is to do it. Children really enjoy being busy. And it is no hardship for them to be busy constructively. Actually, they are going to be "working" one way or another, in that they will certainly be engaged in expending their energies. The child who understands reality and how he fits into it, will have an enormous advantage over the child who doesn't. The former will very soon find things that he wants to do. Because he is motivated by what he wants to do, he will be eager to discover the ways and means to proceed in the direction he wishes to go.

The Joy of Working

How important is it that a person work? Most people stress economic necessity, indicating that if you don't work, you won't earn the money by means of which you can be self-supporting. This is true enough, but it is only part of the story. Factually, you and your child are going to be engaged in expending your energies. And the happiest and most successful people are those who work and work hard.

To begin with, the work of your child is going to be concentrated to a large degree in various learning processes. Make no mistake about it, that, too, is work. It takes discipline,

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This article is a chapter, reprinted by permission, from his latest book, *Raising Children for Fun and Profit*, a home-study course to equip the parent to instill in his progeny the necessary knowledge and values, including character, integrity, self-responsibility, and self-esteem, by means of which the child can deal with the facts of life, both in school and beyond school.

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concentration, self-control, and commitment to be either a good student or a good teacher. But the whole purpose of education is to assist the individual in putting his knowledge to work. To know something for the sake of knowing it may be fine. But to know something that can be used constructively is what we all desire.

Viewing humanity as a whole gives us another insight into the business of work. All men are con-