A person who knowingly commits a crime has broken the social contract and should not retain any civil rights or the right to benefit from his or her own labor.  
Write a response in which you discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with the claim and the reason on which that claim is based.

The issue of whether criminals must be able to earn a livelihood from their labour is a contentious one, with people presenting a large variety of points in favour of, and against this sort of treatment. While one could argue that breaking the social contract warrants a loss of all rights purely for moral and ethical reasons, I mostly disagree with this sentiment. I do believe that there may be some valid arguments that justify this, but the disadvantages outweigh the benefits of such a system. To illustrate this, three main points must be considered.  
  
First, in a system where a criminal is stripped of their civil rights, would they learn better, so as to not repeat their offence after they are released from prison? Evidence would prove otherwise: The United States Department of Justice surveyed prisoners who were not allowed to benefit from their labor, asking them if they committed their crimes knowing that they would lose their rights, and if they were deterred in any way by this measure. A large majority of respondents said that they were not deterred by the prospects of losing their civil rights, and knew the possible consequences as well. One could also argue that taking away a criminal's rights, especially if their crimes were non-violent, are not truly rehabilitative. Once they rejoin society, they would struggle with finding jobs, and would not regain faith in the criminal justice system - they are more likely to re-commit their crimes. In prisons where criminals were paid for their labor, they were more likely to get back into society and learn from their mistakes. Hence, taking away a criminal's rights does not benefit them in the long run, for when they are released from jail.  
  
Second, a prison system that forces incarcerated people to do work for no pay is reminiscent of the slavery and oppression forced upon Black people in the United States in the 19th century. Although the criminals did immoral or illegal acts to reach the point that they are at, making them work without compensation is akin to slavery; it is, in itself, morally wrong. People who point out ethical reasons for taking away their civil liberties fail to explain how free labour is morally acceptable. Such treatment of criminals fails to address the systemic issues that failed in getting them the help they needed prior to their crimes, and will only exacerbate the situation of the Prison Industrial Complex. Robust healthcare and education systems would target the issue more directly, and decrease the number of people who end up in jail. Taking up punishment rather than preventing these crimes is like choosing a cure over a preventative measure for a disease. Hence, preventing a criminal from benefitting from the fruits of their labour is immoral and unethical.  
  
Finally, it is also important to address why this issue is not a straightforward one. Indeed, it is not possible to regard some criminals as safe or willing to learn from their mistakes - primarily in violent crimes. In such cases, they could be made to work but still be given a portion of the value they generate. Civil rights may be denied on a case-to-case basis, but framing a blanket statement for all criminals is irresponsible. Every criminal is different, and must be reprimanded in different ways; it is not as straightforward as taking away all their rights, and their ability to earn money. It would make sense to give a violent criminal slightly harsher conditions than for one who did something non-violent, such as petty theft or vandalism. Hence, while it is possible to partially concede the point that violent criminals must have some rights taken away, it would not be sound to take away all the rights of someone who did not commit a huge crime that affected the well-being of others.  
  
In conclusion, there are no easy, direct answers to this issue, for it is not a black-and-white one. However, one thing that can be said for certain, based on the points discussed above, is that punishing all criminals in a way that effectively dehumanises them, is not a move that is beneficial to society in the long run. On average, the prompt's claim is more false than true. Therefore, more comprehensive, well-rounded solutions must be brought to the table, balancing morality and justice. Rehabilitation must be prioritized over punishment.