

# Unity and Victory

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According to the Declaration of Independence, man has the inalienable right to life. If that be true, it follows that he has also the inalienable right to work.

If you have no right to work, you have no right to life because you can only live by work. And if you live in a system that deprives you of the right to work, that system denies you the right to live. Now man has a right to life because he is here. That is sufficient proof, and if he has the right to life, it follows that he has the right to all the means that sustain life. But how is it in this outgrown capitalist system? A workingman can only work on condition that he finds somebody who will give him permission to work for just enough of what his labor produces to keep him in working order.

No matter whether you have studied this economic question or not, you cannot have failed to observe that during the past half century society has been sharply divided into classes – into a capitalist class upon the one hand, into a working class upon the other hand.

I shall not take the time to trace this evolution. I shall simply call your attention to the fact that half a century ago all a man needed was a trade and having this he could supply himself with the simple tools then used, produce what he needed and enjoy the fruit of his labor. But this has been completely changed. The simple tool has disappeared and the great machine has taken its place. The little shop is gone and the great factory has come in its stead. The worker can no longer work by and for himself. He has been recruited into regiments, battalions and armies, and work has been subdivided and specialized; and now hundreds and thousands of workingmen work together co-operatively and produce in great abundance, not for themselves, however, for they no longer own the tools they work with. What they produce belongs to the capitalist class who own the tools with which they work.

A man fifty years ago who made a shoe owned it. Today it is possible for that same worker, if still alive, to make a hundred times as many shoes, but he doesn't own them now. He works today with modern machinery which is the property of some capitalist who lives perhaps a thousand miles from where the factory is located and who owns all the product because he owns

the machinery.

I have stated that society has been divided into two warring classes. The capitalist owns the tool in modern industry, but he has nothing to do with its operation. By virtue of such ownership he has the economic power to appropriate to himself the wealth produced by the use of that tool. This accounts for the fact that the capitalist becomes rich. But how about the working class? In the first place they have to compete with each other for the privilege of operating the capitalist's tool of production. The bigger the tool and the more generally it is applied, the more it produces, the sharper competition grows between the workers for the privilege of using it and the more are thrown out of employment. ...

No work, no food, and after a while, no credit, and all this in the shadow of the abundance these very workers have created. ... The minute [a workingman] is discharged he has to hunt for a new buyer for his labor power. He owns no tools; the tools are great machines. He can't compete against them with his bare hands. He has got to work. There is only one condition under which he can work and that is when he sells his labor power, his energy, his very life currents, and thus disposes of himself in daily installments. He is not sold from the block, as was the chattel slave. He sells ten hours of himself every day in exchange for just enough to keep himself in that same slavish condition. ...

Don't you agree with me, my brothers, that this condition is an intolerable and indefensible one, and that whatever may be said of the past, this system no longer answers the demands of this time? Why should any workingman need to beg for work? Why forced to surrender to anybody any part of what his labor produces?

Now, I ask this question, and it applies to the whole field of industry: If a hundred men work in a mine and produce a hundred tons of coal, how much of that coal are they entitled to? Are they not entitled to all of it? And if not, who is entitled to any part of it? If the man who produces wealth is not entitled to it, who is? You say the capitalist is necessary and I deny it. The capitalist has become a profit-taking parasite. Industry is now concentrated and operated on a very large scale; it is co-operative and therefore self-operative. The capitalists hire superintendents, managers and workingmen to operate their plants and produce wealth. The capitalists are absolutely unnecessary; they have no part in the process of production.

Now I insist that it is the workingman's duty to so organize economically and politically as to put an end to this system; as to take possession in his collective capacity of the machinery of

production and operate it, not to create millionaires and multi-millionaires, but to produce wealth in plenty for all. That is why the labor question is also a political question. It makes no difference what you do on the economic field to better your condition, so long as the tools of production are privately owned, so long as they are operated for the private profit of the capitalist, the working class will be exploited, they will be in enforced idleness, thousands of them will be reduced to want, some of them to vagabonds and criminals... .

The most important thing for the workingman to recognize is the class struggle. Every capitalist, every capitalist newspaper, attorney and retainer will insist that we have no classes in this country and that there is no class struggle. President Roosevelt himself has declared that class-consciousness is a foul and evil thing. Now, what is class-consciousness? It is simply a recognition on the part of the workingman that his interest is identical with the interest of every other workingman. Class-consciousness points out the necessity for working-class action.

What is it that keeps the working class in subjection? What is it that is responsible for their exploitation and for all of the ills they suffer? Just one thing; it can be stated in a single word. It is Ignorance. The working class have not yet learned how to unite and act together. There are relatively but few capitalists in this country; there are perhaps twenty millions of wage workers, but the capitalists and their retainers have contrived during all these years to keep the working class divided, and as long as the working class is divided it will be helpless. It is only when the working class learn – and they are learning daily and by very bitter experience – to unite and to act together, especially on election day, that there is any hope for emancipation. ... As individuals you are helpless, but united you represent an irresistible power. ...

You may, at times, temporarily better your condition within certain limitations, but you will still remain wage-slaves, and why wage-slaves? For just one reason and no other – you have got to work. To work you have got to have tools, and if you have no tools you have to beg for work, and if you have got to beg for work the man who owns the tools you use will determine the conditions under which you shall work. As long as he owns your tools he owns your job, and if he owns your job he is the master of your fate. You are in no sense a free man. You are subject to his interest and to his will. He decides whether you shall work or not. Therefore, he decides whether you shall live or die. And in that humiliating position anyone who tries to persuade you that you are a free man is guilty of insulting your intelligence.