

Eugene V. Debs

Industrial Unionism

This is an address given Sunday December 10 1905 by Eugene V. Debs, leader of the Socialist Party of the United States, at Grand Central Palace New York, on the subject of the Industrial Workers of the World. Even though the Socialist Party was electoral, there was an overlap in members between them and the I.W.W.

There is a fair bit of sexist language.

There is inspiration in your greeting and my heart opens wide to receive it. I have come a thousand miles to join with you in fanning the flames of the proletarian revolution. (Applause.)

Your presence here makes this a vitalising atmosphere for a labor agitator. I can feel my stature increasing, and this means that you are growing, for all my strength is drawn from you, and without you I am nothing.

In capitalist society you are the lower class; the capitalists are the upper class — because they are on your backs; if they were not on your backs, they could not be above you. (Applause and laughter.)

Standing in your presence, I can see in your gleaming eyes and in your glowing faces the vanguard; I can hear the tramp, I can feel the thrill of the social revolution. The working class are waking up. (A voice: “You bet.”) They are beginning to understand that their economic interests are identical, that they must unite and act together economically and politically and in every other way; that only by united action can they overthrow the capitalist system and emancipate themselves from wage-slavery. (Applause.)

I have said that in capitalist society the working class are the lower class; they have always been the lower class. In the ancient world for thousands of years they were abject slaves; in the Middle Ages, serfs; in modern times, wage-workers; to become free men in socialism is the next inevitable phase in our civilisation. (Applause.) The working class have struggled through all the various phases of their development, and they are to-day engaged in the last stage of the animal struggle for existence; and when the present revolution has run its course, the working class will stand forth the sovereigns of this earth.

In capitalist society the working man is not, in fact, a man at all; as a wage-worker, he is simply merchandise; he is bought in the open market the same as hair, hides, salt, or any other form of merchandise. The very terminology of the capitalist system proves that he is not a man in any sense of that term.

When the capitalist needs you as a workingman to operate his machine, he does not advertise, he does not call for men, but for “hands”; and when you see a placard posted, “fifty hands wanted,” you stop on the instant; you know that that means *you*, and you take a bee-line for the bureau of employment to offer yourself, in evidence of the fact that you are a “hand.” When the capitalist advertises for hands, that is what he wants. He would be insulted if you were to call him a “hand.” He has his capitalist politician tell you, when your vote is wanted, that

you ought to be very proud of your hands because they are horny, and if that is true, he ought to be ashamed of his. (Laughter and applause.) What is your status in society to-day? You are a human being, a wage-worker. Here you stand just as you were created, and you have two hands that represent your labor power; but you do not work, and why not? For this simple reason: That you have no tools with which to work; you cannot compete against the machinery of the capitalist with your bare hands; you cannot work unless you have access to it, and you can only secure access to it by selling your labour power — that is to say, your energy, your vitality, your life itself — to the capitalist who owns the tool with which you work, and without which you are idle and suffer all of the ills that idleness entails.

In the evolution of Capitalism, society has been divided mainly into two economic classes; a relatively small class of capitalists who own tools in the form of great machines they did not make and cannot use, and a great body of many millions of workers who did make these tools and who do use them, and whose very lives depend upon them, yet who do not own them; and these millions of wage-workers, producers of wealth, are forced into the labour market, in competition with each other, disposing of their labour power to the capitalist class, in consideration of just enough of what they produce to keep them in working order. They are exploited of the greater share of what their labour produces, so that while upon the one hand they can produce in great abundance, upon the other they can consume but that share of the product that their meagre wage will buy; and every now and then it follows that they have produced more than can be consumed in the present system, and then they are displaced by the very products of their own labour; the mills and shops and mines and quarries in which they are employed close down, the tools are locked up and they are locked out, and they find themselves idle and helpless in the shadow of the very abundance their labour has created. There is no hope for them in this system. They are beginning to realise this fact, and so they are beginning to organise themselves; they are no longer relying upon someone else to emancipate them, but they are making up their minds to depend upon themselves and to organise for their own emancipation.

Too long have the workers of this world waited for some Moses to lead them out of bondage. He has not come; he never will come. I would not lead you if I could; for if you could be led out, you could be led back again. (Applause.) I would have you make up your minds that there is nothing that you cannot do for yourselves. You do not need the capitalist. He could not exist an instant without you. You would just begin to live without him. (Laughter and prolonged applause.) You do everything and he has everything and some of you imagine that if it were not for him you would have no work. As a matter of fact, he does not employ you at all; you employ him to take from you what you produce, and

he faithfully sticks to his task. If you can stand it, he can; and if you don't change this relation I am sure he won't. You make the automobile; he rides in it. If it were not for you, he would walk; and if it were not for him, you would ride.

The capitalist politician tells you on occasion that you are the salt of the earth; and if you are, you had better begin by salting down the capitalist class.

The revolutionary movement of the working class will date from the year 1901, from the organisation of the Industrial Workers of the World! (Prolonged cheers.) Economic solidarity is to-day the supreme need of the working class. The old form of unionism has long since fulfilled its mission and outlived its usefulness, and the hour has struck for a change.

The old unionism is organised on the basis of the identity of interests of the capitalist and working classes. It spends its time and energy trying to harmonise these two essentially antagonistic classes; and so this unionism has at his head a harmonising board called the Civic Federation. This federation consists of three parts; a part representing the capitalist class; a part supposed to represent the working class, and still another part that is said to represent the "public." The capitalists are represented by that great union Labor champion August Belmont. (Laughter and hisses.) The working class is represented by Samuel Gompers, the president of the American Federation of Labor (hisses and cry "Sick him") and the public by Grover Cleveland. (Laughter.)

Can you imagine a fox and goose peace congress. Just fancy such a meeting, the goose lifting its wings in benediction, and the fox whispering, "Let us prey."

The Civic Federation has been organised for the one purpose of prolonging the age-long sleep of the working class. Their supreme purpose is to keep you from waking up. (voice: "They can't do it.")

The Industrial Workers has been organised for an opposite purpose, and its representatives come in your presence to tell you that there can be no peace between you, the working class, and the capitalist class who exploit you of that you produce; that as workers, you have economic interests apart from and opposed to their interests, and that you must organise by and for yourselves; and that if you are intelligent enough to understand these interests, you will sever your relations with the old unions in which you are divided and sub-divided, and join the Industrial Workers, in which all are organised and united upon the basis of the class struggle. (Applause.)

The Industrial Workers is organised, not to conciliate, but to fight the capitalist class. We have no object in concealing any part of our mission; we would have it perfectly understood. We deny that there is anything in common between the workingman and the capitalist. We insist that workingmen must organise to get rid of capitalists and make themselves the masters of the tools with which they

work, freely employ themselves, secure to themselves all they produce, and enjoy to the full the fruit of their labors. (Applause.)

The old union movement is not only organised upon the basis of the identity of interests of the exploited and exploiting classes, but it divides instead of uniting the workers, and there are thousands of unions, more or less in conflict, used against one another, and so long as these countless unions occupy the field, there will be no substantial unity of the working class. (Applause.)

And here let me say that the most jealous supporter of the old union is the capitalist himself. August Belmont, president of the Civic Federation, takes special pride in declaring himself a "union man" (laughter), but he does not mean by that that he is an Industrial Worker, that is not the kind of union he means. He means the impotent old union that Mr. Gompers and Mr. Mitchell lead, the kind that keeps the working class divided so that the capitalist system may be perpetuated indefinitely.

For thirty years I have been connected with the organised Labor Movement. I have long since been made to realise that the pure and simple union can do nothing for the working class; I have had some experience and know whereof I speak.

The craft union seeks to establish its own supremacy. Craft division is fatal to class unity. To organise along craft lines means to divide the working class and make it the prey of the capitalist class. The Working class can only be unionised efficiently along class lines; and so the Industrial Workers has been organised, not to isolate the crafts but to unite the whole working class. (Applause.)

The working class has had considerable experience during the past few years. In every conflict between Labor and Capital, labor has been defeated. Take the leading strikes in their order, and you will find that, without a single exception, the organised workers have been defeated, and thousands upon thousands of them have lost their jobs, and many of them have become "scabs." Is there not something wrong with a unionism in which the workers are always worsted? Let me review hurriedly the history of the past few years.

I have seen the conductors of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad, organised in the craft union, take the places of the striking union locomotive engineers on the same system.

I have seen the employees of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railway, organised in their several craft unions, stand by the corporation as a unit, totally wiping out the union telegraphers, thirteen hundred of them losing their jobs.

I have seen these same craft unions, just a little while ago, on the Northern Pacific and Great Northern systems. I have seen them unite with the corporation to crush out the telegraphers' union, and defeat the strikers, their own co-unionists and fellow-employees.

Just a few weeks ago, in the city of Chicago, the switchmen on the Grand Trunk went out on strike. All their fellow unionists remained at work and faithfully served the corporation until the switchmen were defeated, and now those union switchmen are scattered about looking for jobs.

The machinists were recently on strike in Chicago. They went out in a body under the direction of their craft union. Their fellow unionists all remained at work until the machinists were completely defeated, and now their organisation in that city is on the verge of collapse.

There has been a ceaseless repetition of this form of scabbing of one craft union upon another until the workingman, if his eyes are open, is bound to see that this kind of unionism is a curse and not a benefit to the working class.

The American Federation of Labor does not learn by experience. They recently held their annual convention, and they passed the same old stereotyped resolutions; they are going to petition Congress to restrict the power of the courts; that is to say, they are going to once more petition a capitalist Congress to restrict the power of capitalist courts. That is as if a flock of sheep were to petition a lot of wolves to extract their own fangs. They have passed these resolutions over and over again. They have been totally fruitless and they will continue to be.

What good came to the working class from these conventions Put your finger upon a single thing that they did that will be of any real benefit to the workers of this country!

You have had some experience here in New York. It was in March last that you had here an exhibition of pure and simple unionism. You saw about six thousand craft union men go out on strike, and you saw their fellow unionists remain at work loyally until all the strikers were defeated and sacrificed. Here you have an object lesson that is well calculated to set you thinking, and this is all I can hope to do by coming here, set you thinking, and for yourselves; for when you begin to think, you will soon begin to act for yourselves. You will then sever your relations with capitalist unions and capitalist parties (applause), and you will begin the real work of organising your class, and that is what we of the Industrial Workers have engaged to do. We have a new mission. That mission is not merely the amelioration of the condition of the working class, but the complete emancipation of that class from slavery. (Applause.)

The Industrial Workers is going to do all for the working class that can be done in the capitalist system, but while it is engaged in doing that, its revolutionary eye will be fixed upon the goal; and there will be a great difference between a strike of revolutionary workers and a strike of ignorant trade unionists who but vaguely understand what they want and do not know how to get that. (Applause.) The Industrial Workers is less than six months old, and already has many thousands of dues-paying members. (Applause). This splendid achievement has no parallel

in the annals of Organised Labor. From every direction come the applications for charters and for organisers, and when the delegates of this revolutionary economic organisation meet in the city of Chicago, next year, it will be the greatest convention that ever met in the United States in the interest of the working class. (Applause.)

This organisation has a world-wide mission; it makes its appeal directly to the working class. It asks no favors from capitalists.

No organisation of workmen has ever been so flagrantly misrepresented by the capitalist press as has been the Industrial Workers of the World; every delegate to the Chicago convention will bear testimony to this fact; and this is as it should be; the capitalist press is the mouthpiece of the capitalist class, and the very fact that the capitalist press is the organ, virtually, of the American Federation of Labor, is in itself sufficient to open the eyes of the working class.

If The American Federation of Labor were not in alliance with the capitalist class, the capitalist press would not pour its fulsome eulogy upon it.

This press has not one friendly word for the Industrial Workers, not one, and we do not expect it to have. These papers of the plutocrats know us and we know them (applause); between us there is no misunderstanding.

The workers of the country (the intelligent ones at least) readily see the difference between revolutionary and reactionary unionism, and that is why they are deserting the old and joining the new; that is why the Industrial Workers is building up so rapidly; that is why there is such a widespread demand for organisers and for literature and for all other means of building up this class-conscious economic organisation. (Applause.)

As I have said, the Industrial Workers begin by declaring that there is nothing in common between capitalists and wage-workers.

The capitalists own the tools they do not use, and the workers use the tools they do not own.

The capitalists who own the tools that the working class use appropriate to themselves what the working class produce, and this accounts for the fact that a few capitalists become fabulously rich while the toiling millions remain in poverty, ignorance, and dependence.

Let me make this point perfectly clear for the benefit of those who have not thought it out for themselves. Andrew Carnegie is a type of the capitalist class. He owns the tools with which steel is produced. These tools are used by many thousands of workmen. Andrew Carnegie, who owns these tools has absolutely nothing to do with the production of steel. He may be in Scotland, or where he will, the production of steel goes forward just the same. His mills at Pittsburgh, Duquesne, and Homestead, where these tools are located, are thronged with thousands of tool-less wage-workers, who work day and night, in winter's cold

and summer's heat, who endure all the privations and make all the sacrifices of health and limb and life, producing thousands upon thousands of tons of steel, yet not having an interest, even the slightest, in the product. Carnegie, who owns the tools, appropriates the product, and the workers, in exchange for their labor power, receive a wage that serves to keep them in producing order; and the more industrious they are, and the more they produce, the worse they are off; for the sooner they have produced more than Carnegie can get rid of in the markets, then the tool houses are shut down and the workers are locked out in the cold.

This is a beautiful arrangement for Mr. Carnegie; he does not want a change, and so he is in favor of the Civic Federation, and a leading member of it; and he is doing what he can to induce you to think that this ideal relation ought to be maintained forever.

Now, what is true of steel production is true of every other department of industrial activity, you belong to the millions who have no tools, who cannot work without selling your labor power, and when you sell that you have got to deliver it in person, you cannot send it to the mill; you must carry it there; you are inseparable from your labor power.

You have got to go to the mill at seven in the morning and work until six in the evening, producing, not for yourself, but for the capitalist who owns the tools you made and use, and without which you are almost as helpless as if you had no arms.

This fundamental fact in modern industry you must recognise, and you must organise upon the basis of this fact; you must appeal to your class to join the union which is the true expression of your economic interests, and this union must be large enough to embrace you all, and such is the Industrial Workers of the World.

Every man and every woman who works for wages is eligible to membership.

Organised into various departments, when you join you become a member of the department that represents your craft or occupation, whatever it may be; and when you have a grievance your department has supervision of it; and if you fail to adjust it in that department, you are not limited to that craft alone for support, but, if necessary, all the other workers in all other departments will unite solidly in your defence to the very last. (Applause.)

Take a plant in modern industry. The workers, under the old form of unionism, are parcelled out to a score or more of unions. Craft division incites craft jealousy, and so they are more or less in conflict with each other, and the employer constructively takes advantage of this fact, and that is why he favors pure and simple unionism.

It were better for the workers who wear craft fetters if they were not organised at all, for then they could and would spontaneously go out on strike together;

but they cannot do this in craft unionism, for certain crafts bind themselves up in craft agreements, and after they have done this they are at the mercy of the capitalist; and when their fellow unionists call upon them for aid, they make the very convenient excuse that they cannot help them, that they must preserve the sanctity of the agreement they have made with the employer. This so-called contract is regarded as of vastly more importance than the jobs, aye, the very lives of the workingmen themselves.

We do not intend that certain departments shall so attach themselves to the capitalist employers. We purpose that the workers shall all be organised, and if there IS any agreement it will embrace them all; and if there is any violation of the agreement, in the case of a single employee it at once becomes the concern of all. (Applause.) That is unionism, industrial unionism, in which all of the workers, totally regardless of occupation, are united completely within the one organisation, so that at all times they can act together in the interests of all. It is upon this basis that the Industrial Workers of the World is organised. It is in this spirit and with this object in view that it makes its appeal to the working class. Then, again, the revolutionary economic organisation has a new and important function which has never once been thought of in the old union, for the simple reason that the old union intends that the wage system shall endure forever.

The Industrial Workers declare that the workers must make themselves the masters of the tools with which they work; and so a very important function of this new union is to teach the workers, or, rather, have them teach themselves, the necessity of fitting themselves to take charge of the industries in which they are employed, when they are wrested, as they will be, from their capitalist masters. (Applause.)

So when you join the Industrial Workers you feel the thrill of a new aspiration; you are no longer a blind, dumb wage-slave. You begin to understand your true and vital relation to your fellow-workers. In the Industrial Workers you are co-related to all other workers in the plant, and thus you develop the embryonic structure of the co-operative commonwealth. (Applause.)

The old unionism would have you contented. We Industrial Workers are doing what we can to increase your discontent. We would have you rise in revolt against wage-slavery. The working man who is contented to-day is truly a pitiable object. (Applause.)

Victor Hugo once said: "Think of a smile in chains" — that is a workingman who, under the influence of a Civic Federation, is satisfied with his lot; he is glad he has a master, has someone to serve; for, in his ignorance, he imagines that he is dependent upon the master.

The Industrial Workers is appealing to the working class to develop their latent powers, and, above all, their capacity for clear thinking.

You are a workingman and you have a brain and if you do not use it in your own interests you are guilty of high treason to your manhood. (Applause.)

It is for the very reason that you do not use your brain in your interests that you are compelled to deform your body in the interests of your master.

I have already said that the capitalist is on your back; he furnishes the mouth, you the hands; he consumes, you produce. That is why he runs largely to stomach and you to hands. (Laughter.)

I would not be a capitalist; I would be a man; you cannot be both at the same time. (Applause.)

The capitalist exists by exploitation, lives out of the labor, that is to say the life, of the working man consumes him, and his code of morals and standard of ethics justify it, and this proves that capitalism is cannibalism. (Applause.)

A man, honest, just, high-minded, would scorn to live out of the sweat and sorrow of his fellow man — by preying upon his weaker brother.

We propose to destroy the capitalist and save the man. (Applause.) We want a system in which the worker shall get what he produces and the capitalist shall produce what he gets. (Applause.) That is a square deal.

The prevailing lack of unity implies the lack of class-consciousness. The workers do not yet understand that they are engaged in a class struggle, that they must unite their class and get on the right side of that struggle economically, politically, and in every other way (applause) strike together, vote together and, if necessary, fight together. (Prolonged applause.) The capitalist and the leader of the pure and simple union do what they can to wipe out the class lines; they do not want you to recognise the class struggle; they contrive to keep you divided, and as long as you are divided you will remain where you are, robbed and helpless.

When you unite and act together the world is yours. (Prolonged applause.)

The fabled Samson, shorn of his locks, the secret of his power, was the sport and prey of the pygmies that tormented him. The modern working class shorn of their tools, the secret of their power, are at the mercy of a small class who exploit them of what they produce and then hold them in contempt because of their slavery.

No master ever had the slightest respect for his slave any more than any slave ever had the least real love for his master.

Between these two classes there is an irrepressible conflict, and we Industrial Workers are pointing it out that you may see it, that you may get on the right side of it, that you may get together and emancipate yourselves from every form of servitude.

It can be done in no other way; but a bit of sober reasoning will convince you workers of this fact.

It is so simple that a child can see it. Why can't you? You can if you think for yourselves and see for yourselves. But you will not do this if you were taught in the old union school; you will still look to someone else to still lead that you may follow; for you are trained to follow the blind leaders of the blind. You have been betrayed over and over again, and there will be no change until you make up your minds to think and see and act for yourselves.

I would not have you blindly walk into the Industrial Workers; if I had sufficient influence and power to draw you into it I would not do it. I would have you stay where you are until you can see your way clear to join it of your own accord. It is your organisation; it is composed of your class; it is going to fight for your class, for your whole class, and continue the fight until your class is emancipated. (Applause.)

There is a great deal of opposition to this organisation. The whole capitalist class and all their labor lieutenants are against it (applause); and there is an army of them, and all their names are on the pay-roll and expense account. They all hold salaried positions, and are looking out for themselves.

When the working class unite there will be a lot of jobless labor leaders. (Applause.)

In many of these craft unions they have it so arranged that the rank and file do not count for any more than if they were so many sheep. In the railroad organisations, for instance, if the whole membership vote to go out on strike, they cannot budge without the official sanction of the Grand Chief. His word outweighs that of the entire membership. In the light of this extraordinary fact, is it strange that the workers are often betrayed? Is it strange that they continue at the mercy of their exploiters?

Haven't they had quite enough of this? Isn't it time for them to take an inventory of their own resources?

If you are a workingman, suppose you look yourself over, just once; take an invoice of your mental stock and see what you have. Do not accept my word; do not depend upon anybody but yourself. Think it out for yourself; and if you do, I am quite certain that you will join the organisation that represents your class (applause); the organisation that has room for all your class; the organisation that appeals to you to develop your own brain, to rely upon yourself and be a man among men. And that is what the working class have to do, cultivate self-reliance and think and act for themselves; and that is what they are stimulated to do in the Industrial Workers.

We have great hope and abiding faith, for we know that each day will bring us increasing numbers, influence and power; and this notwithstanding all the opposition that can be arrayed against us.

We know that the principles of the Industrial Workers are right and that its ultimate triumph is assured beyond the question of a doubt; and if you believe in its conquering mission, then we ask you to be true enough to yourselves and your class to join it; and when you join it you will have a duty to perform, and that duty will be to go out along the unorganised and bring them into the ranks and help in this great work of education and organisation, without which the working class is doomed to continue in ignorance and slavery

Karl Marx the profound economic philosopher who will be known in future as the great emancipator uttered the inspiring shibboleth a half century ago:

“Workingmen of all countries unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains; you have a world to gain”

You workers are the only class essential to society; all others can be spared, but without you society would perish. You produce the wealth, you support government, you create and conserve civilisation. You ought to be, can be, and will be masters of the earth (Great applause.)

Why should you be dependent upon a capitalist?

Why should this capitalist own a tool he cannot use? And why should not you own the tool you have to use?

Every cog in every wheel that revolves everywhere has been made by the working class, and is set and kept in operation by the working class; and if the working class can make and operate this marvellous wealth-producing machinery, they can also develop the intelligence to make themselves the masters of this machinery (applause), and operate it not to turn out millionaires, but to produce wealth in abundance for themselves.

You cannot afford to be contented with your lot; you have a brain to develop and a manhood to sustain. You ought to have some aspiration to be free.

Suppose you do have a job, and that you can get enough to eat and clothes enough to cover your body, and a place to sleep; you but exist upon the animal plane; your very life is suspended by a slender thread

You don't know what hour a machine may be invented to displace you, or you may offend your economic master, and your job is gone. You go to work early in the morning and you work all day; you go to your lodging at night, tired; you throw your exhausted body upon a bed of straw to recuperate enough to go back to the factory and repeat the same operation the next day, and the next, and so on and on to the dreary end and in some respects you are not so well off as was the chattel slave. He had no fear of losing his job, he was not blacklisted; he had food and clothing and shelter; and now and then, seized with a desire for freedom, he tried to run away from his master.

Do not try to run away from yours, he doesn't have to hire a policeman to keep an eye on you. When you run it is in the opposite direction, when the bell rings or the whistle blows.

You are as much subject to the command of the capitalist as if you were his property under the law.

You have got to go to his factory because you have got to work; he is the master of your job, and you cannot work without his consent, and he only gives this on condition that you surrender to him all you produce except what is necessary to keep you in running order.

The machine you work with has to be oiled; you have to be fed; the wage is your lubricant, it keeps you in working order, and so you toil and sweat and reproduce yourself in the form of labor power, and then you pass away like a silkworm that spins its task and dies.

That is your lot in the capitalist system and you have no right to aspire to rise above the dead level of wage-slavery.

It is true that one in ten thousand may escape from his class and become a millionaire; he is the rare exception that proves the rule. The wage-workers remain in the working class, and they never can become anything else in the capitalist system. They produce and perish, and their exploited bones mingle with the dust.

Every few years there is a panic, industrial paralysis, and hundreds of thousands of workers are flung into the streets; no work, no wages; and so they throng the highways in search of employment that cant be found; they become vagrants, tramps, outcasts, criminals. It is in this way that the human being degenerates, and that crime graduates in the capitalist system, all the way from petty larceny to homicide.

The working millions who produce the wealth have little or nothing to show for it There is widespread ignorance among them; industrial and social conditions prevail that defy all language to describe. The working class consists of a mass of human beings, men, women, and children, in enforced competition with one another, in all of the circling hours of day and night, for the sale of their labor power, and in the severity of the competition the wage sinks gradually until it touches the point of subsistence.

In this struggle more than five millions of women are engaged and about two millions of children, and the number of child laborers is steadily increasing, for in this system profit is important while life has no value. It is not a question of male labor, or female labor, or child labor; it is simply a question of cheap labor without reference to the effect upon the working class; the woman is employed in preference to the man and the child in preference to the woman; and so we have millions of children, who, in their early tender years, are seized in the iron clutch

of capitalism, when they ought to be upon the playground or at school; when they ought to be in the sunlight, when they ought to have wholesome food and enjoy the fresh atmosphere they are forced into the industrial dungeons, and there they are riveted to the machines; they feed the insatiate monsters and become as living cogs in the revolving wheels. They are literally fed to industry to produce profits. They are dwarfed and deformed, mentally, morally and physically; they have no chance in life; they are the victims of the industrial system that the Industrial Workers is organised to abolish, in the interest, not only of the working class but in the higher interest of all humanity. (Applause.)

If there is a crime that should bring to the callous cheek of capitalist society the crimson of shame, it is the unspeakable crime of child slavery, the millions of babes that fester in the sweat shops are the slaves of the wheel, and cry out in their agony, but are not heard in the din and roar of our industrial infernalism.

Take that great army of workers, called coal miners, organised in a craft union that does nothing for them, that seeks to make them contented with their lot. These miners are at the very foundation of industry, and without their labor every wheel would cease to revolve as if by the decree of some industrial Jehovah. (Applause.) There are 600,000 of these slaves whose labor makes possible the firesides of the world, while their own loved ones shiver in the cold. I know something of the conditions under which they toil and despair and perish I have taken time enough to descend to the depths of these pits, that Dante never saw, or he might have improved upon his masterpiece. I have stood over these slaves and I have heard the echo of their picks, which sounded to me like muffled drums throbbing funeral marches to the grave, and I have said to myself, in the capitalist system, these wretched are simply following their own hearses to the potter's field. In all of the horizon of the future there is no star that sheds a ray of hope for them.

Then I have followed them from the depths of these black holes over to the edge of the camp, not to the home — they have no home — but to a hut that is owned by the corporation that owns them, and here I have seen the wife — Victor Hugo once said that the wife of a slave is not a wife at all; she is simply a female that gives birth to young — I have seen this wife standing in the doorway, after trying all day long to make a ten-cent piece do the service of a half-dollar, and she was ill-humoured; this could not be otherwise, for love and abject poverty do not dwell beneath the same roof. There is no paper upon the wall and no carpet upon the floor; there is not a picture to appeal to the eye, there is no statue to challenge the soul, no strain of inspiring music to touch and quicken what Lincoln called the better angels of human nature Here there is haggard poverty and want. And in this atmosphere the children of the future are being reared, many thousands

of them, under conditions that make it morally certain that they will become paupers or criminals, or both.

Man is the product, the expression of his environment. Show me a majestic tree that towers aloft, that challenges the admiration of man, or a beautiful rosebud that, under the influence of sunshine and shovel bursts into bloom and fills the common air with its fragrance; these are possible only because the soil and climate are adapted to their culture transfer this flower from the sunlight and the atmosphere to a cellar filled with noxious gases, and it withers and dies. The same law applies to human beings; the industrial soil and the social climate must be adapted to the development of men and women, and then society will cease producing – (cry of “Down with Capitalism”) – the multiplied thousands of deformities that to-day are a rebuke to our much-vaunted civilisation and, above all, an impeachment of the capitalist system. (Applause.)

What is true of the miners is true in a greater or less degree of all workers in all other departments of industrial activity. This system has about fulfilled its historic mission; upon every hand there are the unerring signs of change, and the time has come for the organisation of the working class to prepare the way for this change. Education and organisation of the working class for the social revolution – (applause) – that is to lift the workers from the depths of slavery and elevate them to an exalted plane of equality and fraternity. (Applause.)

At the beginning of industrial society men worked with hand tools; a boy could learn a trade, make himself the master of the simple tools with which he worked, and employ himself and enjoy what he produced; but that simple tool of a century ago has become a mammoth social instrument, in a word, that tool has been socialised. Not only this, but production has been socialised. As small a commodity as a pin, or a pen, or a match involves for its production all of the social labor of the land; but this evolution is not yet complete; the tool has been socialised, production has been socialised, and now ownership must also be socialised; in other words, these great social instruments that are used in modern industry for the production of wealth, those great social agencies that are socially made and socially used, must also be socially owned. (Applause.)

The Industrial Workers is the only economic organisation that makes this declaration, that states this fact, and is organised upon this foundation, that the workers must own their tools and employ themselves. This involves a revolution and this means the end of the capitalist system and the rearing of a working-class republic – (prolonged applause) – the first real republic the world has ever known; and it is coming just as certainly as I stand in your presence.

You can hasten it, or you can retard it, but you cannot prevent it.

This the working class can achieve, and if you are in that class and you do not believe it, it is because of your ignorance, it is because you got your education in

the school of pure and simple unionism, or in a capitalist political party. This the working class can achieve, and all that is required is that the working class shall be educated, that they shall unite, that they shall act together.

The capitalist politician and the labor lieutenant have always contrived to keep the working class divided upon the economic field and upon the political field; and the workers have made no progress, and never will until they desert those false leaders and unite beneath the revolutionary standard of the Industrial Workers of the World. (Applause.)

The capitalists have the mills and the tools and the dollars, but you are an overwhelming majority. You have the men, you have the votes. There are not enough of them to continue this system an instant; it can only be continued by your consent and with your approval, and to the extent that you give it you are responsible for your slavery; and if you have your eyes opened, if you understand where you properly belong, it is still a fortunate thing for you that you cannot do anything for yourself until you have opened the eyes of those that are yet in darkness. (Applause)

Now, there are many workers who have had their eyes opened, and they are giving their time and energy to the revolutionary education of the working class — (applause) — and every day sees our minority increasing, and it is but a question of time until this minority will be converted into the triumphant majority — (applause) — and so we wait and watch and work in all of the circling hours of the day and night.

We have just begun here in New York, and with a vim and an energy unknown in the circles of unionism. In six months from this night you will find that there is a very formidable organisation of Industrial Workers in New York — (applause) — and if you are a workingman and you have convictions of your own, then it is your duty to join this union and take your place where you belong.

Don't hesitate because somebody else is falling back. Don't wait because somebody else is not yet ready. Act, and act now for yourself; and if you happen to be the only Industrial Worker in your shop or in your immediate vicinity, you are simply monumental of the ignorance of your fellow-workers, and you have got to begin to educate them. For a little while they may point you out with the finger of contempt, but you can stand this, you can bear it with patience; if they persecute you because you are true to yourself, your latent powers will be developed, you will become stronger than you now dream, and then you will do the deeds that live and you will write your name where it will stay.

Never mind what others may say, or think, or do. Stand erect in the majesty of your manhood.

Listen for just once to the throbbing of your own heart, and you will hear that it is beating quick-step marches to Camp Freedom.

Stand erect! Lift your bowed form from the earth! The dust has long enough borne the impress of your knees.

Stand up and see how long a shadow you cast in the sunlight! (Applause) Hold up your head and avow your convictions, and then accept, as becomes a man, the consequences of your acts!

We need you, and you need us. We have got to have the workers united, and you have got to help us in the work. And so we make our appeal to you tonight, and we know that you will not fail. You can arrive at no other conclusion; you are bound to join the Industrial Workers, and become a missionary in the field of industrial unionism. You will then feel the ecstasy of a new-born aspiration. You will do your very best. You will wear the badge of the Industrial Workers, and you wear it with pride and joy.

The very contempt that it involves will be a compliment to you in truth, a tribute to your manhood.

Go out into the field and bring in the rest of the workers, that they may be fully equipped for their great mission. We will wrest what we can, step by step, from the capitalists, but with our eyes fixed upon the goal; we will press forward, keeping step together, with the inspiring music of the new emancipation, and when we have enough of this organisation, as Brother De Leon said so happily the other day – (applause) – when we are lined up in battle array and the capitalists try to lock us out we will turn the tables on the gentlemen and lock them out. (Applause)

We can run the mills without them, but they cannot run them without us. (Applause.)

It is a very important thing to develop the economic power, to have a sound economic organisation. This has been the inherent weakness in the Labor movement of the United States. We need, and sorely need, a revolutionary economic organisation. We must develop this kind of strength; it is the kind that we will have occasion to use in due time and it is the kind that will not fail us when the crisis comes. So we shall organise and continue to organise the political field; and I am of those that believe that the day is near at hand when we shall have one great revolutionary economic organisation of the working class and one great revolutionary political party of the working class. (Cheers and prolonged applause.) Then will proceed with increased impetus the work of education and organisation that will culminate in emancipation.

This great body will sweep into power and seize the reins of government; take possession of industry in the name of the working class, and it can be easily done. All that will be required will be to transfer the title from the parasite to the producers; and then the working class, in control of industry, will operate it for the benefit of all. The work-day will be reduced in proportion to the progress of

invention. Every man will work, or at least have a chance to work, and get the full equivalent of what he produces. He will work, not as a slave, but as a free man, and he will express himself in his work and work with joy. Then the badge of labor will be the only badge of aristocracy. The industrial dungeon becomes a temple of science. The working class will be free, and all humanity disenthralled.

The workers are the saviours of society – (applause) – the redeemers of the race; and when they have fulfilled their great historic mission, men and women can walk the highlands and enjoy the vision of a land without masters and without slaves, a land regenerated and resplendent in the triumph of Freedom and Civilisation. (Long, continued applause.)

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