

I Am With You, O Workers!

By J. O. Bentall

(In County Jail, Brainerd, Minnesota)

TODAY I am looking out through the bars of my prison. It is a glorious day. The birds are already singing the life-song of Spring. The sun is smiling upon the slumbering earth that is just waking from its sleep, unfolding its bosom of enchantment.

They have caged me in a cage of iron; they have locked the gates of steel against me. They tell me I must stay here.

But I am not here. They cannot shut in my mind and spirit. They cannot lock up my heart. I am not here.

I am with you—you the working class—the struggling masses of toil and bitterness and hardship.

I am walking with you through the chilly mist of early morning to your field and shop. I stand by your side the long workday and look upon your worn and tired body. And I am tired with you.

There are millions of you—worn and tired.

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I am walking with you to the shaft, and I slip in with you on the cage that shoots down to the bottom of the mine. I go with you through the long "entries." You look—with that foreboding look—at those hanging slate beds in the roof. You suspect that timbering. I also. We go to your "room"—that, too, houses the demon of unexpected death. You take off your rags and stand there naked to the skin. You tie that heavy leather apron to your body. It is cold and slimy and sharp with slivers and coal dust since you threw it off when you quit yesterday. For the sweat of your body flowed like a stream of water as you heaved that heavy coal into the car. It's the same today. You drink gallons of water and cold coffee—gallons of it—pails of it. Yes, I see how you can do it—that terrible flow of sweat. And millions of you sweat like that.

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And I go with you into the steel mills where you pull the pig iron from the melting furnace—where you guide it from roller to roller, where you catch those serpents of white-hot steel and feed them again to the rollers—and catch them again and again and sling them around your naked body—circling them around in that awful heat at that awful pace—hurling them like rings of fire into the last roller and onto the carrier that takes them away.

I work with you those twelve long hours that you labor.

And then we go "home"—man, what a "home!"—after that horrible day of slavery. I will eat with you to-night. Oh, there are the children. Tell them to come in—I want to see them. Playing out there? In that dirt, that mud and sand in the grassless tenement alley? Poor things!

Yes, your hand is rough, but I love to see you take the little baby in your arms and pat it on its tender cheek. It'll try not to cry. It loves you and your rough caresses. So do all your little ones. Oh—you have six,—eight, you say? No, I cannot look at them—they are too thin and starved—their little legs are bare and bony and scratched—their eyes are bulging out too longingly for that food on the table. And poor mother—pitiable—pitiable mother.

Yes, I'll eat with you—I'll try. Thank you—I thought I'd try—thank you—but please pardon me—I am not hungry. Give this to the children—I want to go out a while. There is the old post in the tenement alley. (I want to rest against it while I sob. Nobody will see me.)

There are millions of you just home to eat—and I wanted to eat with you, but I am not hungry—not while all these children are hungry—and their mothers.

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And you at the harbor and on the sea. I can't stay away from you. That dirt—that rain—those cold winter winds—your clothes wet and stiff—your feet, clods of ice. I suffer with you. I never knew the human body could stand such strain and such pace—such strain and pace of labor.

No, I won't go home with you. Your haunts of poverty and suffering are too sacred for outsiders to step into. And there are so many of you—millions.

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Poor little things—you were so sleepy this morning. It was so hard for you to be dragged out of bed and

be shaken to your senses. Yes, the first whistle just blew and you have to hurry. That crust and black coffee will keep your body and soul together till noon. That sandwich—only some hard bread—and the banana isn't bad—only started to spoil—you can eat most of it—your brother must have the other one.

Does he work too? You say he is older than you—fourteen? And so slender and pale. That he has slaved in that child labor hell two years already? Coughs like that every morning? And you, too, my little girl—you can't go to work today with that cough. Stay home and play with your doll—haven't you? Never mind—don't cry. You'll have one some day—by God you will—if I live. Millions of you will.

Grown people will work in those cotton mills and in those factories. And we shall not have lint and dust to strangle and clog your lungs. This child slavery shall cease and these cough breeders shall be fixed.

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So that hanging slate fell—I knew it would—so did

The American Left Wing in Action

By N. I. Hourwich

THE hitherto scattered efforts and manifestations of personal dissatisfaction and discontent with the opportunistic policy of the Socialist Party, are now assuming a definite and organized expression. The development of the Left Wing Section of the Socialist Party of New York City, the adoption of its Manifesto and Program by local after local of the Socialist Party,—all this is unifying the opposition and the revolutionary elements, developing a common struggle to turn the party into its proper revolutionary course. And this course is the course outlined by the creators of the proletarian International, Marx and Engels.

In common with the majority of the modern Socialist Parties, created and developing in a milieu of bourgeois parliamentarism, the American Socialist Party in its present official form and policy, is the product of an "adaptation" of the revolutionary ideals and policy of a Socialist Party to the capitalist state, the product of "growing into" Capitalism of the Socialist movement, becoming a "lawful" and integral part of Capitalism. The "parliamentary state" must have political parties. And one of these parliamentary (but in no sense revolutionary) parties is the present Socialist Party. It represents, in itself, nothing but a form of opposition to "His Majesty"—bourgeois society.

Precisely as all other social-opportunist Socialist parties, the American party is, in the words of the Manifesto of the Left Wing, the product of mixing real Socialism with bourgeois reforms; it is "sausage Socialism," in the apt words of Rosa Luxemburg.

As the Left Wing Manifesto again phrases it, the American Socialist Party, in common with its European affiliations, hopes to "legislate Capitalism out of office." It hopes to "win the class struggle in capitalist legislative institutions."

The complexity of the mass struggle of the proletariat, which, in the words of the Communist Manifesto, is at the same time a political struggle; the political struggle of the proletariat the meaning and object of which should be the seizure of power, the abolition of the bourgeois class state and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat,—all these vital phases of Socialism the party has officially cramped into the narrow and stultifying limits of the parliamentary struggle, of the Socialist "parliamentarians." The lesson of the Paris Commune, summarized by Marx in the words, "The working class cannot lay hold of the ready-made machinery of the bourgeois state and use it for its purposes," has been lost completely to the official leaders of the Socialist Party, to moderate Socialism in general. Neither did they learn from the collapse of the second International, from the four and a half years of the world war. Truly it can be said of them that they have forgotten nothing and learned nothing. As a protest against this degradation and profanation of Socialism, there has developed the mass movement of the Left Wing within the party. To this mass movement belongs the future, and it imposes an obligation on all revolutionary Socialists, on all Bolsheviks in the party, to rally to its cause—to conquer the party for revolutionary Socialism.

he. But the company would not allow better timbering. That would cut dividends.

Yes he is badly hurt, but don't cry. They are bringing him "home." The boys are all gentle and handle him so carefully and tenderly. And anyhow he may not feel anything. No the little baby won't understand—that's good. And the other children are growing fast and will soon be helping to earn. No, I don't think your boy will be allowed to take his place—only twelve? You say lots of boys that age are now in the mines? Thousands of them? (So Congress repealed the child labor law—did it?)

Try to be strong—there come the neighbors—they'll help you. We'll pull out those chairs so they can lay the board right on them—they carry him on a wide board. I know it is hard for you. He was so good and kind—and always worked hard.

Don't — not yet — no, wait. They are coming to wash him and gather him together and maybe you can see him. No, leave the covers over him.

Yes, he tried so hard to get away—how he pulled to get that crushed leg away—and how eagerly he looked at us when we came running to help him—but another block of rock fell—on his head.

No, not much insurance—only enough to cover funeral cost—and the preacher. Just \$9 coming from the company, and you owe the grocer \$13? And no bread in the house when you come back from the....

And there are thousands like that—millions.

* * *

Yes I heard them in their secret chambers—I heard them plot the big butcher program. It was Capitalism in league with Satan. Sometime I shall tell you the whole story.

Now the boys are coming home. We greet you and cheer you. Your heart was right and you placed your life on the altar of Democracy. You were on the square—but Capitalism didn't play square with you. Capitalism aimed at your heart when you went out and Capitalism is stabbing you in the back as you return.

I was with you in the camps where you endured the humiliation of slaves under the uppish idiocy of snobs, and in the trenches where you tried to dodge death among the corpses of your comrades.

And I am with you now when you are hunting jobs among your masters and where you are sitting full of sores at the rich man's feet, picking crumbs that perchance may fall from his table, while the profiteering dogs are licking a few more drops of blood from your bleeding bodies.

And there are millions of you—nearly four million of you.

I am not going to the homes that Capitalism has wrecked—the hearts it has broken that can never heal. I can't.

I am not discouraged. For the fetters of this dungeon are wonderfully elastic—and generous. They let me out upon the mountains of vision and let me roam over the plains of reality. I go to the Bethlehem stable—to the inn at Petrograd and Moscow—to the hillsides of Riga and Archangel where the Russian shepherds have seen the star and where the hosts of the proletariat are shouting their great hosannas to the new-born Comrade of Peace—the new-born spirit of good will to men—the new-born passion of a new love.

I shout with you in the ecstasy of joy. I clasp you in my arms and cry and shout. I sing and dance and weep and laugh and behave as you do. For we have been bound and oppressed and hounded so long, and now we have torn down the throne of the Czar and his tyranny, and hurled Capitalism from its citadel into outer darkness where there is gnashing of teeth. We have reared up the monument of Liberty and established the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

And with you I go into all the world and preach this gospel to every worker—beginning with Germany—then to Italy and France—England and America—to every race and kindred and tongue.

And, behold, the all-conquering power of the new affection shall sweep like a mighty wind over the earth, and the masses shall be stirred to action against every onslaught of the master class.

Unflinching, determined, inspired, victor-proud,—resolved to snap our chains—we rush headlong against all the hell and all the demons of tyranny and oppression.

We have won.

We come rejoicing—we have gained the world—we lay it at the feet of a free humanity.