

The Overmastering Passion for Profit (May 28, 1904)

The primal consideration in the present industrial system is profit. All other things are secondary. Profit is the life blood of capital — the vital current of the capitalist system — and when it shall cease to flow the system will be dead.

The capitalist is the owner of the worker's tools. Before the latter can work he must have access to the capitalist's tool house and permission to use the master's tools. What he produces with these tools belongs to the master, to whom he must sell his labor at the market price. The owner of the tools is therefore master of the man.

Only when the capitalist can extract a satisfactory profit from his labor-power is the worker given a job, or allowed to work at all.

Profit first; labor, life, love, liberty — all these must take second place.

In such a system labor is in chains, and the standard of living, if such it may be called, is cornerstoned in crusts and rags. Under such conditions ideas and ideals are not prolific among the sons and daughters of toil. Slavery does not excite lofty aspirations nor inspire noble ideals.

The tendency is to sodden irresolution and brutish inertia. But this very tendency nourishes the germ of resistance that ripens into the spirit of revolt.

The labor movement is the child of slavery — the offspring of oppression — in revolt against the misery and suffering that gave it birth. Its splendid growth is the marvel of our time, the forerunner of freedom, the hope of mankind.

Ten thousand times has the labor movement stumbled and fallen and bruised itself, and risen again; been sized by the throat and choked and clubbed into insensibility; enjoined by courts, assaulted by thugs, charged by the militia, shot down by regulars, traduced by the press, frowned upon by public opinion, deceived by politicians, threatened by priests, repudiated by renegades, preyed upon by grafters, infested by spies, deserted by cowards, betrayed by traitors, bled by leeches, and sold out by leaders; but, notwithstanding all this, and all these, it is today the most vital and potential power this planet has ever known and its historic mission of

emancipating the workers of the world from the thralldom of the ages is as certain of ultimate realization as the setting of the rising sun.

The most vital thing about this world movement is the educational propaganda — its capacity and power to shed light in the brain of the working class, arouse them from their torpor, develop their faculties for thinking, teach them their economic class interests, effect their solidarity, and imbue them with the spirit of the impending social revolution.

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