
“Workingmen in Politics”

by Eugene V. Debs

Unsigned article in *Locomotive Firemen's Magazine*,
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An article in a recent number of *The Laster*, under the above caption, is eminently timely and should have wide reading. It is as follows:

Workingmen should keep in politics more, not to make a living out of it, but to make a living by it. The men who labor for a living form the great mass of American voters, and if they are to become negligent in their political duties, the field is left open to political demagogues, office-seekers, and monopolists. Americans are apt to be deceived by the idea that they exercise a great power as voters, but the truth is the English workingmen have their wishes more respected and wield a greater influence in Parliament than do the voters of this country in our national house of Congress. Very seldom can it be said to happen there that a politician wheedles votes from the workingmen, and then deliberately violates the pledges made to them by voting against their interests at the very next session, and depend upon sugary excuses to their constituents to get reelected. If he does it but once he is branded and dumped into eternal political obscurity. Workingmen on this side of the water should do the same and push themselves more into politics as workmen. If one of our number should rise to political prominence, like Joseph Cowan, the English Radical, he would be an immense power in industrial legislation and a stone wall to monopolistic lobbying. Workingmen should, as we observed in the beginning, make a living not out of, but by politics; that is, they ought to endeavor, by their political actions, to bring about legislation which will, if it does not aid them directly in the socialistic sense of earning a living, at least prevent the grinding or overreaching political tactics of corporations, trusts, etc. The members of these rich bodies are few in number compared with the mass of workingmen, and yet the former are every dickering in politics, tampering with legislatures and laws so as to find some loophole for their schemes. We can not, if we would, do the bribing done by these unscrupulous magnates. We have not the money, but we have a

voice and a ballot. Let the workman's ballot be pitted against the magnate's dollar! Ballot against boodle, and the ballot wins every time.

What the workingmen of the United States want is righteous laws; they want upright men to administer them when enacted; they want good government, and by the right use of the ballot they can put a stop to multiplied wrongs, the result of vicious laws enacted in the past, many of which still disgrace the statute books of the country.

This *Magazine*, from time to time, has called attention to this subject, and we are glad to know that politics, as the term should be understood, is doing some excellent work for working men — and that it is looked upon as a means for the accomplishment of still greater things for their welfare. There must be laws everywhere suppressing Pinkerton thugs, the blacklisting infamy, and laws that shall sharply define the boundaries of courts when a workingman's interests come in conflict with corporate greed. There must be laws to restrain men from cornering the food products of the country, thereby reducing the purchasing power of the workingman's hard-earned dollar. There must be laws to squeeze the water out of stocks and bonds which compel labor to pay tribute to felonious greed. And politics, not partisan politics, but politics, the science of government, will do those righteous things and give labor a fair show in the struggle for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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