

The Political Solidarity of Labor (August 10, 1901)

Terre Haute, Ind., Aug. 10, 1901.

Extended argument is not required in demonstration of the fact that the interests of all workers are identical; that they must rise or fall together. It is a self-evident proposition that the densest ignorance cannot fail to perceive. When a strike occurs the supreme necessity for solidarity, the closing up of the ranks and standing together like a wall or resistance, is instinctively felt, and every worker falls into his place and holds it against the assaults of hunger and privation, and if a hapless victim, unequal to the ordeal, falls out of line, he is denounced as a “scab” and the gaunt specter of persecution pursues him to his dying day, and then the last groan of despair has been extorted from him, the badge of shame and dishonor is transferred to his innocent offspring.

In the light of such daily exhibitions of industrial solidarity, how curious it seems that upon the political field, the mastery of which would make labor the ruler of the world the forces are divided into hostile camps, and brother brains brother, while all sink to social and economic degradation to the melancholy music of their self-forged fetters.

In these days of economic concentration the capitalist is master. He holds all the keys. By a turn of the lock the judicial harlot appears in her debauched ermine and proclaims the command of her imperious master. Another turn and sodden soldiers rip with impious steel the throbbing flesh of honest men. Still another, and fair earth becomes a prison house, and all the helpless hosts of labor are prostrate in the dust.

Is there relieve, release, escape? Yes. When? Now. Where? At the ballot box. How? By the solidarity of labor.

On the industrial field workingmen strike against capitalists — a flintlock against a gatling.¹ Transfer this strike to the political arena and the weapons are exchanged. Political solidarity solves the problem.

A great class conflict is shaking the foundations of human society. In this life-and-death struggle I am on the side of the working class and against every other class. On election day I prove myself a “union man”

by casting a vote that bears the label of the working class, a vote in favor of putting that class in control of the American government and making it the ruling class of the world.

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¹ A flintlock was an archaic muzzle-loaded single shot firearm, a gatling gun the hand-cranked predecessor of the modern machine gun.