

Workers Arise and Seize The Earth!

BY FERDINAND MARAIS

THE matter with you working men and women is that you are starved in mind as well as in body. And you are starved in mind and body because you are slaves. And you are slaves because you allow other people to tell you how and when you may work.

There is only one crime, and that is the crime of being poor. It is a crime not only against yourselves but, what is worse still, against your children.

There is no reason whatsoever for any man, woman or child to suffer poverty in this twentieth century. Enough machinery now exists to provide everybody with a good house to live in, good food to eat, and good clothes to wear. You wage slaves who produce abundance of these good things for your masters are badly housed, badly clothed and badly fed. If you only understood why it is that you suffer cold, hunger and nakedness in the midst of plenty you would soon take steps to bring about a great change in society. It is my purpose and the purpose of the *INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST REVIEW* to try to explain to you the why and the wherefore of these things.

First of all you must know that you are enslaved and poverty-stricken because your masters have taken into their own exclusive possession the land (which no human being has created) and the machinery (which has been created by the strength and skill of the workers of all ages). Through this ownership they own your job and therefore they own you. Shakespeare says: "You take my life when you do take the means whereby I live." Well, the means whereby you wage-slaves live is your job; and the boss holds the club of hunger and death over all of you by the ever-present threat that he will deprive you of your job if you kick against his terms. And, as you must be well aware, the terms of the boss are that you shall work as hard and as long as possible for the smallest possible wage.

The very fact that you have been forced to join with one another into unions to resist the boss's robbery of your strength and skill proves that you feel yourselves to be

helpless as individuals against this tyranny. You feel that your union is the only thing that stands between you and misery.

But the boss knows how to defeat you in spite of your unions. Out of your class he has taken a number of strong young fellows. He dresses them up in uniform, puts clubs and rifles in their hands, and tells you that they are for the protection of life and property. Whose life and property? How much property are you slaves in danger of losing? Who threatens to take your lives? Why, you know you have no property to speak of, and your lives are threatened by the boss every day of the week!

Who gets killed when you strike for better conditions of life for yourselves and your families? Do the policeman and the soldier protect you against the boss who wants to take away the only property you have, your labor power? Of course not. It is you working slaves who are food for steel and powder. You are shot down like dogs as in Johannesburg or in Colorado. Is it not terrible to think that the boss can hire working people to kill one another for his profit? Is it not terrible to think that you working people supply arms and ammunition to your own brothers that they may murder you at the command of the boss? Is it not worse than criminal for you to man the engines that allow those hired murderers to go backward and forward to the places where the boss orders a working class massacre to take place? Why don't you working men and women force the boss to do his own dirty work?

I said that you are poor because the boss owns your job. But you may not yet understand why it is that you cannot make headway in spite of your unions. The reason is simple. You cannot escape poverty so long as you allow the bosses to keep the land and the machinery as their private property. You think, perhaps, that reforms will improve your conditions of life, but you are absolutely mistaken. You are wasting your time, as I hope to be able to prove to you.

Things are made under the present sys-

tem of private ownership not that they may make you more comfortable, but that they may bring a profit to the boss who owns the machines. Suppose you are employed making chairs. You get, say, 25 cents in wages for making one chair, the material of which costs, say, 50 cents. Therefore, the actual cost of making the finished chair is 75 cents. But you cannot buy that chair for 75 cents if you want it for the use of your family. The boss will charge you two dollars for it. It is the very same with boots and shirts and beds and meat and bread. Now, if you will only think the thing out for yourselves you will see that reforms can never benefit you. You working people are 90 per cent of the population. You produce by your labor every article of necessity and luxury—I include luxury, because you feed and house and clothe the artist and musician while they are making fine jewelry and pictures and books and sounds for the boss. But if you only get in wages a fifth of what you produce, how can you buy back more than a fifth of the articles put on the market for sale? How is the surplus four-fifths disposed of?

Just try to puzzle this thing out. When there is a surplus of things for sale, there is what the so-called political economists describe as an individual crisis. They say there has been an overproduction, but if they told the truth they would tell you that you have been robbed of four-fifths of the result of your labor. The boss class and their hangers-on are only 10 per cent of the population, and as they have already more than enough of the good things of life, they cannot possibly consume all of this surplus. What do they do with it? Well, they waste a lot of it by employing some of you to act the flunkey to them. Thousands of your womenfolk are forced to sell themselves so that the boss can satisfy his beastly lusts upon them. A lot of politicians, lawyers, judges, parsons, editors and authors are paid out of the surplus for the purpose of telling lies to poison your minds. But by far the greater part of the surplus goes towards the upkeep of policemen and soldiers who are used to club and shoot you in the streets when you dare make a stand for your rights. If it were not for all this waste of wealth, there would be a state of unemployment so vast that the capitalist system would fall to pieces in one week.

You working men and women are poor, and when you have finished your day's toil are too tired and careworn to be able to think out these things clearly. And the boss, with a devilish cunning unknown in any former age, has at his command an army of writers and talkers who are paid to keep you ignorant of the fact that you are being robbed and murdered for his profit. The parson will tell you that poverty must always exist and that you must look beyond the sky for happiness. The schoolmaster teaches your children lies about history and science. The editor tells you lies about political economy. The politician talks about patriotism and advocates reform.

You wage slaves have no country, no religion, no patriotism that is of any use to you. The only thing you want to know is how to get rid of the boss. Reform won't help you. If you could get a minimum wage for all workers, the use of more improved machinery would only create a greater unemployed problem, while the price of everything you use would increase. Some say that the industries should be "nationalized," or, in other words, that the government should take them over and run them for your benefit. But the government is simply the politicians and judges and soldiers and policemen who make and carry out laws to shoot you down when you revolt. How can you expect to be better off as slaves to the capitalist state. The private boss only wants nationalization at his price. Workers employed by the state in Europe, Australia and South Africa are treated as mutineers if they strike and may suffer the death penalty. A "nationalized" industry is just as much the property of the boss as a private industry. The government in that case acts directly as slave drivers, in order to compel the slaves to make a profit for the owners of state bonds.

You workers do not want reform. You want *Revolution*. You must join together in one great union of workers, male and female, young and old, so that you may prevent organized scabbing. You must *seize* the land and the factories and starve out the robbers and their hired liars and murderers. You must make them taste their own gruel. Let your motto henceforth be "*Unity is Strength and Might is Right.*" No quarter to the robber class! Get together, ye downtrodden and seize and enjoy the earth!