
The Rights of Labor

by Eugene V. Debs

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Great questions, relating more especially to the rights of laboring men, but touching in their relations all the interests of humanity, are forcing themselves more urgently every year on the attention of the people. It is impossible to avoid these great problems, they must be solved. Bound together as all humanity is in an eternal union, mutually and equally beneficial, there can be but one judgment, that the universal interest is that they be solved justly. Success and the security of justice can only come by seeking the greatest good of the greatest number. This is the first, the greatest fundamental principle. It is the primer of our government. Our members, their wives, and their children are all deeply interested in the success of our Order. To them our attention is especially directed. Our cause is of national importance. It is a part of justice and humanity, all who are interested in these are interested in our success.

The rights of labor have been the subject of agitation for centuries. The more we contemplate them the more certain it is that nothing but good can come of them and the justice done them. In advocating the rights of labor we have an eye single to justice and universal good. Labor is the grand builder of all to be desired, it builds up the world and is the source of all good. It opens up the flood gates of prosperity. No encomium of labor can be too great. To it we owe our blessings. It is the salvation of humanity; our great fortune, the source of unlimited bounty.

When we contemplate the vast fields of labor of all kinds open in our country we are filled with wonder and admiration. Truly her is a scene to inspire the soul of the greatest genius. How gloriously we shall gather in the sheaves of our greatness. Let us possess the goodly land before us. Labor is civilization, and civilization is labor. By supporting the interests of labor we secure to ourselves all the great benefits of civilization. Pampered idleness and snobbish dandyism is bar-

barity. Who has a better right to the fruits of labor than the laborer himself?

Our labors are the result of our sweat and toil, of brain and muscle, by virtue of which we have made them our own. We have identified ourselves with them, they are a part of us, they and their fruits belong to us, they have our brand upon them, and we will own, reclaim, and acknowledge them wherever we find them. It is an individual work, essential in every way. No one will be found to perform it for us and no one so well qualified as ourselves to do our own duty. We are the best informed on the subject, and we hold it to be self-evident that we are the best and, indeed, the sole judges of our own interests. The interests of labor have been too long neglected for the good of us all. Let them be supported and all will be happy, successful, and prosperous.

In forwarding the interests of labor we make no war on capital. Capital's best interests are in a well rewarded and fostered system of labor. What could capital ever hope for from impoverished labor? When labor becomes impoverished and beggarly paid, capital must become the prey of robbers and plunderers. Labor is the prop that supports capital, and when the prop is gone, what depends upon it must fall. Our great capitalists know this. They will heed it. We will not meet with any opposition from them. Their salvation depends upon us. they understand our grand object, the general good of us all, and will assist us. We seek not to overturn, but to improve.

As the military power is subject to the civil, so should the interests of capital be subject to the interests of labor. We propose to represent, protect, and secure the best interests of all our members in the fullest manner possible, in order that justice be done. We must have a voice in the decision of our affairs.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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