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The Use and Need for a Union

Léa Wullschleger

1907

An unfortunate indifference still reigns among a large number of working women.

Lulled by illusions, deceived by prejudice, sometimes by resignation itself, they imagine that their earthly sufferings will be compensated by a better life. This is how, consciously or not, they do a great deal of harm to their comrades, their sisters in the struggle. And, yet, as workers, we cannot see any other fate than the fate we will achieve by ourselves. In order to do this, we only have to join and contribute to our unions. Many among us might say that we should leave such things to the stronger sex. But, to those who think so, we ask: “who will watch over us; who will take care of our interests?” It certainly won’t be our bosses.

By her economic situation, the working woman finds herself in a state of inferiority compared with her boss. While the latter owns the instruments of her work, the machinery, the factories, etc., the working woman only owns the energy of her body or her brain, which means that, in order to survive, she finds herself forced to sell this energy to her boss.

The boss, among all the arms which reach out to get a job and afford some bread to eat, will always choose, in his own interest,

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the one who will sell her physical or mental energy for the tiniest wages. But if the worker is, faced with her boss, in an inferior economic situation, and if the latter can impose on her her working conditions as he pleases, this situation will change once working women have understood that their strength resides in their union. Certainly, if they cannot fight against the bosses with the same weapons as them, capital, since they don't own any, they can achieve anything through numbers and organisation; since we are no doubt the more numerous.

We can therefore oppose the bosses' attacks with an even greater force: the united and indivisible multitude of the workers. We all feel the need to gain better living conditions; by a single aspiration, by a single idea, we will impose our will on the bosses; by the power of our organisations, we will tear from them wages which will allow us to live honestly, and gradually, as much as possible, we will reduce the length of the work day.

And, in this way, from the slaves we are, we will become masters of our own destinies.

May these few facts give working women some thought if they still had doubts on the need for a union, and make them join, to strengthen it, since the union makes us strong.