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Ricardo Flores Magón
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1911

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Class Struggle

Ricardo Flores Magón

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Humanity is divided into two classes: the capitalist class and the working class. The capitalist class possesses the land, the machinery, the means of labour, the mines, the homes, the railways, the ships, and other means of transportation, the factories and the workshops; and as the guardian of all of these, it can count on the government in any of its forms: absolute monarchy, constitutional monarchy or republic, whether centralized or federal. The working class possesses nothing more than its arms, its brains, and the vital energy which gives it the capacity of performing any kind of labour, while it can stay standing on its feet.

The capitalist class, under whichever form of government, can live at ease, because it has the material means that put it in an advantageous situation with respect to those who have nothing (that is, the workers), and enjoys by these same means a great deal of independence and a great deal of freedom, since it can not only satisfy its needs without being dependent on any person, but is also supported by the governmental apparatus upon which it does depend; with its laws, judges, cops, soldiers, and prisons, in the end, with all the necessary means to guarantee to the rich the peaceful and free enjoyment of their riches.

The poor class, by virtue of encountering material wealth hoarded by the rich, is forced to depend on them. If the poor man wants to work the land, he has to rent himself out for a determined price that is called the wage and which represents an abrogated part of what he produces with his arms. If the worker wants to work in a factory, in a mine, on a ship, on a railway, on the construction of a home, or any other kind of job, he equally has to rent out his arms in order to receive a wage which represents, always, a minimal part of what he produces.

It has been calculated that the bosses pay only a tenth the value of what is produced by the worker's labor, and in Mexico it is even more disproportionate, because, as is known, wages in our country are in truth merely alms. Nine-tenths of what a worker produces passes into the pockets of the boss as profit, although the latter has not been as fatigued to produce it as the worker has.

This profit, naturally, is sanctioned by the law, which, as I've said many times, has been made, as are all laws, by the capitalist class, which, of course, has to make laws that benefit its class, laws that protect the exploitation exercised by the masters.

These laws prevail everywhere, in all so-called civilized countries, from those ruled by absolute monarchs to those governed by constitutional presidents, such as in the United States and Switzerland, renowned as "free" countries, as "model" republics.

The worker, then, is a slave everywhere. A slave in Russia, a slave in the United States, a slave in Mexico, a slave in Turkey, in France, a slave wherever. The famous political freedoms which Maderismo wants to conquer, such as electoral freedom, freedom of assembly, freedom of thought, and many others, are in truth only tricks which divert the proletariat from its sacred mission: economic freedom. Without economic freedom, it's not possible to enjoy political freedom.

There are countries, such as Russia, for example, where there are no political freedoms, and yet the worker there is just as unfortunate as he is in the United States, the country which parades

around its freedom. In the streets of Saint Petersburg, Moscow, or Odessa you'll see the same rags, the same pallid faces as in the streets of New York or Chicago. This is to say that in Russia, that barbarous and oppressive country, there exists the same problem, the same social question that exists in the United States, the country that boasts of being civilized and free.

In Canada, despite there being no law guaranteeing everyone the right to vote, that is, in that land where there is nothing called universal suffrage, where only those of good fortune have the right to vote, the worker lives with more ease than in the United States where universal suffrage does exist, that is, where all men of a certain age can elect their governors.

This proves that it is not the vote, nor the right of freedom of thought, nor of freedom of assembly, nor is it any other political powers conferred by laws which give the worker something to eat. The right to vote is a sarcasm. Here, in the United States, we have proof of this. The people of this nation have always had the right to vote, and nonetheless, the miserable districts of New York, Chicago, St. Louis, Philadelphia, and of all of the other great American cities are eloquent testimonies to the inefficiency of the vote in bringing about the happiness of the people.

In these districts, hundreds of thousands of persons rot, both physically and morally, inside infected human storage rooms, and in the entire nation, every morning four million human beings go out from these palaces of filth and hunger to search for work so that they can return with a crumb of bread for their wives and children; but since they often don't find work, they return with empty hands and hungry stomachs, and they go out again the next day on their painful pilgrimage in search of bosses to rent out their arms to; and when election time arrives, these hungry workers hurry to fill out ballots to elevate another governor who will continue to put the squeeze on their necks.

If we have this example in view, why would we insist on the conquest of the illusory power of the vote? Why wouldn't we ded-

icate all our energies to the conquest of the land, the lands that are the source of all wealth, that in the hands of the people would secure all of life, and in the same way, economic independence, and its consequence, true freedom?

Material well-being is what the people need to be free. That the people take possession of the land and of the instruments of labour is what the Partido Liberal wants. When the people are owners of the land, everything else will fall into their hands through the force of circumstances. Is this crazy? That's what the cowards, the ignorant and all those who have an interest in the continuation of the current system of exploitation of the working class say.

All of those who desire to occupy larger or smaller public offices, all of those who want to live at the expense of others, desire that Madero will triumph; but those sensible working people who possess no more capital than their hands, callused by the hard work to which they've been subjected by the bourgeoisie, those workers who have understood what *Regeneración* has taught will not follow Madero, cannot follow those who make politics their way of life, but instead are liable to continue the class struggle, the struggle against capitalism, until it is made to bite the dust.

There are two social classes: that which exploits and that which is exploited. That which exploits has an interest in Madero's rise to power, so that it can continue to exploit. The exploited class, for its part, has an interest in the land being for everyone, in there being no more bosses, in there being no more misery.

Comrades, follow the banner of the Partido Liberal which has this motto: Land and Freedom.