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To Erma Barsky (March 16, 1922)

Ricardo Flores Magón

1922

Ricardo Flores Magon
Post Office Box 7
Leavenworth, Kansas
March 16, 1922
Miss Erma Barsky
New York, N.Y.

My dear comrade:

Your postcard, and a letter from Dr. Weinberger received. Mr. Weinberger most kindly makes me know how my case, for lack of proper recommendations, cannot go to the President to be considered, according to word sent him by the Department of Justice. The recommendations, strange as it would seem to common mortals, are not my growing infirmity, nor the flagrant violation of the most rudimentary justice committed by the judge of my trial, nor my having dependents, nothing, in fine, that might appeal to the average human heart and conscience. The recommendations which the government officials deem of great importance are those that

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the judge and district attorney can make, and in my case, they were adverse ... The judge could not confess his having been biased, and the district attorney found it hard to state that his zeal in getting for me the maximum penalty, was prompted by an immoderate desire to get promoted.

I beg you, my good comrade, to tell Mr. Weinberger that his letter was received, and that I appreciate his efforts to obtain my release, and his kindness in always keeping one well posted as to his activities in my behalf. Now he is going to Washington. I think, however, that my case is a hopeless one. Humane interests have nothing to do with government officials. Government officials are part of a huge machine which has no heart, nor nerves, nor conscience. The governmental machine will never pay heed to my sufferings. That I am going blind? The machine will say with a shrug of its shoulders: "So much the worse for him." That I shall die here? "Well — the machine will say — there will be room enough in the prison graveyard to accommodate a corpse." That my dear ones may starve. "They will not be the only ones starving under the sun." — will be its reply. The essential thing for this machine to take a case into consideration, are not ethical motives. Expediency, and not justice, is the key which opens the prison gates. Yet, it is in the name of justice that it acts ... Its assumption would move to laughter, were not for the tragedy in it. For nothing fruitful, noble, or great can ever result from expediency under the cloak of justice. It is the wolf under the guise of sheep. It is a crime stalking abroad, unavoidable as it is irrecognizable and much more dangerous, in that it assumes a mien of dignity, and decency. Thus, in the name of justice the most savage and revolting acts are perpetrated. Was not in justice's name that the officialdom of the most advanced nations of the world urged their peoples to cut each other's throats? and knowing this, how might I harbour any hopes as to the government officials ever getting moved by my torments? I am caught by the formidable mechanism of a monstrous machine, and my flesh may get ripped open, and my bones crushed, and my moans fill

the space and make the very infinite shudder, but the machine will not stop grinding, grinding, grinding ... Had I a friend with political influence, that is, a piece of this astounding machine, I could be set free even if I had stepped upon one or all of the Ten Commandments. But I have none, and for expediency's sake I may rot and die, pent up like a wild beast in an iron cage, far away from the innocent creatures I love. My crime is one of those which have no atonement. Murder? No; it was not murder; human life is cheap to the machine's eyes, and thus a murderer gets easily released, or if he had killed by the wholesale, he will never dwell in an iron cage, but will be laden with honorific crosses and medals instead. Swindle? No; if this were the case I would have been appointed president of one big corporation or other. I have not killed, I have not stolen, I have not exploited women's prostitution, I have not caused my fellowmen to shed a tear or a drop of sweat or blood. I am a dreamer — this is my crime! I dream of the Beautiful, and find pleasure in sharing my dreams with my fellow-creatures. This is my crime; this is why I have been branded as a felon, and thrown into this hell, when the darkness begins to enshroud me before I am dead ... Yet, my dream of the Beautiful, and my cherished visions of a humanity living in peace, and love, and freedom, dreams and visions which the machine abhors, shall not die with one, for so long as there should be upon this Earth of ours an aching heart or any eye full of tears, my dreams and my visions shall live!

And now, good-bye, my good Erma. I received candy — nice exquisite candy — night before last. Thanks, thanks, thanks. And tonight, I received such a wonderful letter from our beloved Ellen! I will write her next week. In the meantime, please offer her my love, and to all the other good comrades, and I hope that you will accept it as the only thing a captive can give.

Ricardo Flores Magon