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# Workers, Free Yourselves!

[circa November 1919]

by Floyd C. Ramp

Untitled handwritten document in the Floyd Ramp papers,  
University of Oregon, Collection 189, box 6, folder 3.

I lost my citizenship when I went to Leavenworth but I retained my self-respect.

They have robbed me of my right to vote, and they have classed me with degenerates and other inferiors, but they will know before I am through with them that I am a citizen and that I believe enough in the welfare of my country to work unceasingly for its improvement. I have no desire to convert my patriotism into cash. If the patriotism I possess were only worn on the lapel of my coat and did not reach my heart, I would not brag about it.

If wearing a flag on the lapel of my coat, and standing up when the national anthem was being played, and the next day forming a mob to tar and feather or even murder innocent human beings were manifestations of my patriotism, I should be sadly ashamed of myself.

If preaching democracy and advocating “open covenants openly arrived at” and then entering into secret arrangements to crush weaker nations who are trying to work out their ideas of government, and scheming behind closed doors to crush the democratic aspirations of other nations were a measure of my sincerity and devotion to a high ideal — please count me out.

If I stand idly by while the press of the country were spreading their ferocious lies about a great people struggling for freedom, economic freedom as well as political, and did not raise my voice in protest, I should consider myself a coward of the very worst type.

If I joined hands with the blackest autocracy in the modern world in assisting a firm believer in monarchy to crush the first workers’ republic the world has ever known, then I should be ashamed to return to the country whose ideals I had pledged myself to protect.

Humble and illiterate as I know I am, if I could exchange places with the first man of this great country, I would refuse.

I believe I love this great country just as much as any man who was ever born within its borders. I do not think that keeps me from understanding the needs of other people and I believe I can best prove that patriotism by joining hands with the workers of the world to overthrow the system of society that has taught us to hate each other and has kept us at each others’ throats for these thousands of years and that has just left us as a credit to our bloody work — 50 million victims.

As a patriot I should hate to have to face the accusation of those fatherless children, those widowed mothers, and those sad faces of disappointed maidens. And I wish someone would please show me one thing that all this butchery has brought us. A few millionaires, of course. I had almost forgotten about that....

We are nearer Socialism, it is true, but those who plunged us into this great tragedy did not intend any such results.

They accuse the working class of violence and pass silly laws to try to send honest men and

women to jail — because they say they want to overthrow the system by violence. False, of course; how they can accuse them of violence with the record of blood that they have behind them is more than I can understand.

We do not believe in violence and we hope we will be able to go ahead peacefully educating the workers to a new understanding of loyalty and patriotism, to an understanding of their class position and their real economic interests so that very soon we can leave behind us this insane arrangement we now have of a society divided into classes — where one class does the owning and the playing and the other class the working and the suffering.

This society called Capitalism is going to pass — it is passing — and the sooner the workers away to the needs of its passing and the methods necessary to help it on its way and to build the new society, the better it will be for them and in fact the better it will be for all.

We have worked and suffered long enough — we have hoped for better days and they have not come. We have listened to promises that have not been fulfilled and have endured all the sorrows and hardships of the ages and we still are at our work. But not for long—

The great change is coming — labor is awakening as never before — it is forming itself into political and economic organizations, revolutionary in their nature. All over the world these things are being done — and tomorrow or the day after

tomorrow we will be strong enough to take power and begin the constructive work necessary to our freedom. Freedom we are going to have — thousands have fought for it and they are home now and are looking for this freedom.

Our brave and courageous comrades in Russia have taken the plunge, have taken power and for nearly 2 years have withstood the attack of not only enemies from within but from the combined forces of international capitalism and I know that they carry on, with our assistance until every element of imperialism and capitalism has been completely crushed. The world crisis is here — all over Europe the proletariat is rising in its might and in only a little while, a few short years at the most, it will be with us and we had just as well steel ourselves for this great crisis. Shoulder to shoulder you must stand; you must join your hands and your hearts together in this mighty cause for humanity's freedom and carry forward the work that will test your very souls.

Who is it that would not want to be a part of this great movement? Who is it that would shirk his or her responsibility? What does it matter if you fall in this struggle? To go on slaving for a master who despises you — to continue this life of misery at the loom can surely leave no particular joys for even the deadest slave.

Awaken, workers — comrades, show them the way! Join your hands with theirs and free yourselves from the clutches of this cruel system — Capitalism.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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