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TO WORKING WOMEN!

A COMMUNIST MESSAGE

By Y. J.

*Neither poor nor rich :
Neither slums nor mansions.*

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PRICE ONE PENNY
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COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN
16 KING STREET, COVENT GARDEN, W.C.2

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A MESSAGE TO WORKING WOMEN.

To the weary sisterhood of working women the world over I send this message of warning and of hope. Worn-out in body and mind as you are in the never-ceasing struggle to keep your poor homes together and in the care of your little ones, I yet feel that those of you who read this may gather fresh courage; and perhaps, in making some endeavour, however slight, for a great cause that struggles and suffers only for you, your lives may gather the inspiration of a beautiful hope.

THE WORRY OF LIFE.

There are many mothers among you who love your children better than your lives. But how much pain, and weariness and neglected ill-health have they cost you. Look at baby. She is rather pale, and a little thin, but to you she is the dearest baby in the world. Do you remember the moment when you fully realised that she was coming into the world and you were already the mother of several children? Was it joy that you felt? Did your face beam with happiness when your husband came home so tired from work in the factory, and you told him the news? No! There was just a terrible ache at your heart and a gnawing anxiety, and though he tried to comfort and cheer you, he looked wearier than ever. The thought in both your minds was "How are we to feed and clothe an additional little life?" Times were hard then, and are harder now; and so the little life that should have been welcomed with a natural joy was just another source of grinding anxiety to both of you. Then followed the terrible period of pregnancy, a nightmare throughout. There was the washing and the scrubbing and the cooking still to be done. Your children seemed more of a worry than ever to you, and oh! how your back ached as you dragged about your home and tried to keep it neat and clean and inviting. Your perpetual crusade against dirt was but a terribly wasted effort, for there was no water supply conveniently near at hand, and you were so cramped for room. Do you remember just before baby was born how you

stood over a steaming wash-tub in your living room, where you had to do your week's washing, and hot and tired as you were, you dragged yourself down to the yard with a pile of wet clothes? How the bitterly cold wind simply pierced into your bones! All this at a time when you required the greatest care and attention both for yourself and the little life to be.

This, working women, is no imaginary picture. You know only too well that it is the cruel reality of the lives of millions of you.

How is it all to end? Must you suffer and work, and work and suffer from the cradle to the grave for all time? Will your children never be well-fed and rosy and happy?

THE IDLE RICH.

My sisters, I have drawn for you one picture, I will now draw another.

Perhaps one week you have managed to scrape together an extra shilling. Leaving your little ones in the charge of a kindly neighbour, you and your husband board a motor-bus and drive into that paradise, the west-end of London. Spell-bound, you stand in front of the gorgeous shops. "Look, what a lovely little dress. Baby would look grand in that," and you point in an ecstasy at a little silk dress, adorned with lovely hand embroidery. It is marked in pounds, and so you sigh, and look up a little wistfully in your man's face and say, "Perhaps—some day." Now your husband notices a beautiful evening dress, of the kind called 'a creation' by the rich. "Why, my girl, you would look fine in that. I wish I could buy it for you." "I am afraid not. You see, I am so thin, and look how pale my face is. But that would have suited me a treat when I was a girl, and you were courting me." Your husband smiles, and thinks of his tired little wife when she was a girl. The brightest eyes and the freshest face in all the world was hers, and such a saucy, bright manner she had, too. He sighs again. She is all too subdued now, and sometimes so tired that she can hardly smile. Suddenly you cry "Look here." You both turn in time to see a tall, beautiful woman stepping out of a taxi. Her dress is of some wonderful silk, and diamonds glitter in her ears and on her neck. Her pink and white skin glows, and her large dark eyes glance at you both haughtily. The wonderful apparition vanishes through the doors of a grand hotel, ushered in by a servile attendant.

There, working women, is the cancer that is eating up the lives and happiness of you and yours. That beautiful, graciously-gowned woman, with her diamonds and her insolent manner, is the emblem of the social disease that compels you to suffer, and leaves her but with one care—the preservation of her beauty. She is of the class that possesses, that can command you and kill you if needs be. She and her kind have robbed you of your birthright, the right to a complete, full, happy life; and so long as your men stand cap in hand in front of her class, humbly pleading for the right to work, so long will you drudge in wretched rooms, and bring children into the world in pain and anguish, and see them go ill-fed and ill-cared for.

The possessing class have ground you into the dust. They will keep you there if they can.

UPWARDS AND ONWARDS.

Working women, there is one great principle that you must realise, and it is this. The very fact of being alive means a constant transition, a constant change. Right through the ages, laws and manners and ways of living have changed. The savage used his hands in tearing his meat to pieces, and devoured it whole. We at the present day use knives and forks and prate of our table manners. Years ago, the idea of women acting as lawyers and barristers, sitting on juries, or even preaching in churches was absolutely unthinkable. People would have been terribly shocked if you had suggested any of these things. Now they are all established facts. The great curse of you all has been that with the wearing out of your bodies in the terrific struggle for bare existence, your minds and souls have set in one hard, unlovely mould. You have been too apt to accept conditions as you found them, and sigh, "It must be so." But, working women, things must not be so, and need not be so. There is no natural law which says that you must toil while others idle, that you must weep while others laugh, and that you must die prematurely worn-out while others live on in beauty and insolence, and the excesses of a vicious prosperity.

The men before whom your husbands stand cap in hand are utterly ruthless in their power, and take advantage of every opportunity to retain it and increase it, and so it must be with you. If you wish to save yourselves from the hell in which you are living now, you must help and encourage your menfolk, those millions of downtrodden toilers, to seize their opportunity when it is before them, and take back their stolen birthright, the right to a free, full,

happy life. If you cannot actively assist them in this great work, do not hinder them. Encourage and inspire them, for they are fighting for you and yours.

CAPITALISM, THE ENEMY.

Again, I want to impress most clearly upon you the underlying cause of all your present misery. You are living now under a certain construction of society which we call the rule of capitalism. It is this state of society which makes possible the existence on the one hand of an extremely wealthy class, and on the other of a bitterly poor class. Both extremes are vicious and work together for the degradation and misery of all mankind. The name "capitalist" is applied to a man who possesses a large sum of money which he himself has not honestly earned, but has stolen from his fellowmen who have toiled for him. Of course, he has paid them a certain amount for their labour, but only enough to enable them to make a bare living. The greater part of the result of their labours he has taken unto himself. Now, working women, what would you call this? If you consider this state of affairs in all honesty, you can only use two very ugly words—thieving and cheating. The capitalists, who are neither honest with themselves nor with others, call it business. And it is in the name of this cursed business that you and yours are robbed and ground down. Your men, in the sweat of their brows, build ships, houses, factories, machines, stand over broiling furnaces, dig deep into the bowels of the earth for coal, do all the labour that is necessary to keep mankind alive and in varying degrees of comfort, and their reward is a meagre living, just enough to keep body and soul together. Strange, is it not, aye, and the cruellest fact that ever cursed you and yours! There is one great reason for all this. Your men make the machines, build the factories, mills and ships, but the capitalists steal them all in the name of private property and business, and in stealing them, they enslave your men body and soul. Unless they work in these factories and mills, they starve like dogs in the gutter. So strange and insane are the workings of this system, Capitalism, that there are long periods during which your men are not able to get jobs, but are forced to exist on the meagre doles of charity. A great army of unemployed is created, which is just another whip in the hands of the capitalists. They use this weapon in intimidating the men in work, and cutting down their wages. You know only too well what happens if a man

shows any signs of fight against this injustice. He is promptly dismissed, and a member of the great waiting army of unemployed is put in his place.

You may have noticed in your capacity of housewives that, no matter how much your husbands earn, the cost of living is always higher in proportion than any rise in wages. Your grandmother managed on 25s. a week. You manage on, perhaps, two or three pounds a week when your husbands are in work. But you are still on the poverty line. There are many and various reasons for this. "Capitalism works in mysterious ways its evils to perform." The fact is that within the insane stupidity of this system you will always remain on the poverty line, and suffer accordingly.

THE CURSE OF CAPITALIST WARS.

Working women, these capitalists have you by the throat. They do as they will with you. In peace times, they force your men to work for a bare living or throw them on to the labour market, as it suits their purpose. The results of their toil go into the pockets of their masters, that they may grow fat. It is blood money that the capitalists prosper on. If the capitalists find that they cannot rob you sufficiently in one country, they look around for pastures new. Having lighted upon a country which they think will afford them enormous profits, they promptly try to rob and exploit your brothers and sisters there. But other capitalists are out on the identical game. They also covet the unexploited territory. Then follows the spectacle of several dogs fighting over one bone. But in this case, the dogs do not fight their battle themselves. In this hellish plot against your own class, they conscript your men and prate to them of patriotism, and civilisation and heroism. Lies, lies, all lies! Thus are your dear ones flung into the hell of war, to be maimed and slaughtered and thrown on the scrap-heap.

Do you hate war, my sisters? Do you, as you softly croon to the dear little one in your arms, ever think with fear and horror of his possible destiny, and hold him tighter to your breast, growing sick with dread? Then fight, fight with all your might against the system which makes war possible. You are the precious creators of life. Be its conservers also.

Everywhere you and yours are fooled. Realise this, working women, and beware for the future.

PROSTITUTION.

Growing out of the slimy soil of Capitalism is a poisonous weed—Prostitution. Working women, secure as you are in the love of your husbands and children, have you ever given a thought to that great pitiful sisterhood that prowl the streets at night, and look for their bread in the successful degradation of every shred of decent womanhood that they may once have possessed. Some of you have no word of pity for these poor outcasts. "Look," you say, "into the lives of millions of decent women. They toil and toil and are still terribly poor. But to them, death itself were preferable to such shame." That is true, my sisters. It may be that many of these unfortunates have been morally weak, but had they had the wherewithal to live in something like decency and comfort under a sane administration of society, do you think that they would willingly pursue their lives of shame? What does the future hold for them? Nothing but disease and painful death, and well they know it. But in their black despair they pursue their bitter paths, and fall by the way. Capitalism has no solution for this sad problem. Prostitution is as inevitable an outgrowth of Capitalism as is poverty. Both go hand in hand. There are many accidental causes for its existence, but the great underlying cause is the continued existence of the state of Capitalism, by which the rich have the power to withhold from the poor the right to a happy existence.

THE COMMUNIST MESSAGE.

You have in your midst a party which lives and works only for you. It wages a perpetual war against the possessing class, the capitalists, who have brought you so low in misery and despair, and who will keep you there by all the means in their power. The Communist Party of Great Britain holds out to you a shining hope, the hope of Communism. Present-day society is founded upon the most ghastly, callous element in human nature. Selfishness is its watchword. It completely ignores the fact that we all have need of each other, and that only on love and amity can a happy state of society be founded.

The Communist Party strives by all the means in its power to bring about a state of society in which the law of love shall rule, and men and women work together in mutual co-operation and helpfulness. To do this, it uses every weapon that lies nearest to its hand. You are told, working women, that the Communist Party is out for "Bloody revolution." I know there are many

among you who hate the very thought of violence, and to you I say that there is not a single Communist, man or woman, who willingly contemplates the thought of a violent revolution to bring about a happier state of society. But there is just one thing that you must bear in mind. Throughout the ages, the tactics and weapons the workers have used in their struggle against their oppressors have been decided for them by circumstances over which they had no control. Defence, not offence, has been their watchword. This will be true of the future. If, in our fight against our oppressors, machine-guns are turned against us, we will have to defend ourselves as adequately as we can. But the thought of shedding blood in a spirit of cruel revenge creates a feeling of the utmost horror and loathing in the mind of every true Communist.

THE HOPE OF THE FUTURE.

Now, in what peculiar sense will the advent of Communism benefit all working women?

Communism means co-operation in every sphere of human activity. No more will marriage and home spell a dreary, hopeless round of domestic drudgery. Communal laundries run by labour-saving devices will rid you of that weekly bugbear—washing day. Men and women will meet on a footing of equality and comradeship, every labour-saving device that enables the wheels of the domestic machinery to run more smoothly will be yours. Airy, cheerful kitchens, appliances for the mechanical drying and washing of cooking and dining utensils, adequate and sensible stainless cutlery will be yours for the asking—for in those happy days, those who do the world's work will receive the highest compensation and comfort.

Working women, have you ever thought of those sisters of yours more fortunate than you, who sing and play and are accomplished in all manner of ways, of women who paint pictures and write books, of the women who teach in great schools. In a precious moment of respite from toil, perhaps, your thoughts have wandered to that strange, beautiful world in which they live, far removed from sordid, petty, domestic cares. In that moment, you long, perhaps, to taste also of the high delights that are theirs, and then your little ones tug at your skirts, and ask you to play with them. You sigh, and think sadly that ever in this narrow sphere of home you must live and toil, and that life has no other place for you. Communism holds for you a very different lot, if you so wish

it. Children may still come and bless your life with their smiles and pretty ways, but the possibility of a career will always be open to you, for there will be large comfortable State nurseries in which your children will be well cared for. The greatest care of children will be the highest duty of Communism.

Prostitution will die a natural death under Communism. Decent conditions and ways of life produce normal, healthy men and women, and under such conditions, prostitution cannot flourish, but vanishes for ever from the life of mankind.

With the coming of Communism, a new life will begin for you all, a life free from petty cares, wherein men and women will be free to develop the best in them. The terrible struggle for mere existence will cease, for those who work will enjoy the fruits of their labour in all fulness. The glory of the earth will be theirs, and life stretch full of radiant hope and promise before them.

Working Women, join the Women's Section of the Communist Party. We need your help and co-operation. We cannot do without you.

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