

Module 05: Industrialization and Its Discontents: The Great Strike of 1877

Evidence 24: Joshua Ferguson, "Are Ye Still Content?," 28 July 1877

A

Introduction

Poetry offered another avenue for commentary about the American labor situation in the aftermath of the Great Strike of 1877.

Questions to Consider

- What future did the poet see for workers?
- To what did he compare owners and managers?
- What was the message of the poem? How effective was the poet in conveying that message?

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Say, brothers, are ye still content
To sweat, and toil from year to year,
Till sunny youth are spent?
And all for what? A lordling's sneer!
When feeble age and sickness come,
And palsied limbs can toil no more,
The poor-house bids you, "welcome home"
Or open yawns the prison door.

And that's not our end, our sole reward;
For years of toil the only fee
Our tyrant masters will accord
To weary serfs, like you and me
God! were we born to pine and sigh?
And crouch and fawn like abject slaves
To toll, to suffer and to die?
And rest, at last, in pauper's graves?

Up, brothers, up throughout the land!
In all your strength, united, rise,

With eager hearts together band;
Our only hope in union lies.
Awake ye trembling, trampled throng,
In every land by shore and sea;
Oh, spurn the yoke you've worn so long,
Strike off your chains, and dare to be free!

And from your limbs the shackles shake,
And stand erect as freeman should;
While Mammon's bloated offspring quake,
The vampires drunken with our blood!
And He who watches over all
Who scorns the hand that would oppress,
Who sees and notes the sparrow's fall,
Will bless your efforts with success.

Source:

Joshua Ferguson, "Are Ye Still Content?," *Labor Standard* 3, no. 12 (28 July 1877).