

THE "BERRIES"

POETRY OF NATION FAILS OF EXPRESSION IN THEIR PICKING.

It may be that our fine ladies and lords don't know what berry picking is, so naturally it becomes an almost sacred duty for our writers to touch upon this subject—even while they eat the berries. It may be possible that many of our fine lords carry an idea in their bonnets that a berry is only a kind of fruit that floats around in their brandy-glass.

It is entirely possible that our ignorant masters and mistresses imagine that a berry grows on a bush of some kind, on a tree or on a vine, and that Fair Mother Nature provided these things for their 'special benefit.

Some of them even may have the idea that a swarm of bees fly from vine, bush to bush, and gather these berries into one pile—and that, all they themselves have to do is to sit at a table and eat them. Wouldn't that be nice!

Unfortunately, "the berries" mean a lot of hard work, little pay and many discomforts. Hard work (—?—) that children can do, women can do, and men can do. (But oh, my poor back!) Many of our finest people imagine that berry picking is a romantic occupation.

These people couldn't tell the difference between a berry-patch and the "bad lands." They think that a male Berry-king, in white duck pants, strolls down the lane with a female Berry-queen leaning on his arm smacking her lips over the blushing strawberries he pokes into her mouth. Yes. That's what they think—and you can't blame them—they don't know much.

But we will not tell them how it is done. We have other things to write about besides "how to pick berries"—industrial unionism, for instance. It is enough for us to know that it is hard work and little pay and that we must organize into the Agricultural Workers' Union before we can get the full value out of the berries that we pick.

Our boss belongs to a Farmers' Union and he will not pay a cent more than he has to. So it is up to us to organize, and see to it, that he has to pay us what it is worth, and not "what he thinks it's worth."

The A. W. I. U. is a big industrial union and is going pretty strong. It has done a lot of organizing in the berry fields and will do a lot more this year. It is the only thing that stands between low wages and the harvest hand.

Every normal man wants as much pay as the next man—and, everybody knows it. If we are getting less than the next man we very naturally feel like asking for more. As a body of men working on a job, getting less than somebody else, we frequently feel an increase in wages would do us a great deal of good. And surely it wouldn't do us any harm—we are very optimistic in this respect and many of us feel like taking a chance on it any way, come what may.

But we are working as a gang, a crew, a body of men (Each one may have a different idea on what constitutes a day's pay). In that case we must hold a meeting of some kind and, if we're going to hold a meeting, we had better be organized.

If we were on the job all alone, the matter would be very simple. As an individual we could halt the boss and tell him, in a very few words, just exactly what is on our mind. No meeting would be necessary, except the one with the Boss.

But we are not working that way, and haven't been—since the days of the civil war.

We are working as a gang and so, as a gang we must meet with the Boss.

In order to successfully meet with the boss we've got to become union men and it follows, like day follows craft union night, that we ought to take out a red card in the I. W. W. and try to better our condition not only in the berry fields but also in all other fields in which we may work this summer. If we don't! It will be only a short time when the **bankers** will have us all on the bum.

A red card is about the best investment any working man or working woman can make. It brings the goods. It pays for itself in better wages and better living conditions. Besides: A man feels better when he is a union man.

True it is that the farmers have been crowded pretty hard by the bankers and other speculators. But true it is also that the Arkansas, Oklahoma and Kansas farmers are beginning to see who their real enemy is. He doesn't blame the men, who work with him, any more.

It looks like a big year for the A. W. I. U. No. 110.

Yours for the Berries,

T-bone Slim.