Labor

"DEAR ADOLF"

Letter From A Working Man

Auspices of the Council For Democracy

Sunday July 5, 1942

NBC - Red Network
5:00-5:15 P.M. EWT

OPENING ANNOUNCEMENT:

ANNOUNCER:
"Dear Adolf" - A Letter to Hitler! The National Broadcasting Company, in co-operation with the Council For Democracy, an organization dedicated to a fighting faith in democracy, presents "Dear Adolf", a series of six narrative letters written each week by Stephen Vincent Benet, one of the nation's greatest poet-writers.

These broadcasts are based upon actual letters written to Hitler by representative Americans, and reflect their reactions to the war and our stake in ultimate victory.

Our third program in this series presents James Cagney, distinguished American actor, relating the views of an American working man, as he addresses a letter to Hitler.

(OPEN WITH MUSIC AND BACKGROUND NOISES OF A BIG PLANT AT WORK)

NARRATOR:
Dear Adolf-- (GRIND OF A LATHE)

A VOICE:
Shift number one. Machine Shop. Shift number one.

NARRATOR:
Dear Adolf-- (THUD OF A MECHANICAL HAMMER)

VOICE:
Shift number two. Drop Hammer. Shift number two.

NARRATOR:
Dear Adolf-- (NOISE OF WELDING)

VOICE: Shift number three. Welding. Shift number three.

NARRATOR:
Dear Adolf. We're writing you a letter and it isn't in fancy words. It's written around the clock by the working stiffs of America--the guys with grease on their faces who know what work means. It's written in steel and plastics, carborundum and tungsten, rivet-buckers and drill-templates, planes and guns. How about it--you guys at Raw Stores?

VOICE:
O.K. Send it on to Adolf!

NARRATOR:
How about it, Sheet Metal?

VOICE: Don't give us the oil. We're busy. Send it on to Adolf?

NARRATOR:
How about it, Production, Inspection, Engineering?

VOICES:
--on to Adolf!

NARRATOR:
Experimental--Metal Bench--Finishing and Plating?

VOICE:
Got no time to gab. We're busy. Send it on to Adolf!

NARRATOR:
How's it coming, Final Assembly?

VOICE:
Can't you read the chart, you dumb bunny? The figures keep climbing, don't they? Send them on to Adolf!
(MUSIC UP INTO A BIG FACTORY WHISTLE, TRAMP OF MEN'S FEET. MACHINE-NOISE CONTINUES IN BACKGROUND, UNINTERRUPTED.)

NARRATOR:
That's the old shift going off and the new shift coming on. And, eight hours from now, that shift will go off and another one come on. And eight hours from then--same business. Because this is an American war plant and it's making war!

A NAZI VOICE, BREAKING IN:
But that is impossible, my good man. You cannot make war. Your workers only work forty hours a week. I have read it in your papers.

NARRATOR:

Listen, sap, don't give me that baloney. Sure we got a forty-hour week, base-pay. And wouldn't your sweated workers like to have one. But--how much did you work last week, in your plant, Jimmy?

A VOICE:

52.

NARRATOR:

How about you, Shorty?

A VOICE:

48.

NARRATOR:

Mike?

A VOICE, ITALIAN, EXCITABLE)

I don't know how hella da long I worka dis week till I getta da paycheck. Maybe 56, maybe 60. I know dam well I worka da overtime because we gotta rusha job and she's gotta rush.

NARRATOR:

48--52--60. Well, why are you doing it?

VOICE 1)

Got kids. Raising 'em.

VOICE 2)

I get paid for the overtime, don't I? So what?

ITALIAN VOICE:

Da old woman she tella me she wanta fix uppa da house. She say, Mike, getta da lead outa your pants and work on da rusha job--da house she needsa be fix.

A FAT, AMERICAN VOICE, BREAKING IN)

Just what I suspected. Just what I've always said. Apathy. Selfishness. Greed. Eyes that never look beyond the paycheck. Labor asleep at the switch. Oh dear, oh dear. Don't you realize that, while you get paid for overtime, our brave American boys are fighting and dying--

NARRATOR:

You needn't tell us. We know.

We got brothers in the army and navy, we got sons and nephews and guys that worked at the same bench with us. We aren't spilling off about them but we aren't forgetting them. We don't like the bunk and the oil and the big words. We don't like star-spangled orations that don't add up. But we know what we're doing--and we know what they're doing. Everytime we throw a switch or pull a lever--every time we set up a new job--everytime the whistle blows for the new shift--we know what we're doing--over 20 million of us--and don't be fooled about that.

Did you ever sleep in what they call a "hot bed", Mister--a bed that never gets changed because, as soon as you get out of it, the guy from shift three gets in? Did you ever work in an asbestos suit in front of the hot steel? Did you ever work on high iron--did you ever climb the poles? Did you ever go down the mine-shaft, in the cage, and wonder, now and then, about the guys last week who never came up from Shaft Six? Did you ever see a man's hand chewed into red pulp, just because he slipped up for a split-second?

Then don't talk to us, Mister. We aren't softies and we aren't pampered. We're working-stiffs and we're tough.

That's where you made your mistake about us, Adolf. You thought we weren't tough. You thought dough was all we were after. And you thought we couldn't think.

Well, we're thinking now and we're thinking about this war. We aren't thinking about it in slogans--Axe the Axis and Set the Rising Sun. I guess they're all right, as advertising. But we're thinking about it like this.

A RATHER SERIOUS VOICE:

I'm a mechanic. Live in Seattle. Guess I wasn't so sold on this war, at first--no, not even on the need for victory. Then I heard a broadcast listing the names and trades of 20 Norwegians, shot by the Nazis because they tried to escape to England. One of those men was a mechanic. I could imagine myself in that man's place. Perhaps he was just like me; maybe he had a family just like mine. If that could happen to a mechanic in Norway, it could happen to a mechanic in Seattle. Every time somebody grumbles about the war, I think of that mechanic in Norway. I think about him and me.

NARRATOR:

Get that one? Okay. Here's a guy from New York State.

VOICE, MAYBE BRONX)

I'm a radical drill operator, working in a plant that turns out vital equipment for our Navy. I work to close tolerances. My machine is intricate and requires deep concentration. I can do my work fast and efficiently for two good reasons. Peace of mind is one--we've got decent wages and working conditions

and my loved ones are secure. And then there's my desire to do my share in aiding my country. That's part of it all. Well, just multiply these thoughts by millions of fellows like me.

NARRATOR:

Multiply them Adolf, Add them up. And stick this one in. Here's an electrical worker from Kansas City, writing in to his Union journal.

VOICE, MIDWEST)

A while ago, in these columns, we snarled "What war?". We know now, "what war". It's a war in which laborer and employer must fight shoulder to shoulder or perish side by side.

NARRATOR:

Here's one from an airplane-plant.

OLDER VOICE:

I have two sons who are in the American Army. I don't want to see them fail for lack of equipment. And here's where we're turning out the stuff. Every time I complete my particular work on an airplane assembly, I speed it on the way to my sons.

NARRATOR:

And here's something just a little different. He isn't a skilled worker--he's nobody you ever heard of. He's just a rag-peddler. Yes, I said rag-peddler. But, over here, Adolf, even rag-peddlers can have ideas of their own. And he says--

GERMAN VOICE, OLD)

I am an old man and an individualist. My German inheritance comes from three generations, born here in America. As a young man, I traveled through Germany and half of Europe. My trades are many but now rag-peddling is my only desire.

In the dark streets and alleys, in the lawns surrounding the residences of the so-called better class, through the nerve-killing noise of industry, I make my daily trips. There I see the gambler, the stickupmen, the prostitute, the worker, the businessman and all the different kinds of people what make this world. I see plenty rags of human minds. And once, in my bundle of rags, I find your book, "Mein Kampf". I read it because I want to know what it's about.

After I finish that book of hate and nonsense, something happened inside of me. I have a strange desire to live till the biggest rag-collecting job in the world is done and I know it will be done. We will take your rags on par value, Mr. Hitler. The world will see you naked. The medals and uniforms of your Hermann Goering, the ropes of your Heinrich Himmler and all the rags you accumulated will be collected. The rats of fear, the sufferings of your tortured Europe, will go with the swastika on the big rag pile.

Adolf, your time is gone. I want your rags. I am old and I know when things are good and when they are rotten.

NARRATOR:

And now--back to another war-plant and another workman.

VOICE:

I have been buying war bonds with every spare dollar. I have been working on my war job with every ounce of strength. I intend to go on doing that because I know that never again will I have overtime pay or a shop committee or the right to change my job--if Hitler wins. And he won't win, while the boys in Plant Four keep working.

NARRATOR:

Get it Adolf? That's us.

More than 20 million workers, eleven million union members, all over the U.S.A. Yes, I'm talking about unions. I'm talking about CIO and A.F.of L. I'm talking about every union man in this country. Because we know what you do to unions, Adolf. You don't fight them and you don't debate with them. You wipe them out hide and hair.

Over here, a union button's a union button. In Germany, now, it means your controlled Labor Front. In Japan, it never existed. In Italy,-- well, can you imagine a Mussulunion? There's just one thing about unions you've taught us, Adolf. They can't grow inside your New Order. They can only grow in a democracy. They can only grow on free soil.

A VOICE:

Calling local B241. Calling local B241.

A VOICE:

No answer. There's no answer.

VOICE:

No answer from any local.

VOICE:

No answer. Address unknown.

NAZI VOICE:

All patriotic workers are now members of the Labor Front. All unions are now a part of the Labor Front. There are no other workers, no other unions.

VOICE:

Hans was secretary of the local. Have you heard what happened to Hans?

VOICE:

Concentration camp. Term indefinite.

VOICE:

Otto--he was treasurer--Otto--

VOICE:

Otto-died.

VOICE:

Gustave was on the shop-committee-Gustave--

VOICE:

Forced labor in Poland. Typhus.

NARRATOR:

That's the way it is in your country, Adolf--and in the countries you've conquered. And that's the way it isn't going to be here.

Eleven million union men are against you, Adolf. Day shift or night shift or middle shift--they're against you and they're out to get you. And that doesn't just go for the unions. It goes for all labor.

Let me tell you just one little story, Adolf--when Chrysler built its first tank-plant. You don't get balmy weather in Michigan, in the winter. But the guys on the job gave up holidays and weekends to stand in slush knee-deep, pouring 51,000 tons of concrete. It snowed and they blew on their fingers and put up 6,500 tons of steel in 70 days. And that was a year before Pearl Harbor. Well, what do you suppose those guys are doing now--picking buttercups?

They did it for overtime pay? Well, let's see your Labor Front match it. And, confidentially, Adolf--it wasn't all for the overtime.

THE FAT AMERICAN VOICE, BREAKING IN:

Distressing--racketeers--labor czars--corruption--intimidation--horrible--awful--distressing--scandalous--

NARRATOR:

Yeah. We hear you, too. We hear the divisive voices. We hear the voices of those who would set class against class, whites against Negroes, Christians against Jews. And we know they're playing Adolf's game--and we're onto them. We hear the voices of those--not many but a few--who would rather beat Labor than Hitler, rather muscle in on Labor than save the United States. And our answer to them and you is-- (LOUD AND DERISIVE BRONX CHEER FROM MANY VOICES)

NARRATOR:

Yep, that's coarse. It isn't refined. I guess we're not very refined when we get mad, Adolf. And you're getting us madder every day.

The worse you make it, the madder we'll get. We know about the guys on those tankers you've been sinking--they were working guys like us. We know about the guys who died on Bataan--a lot of them used to be working guys like us. There's a cap floating out on the Atlantic with a union button on it. There's a kid who was a smart mechanic, but he won't come back for his tool-kit since the Japanese sniper got him. Well, they were us--and we're them. We don't need any fancy slogans to keep turning on the heat.

Sure, we're keeping the right to strike. Tell your workers that--if you dare! Tell them the figures, too - in May there were a hundred and thirty-seven thousand man days lost by strikes. A hundred and 37 thousand man days lost. But two hundred and forty-two million man days worked. The total loss was just six one hundredths of one percent. And let them think that one over--and you'd better think it over, too.

There's no cockeyed Labor Front in this country. There's no Gestapo pushing us around. We've adjourned the big strikes for the duration. We're doing that freely. We're giving up extras and working overtime. We're doing that freely. We're back of the President and back of the government. And we're sending you a letter 20 million workers long. It's written in steel and flame--in the planes that fly the oceans and the bombs that drop from the planes--in the ships that slide down the ways and the plants that work night and day, day and night. It's written in brains and muscles and skilled hands moving fast on the assembly-line--in war bonds and war stamps and the sweat and grind of the shift. It's written in plain American and it's signed "Yours to blow you sky high--American labor!"

How about it, Assembly Line?

A VOICE:

Sending it on to Adolf.

A QUIET VOICE:
The time's short

NARRATOR:
How about it, Production, Maintenance, Metal Bench, Center Wings?

VOICE:
Sending it on to Adolf!

A QUIET VOICE:
The time's passing.

NARRATOR:
How about it, 20 million workmen?

VOICES:
SENDING IT ON TO ADOLF! SENDING IT ON! (MUSIC UP) (CURTAIN)

CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENT:

ANNOUNCER:
You have just heard "Dear Adolf," the third of a series of six narrative letters written each week by Stephen Vincent Benet and presented by the National Broadcasting Company, in cooperation with the Council For Democracy. The third letter was addressed to Hitler by an American working man, with James Cagney, as narrator. The program was directed by Lester O'Keefe, with original music composed by Tom Bennett. Milton E. Krents supervised for the Council For Democracy.

These broadcasts are based upon actual letters written to Hitler by representative Americans. Won't you send in your own letter to Dear Adolf? All letters become the property of this program and may be used on forthcoming broadcasts without the mention of names.

Listen next week to a letter to Hitler from an American housewife and mother with Helen Hayes, as narrator.

Copies of today's "Dear Adolf" letter from a working man may be secured without cost by writing directly to the Council For Democracy, 11 West 42nd Street, New York City.