

WHAT'S YOUR BETTERWORLD ISSUE?

LABOR



"The people united will never be divided."
-- Cesar Chavez

A nation's well-being depends on those who work to provide the goods and services that allow its citizens to lead productive and healthy lives. Often throughout history, societies have been divided into different classes, with one class typically having to do much of the work that keeps that society running. Employers and governments have not always treated the working classes well – often workers had to work long hours, in hazardous conditions for little pay.

The labor movement arose in Europe during the Industrial Revolution in the 18th and early 19th centuries, beginning with working people organizing into groups called labor unions and trade unions. With strength in numbers, workers had a better chance to convince employers and governments to treat them more fairly. The movement met with great resistance from the privileged classes. But by the late 1800s it began to grow into a worldwide movement after Pope Leo XIII advocated reforms for the working class, including the elimination of child labor, the right for workers to organize into unions, to have shorter work days and liveable wages.

Although some workers are still forced into sweatshops and other inhumane working conditions, the labor movement has won numerous victories that many of us take for granted, such as the 5-day work week, 8-hour work day, paid holidays and the end of child labor.

Most of the world celebrates May 1 as **International Workers' Day**, a time to celebrate the victories that have been won to make many workers' lives safer and more sustainable, and to rally around workers' rights to insist that all workers are treated fairly. Even though this date commemorates the US labor movement's demand for an eight-hour work day to come into effect on May 1, 1886, in the United States the labor force is celebrated on **Labor Day** on the first Monday in September.

Be A Hero For A Better World!

1. Find out more about historical labor leaders, labor victories, and ongoing labor injustice
2. Hold an event to raise awareness about sweatshops & other violations of workers' rights
3. Support organizations working to defend workers' rights

Labor Links

- AFL-CIO (aflcio.org)
- Fair Labor Association (fairlabor.org)
- International Labour Organisation (ilo.org)
- Jobs With Justice (jwj.org)
- LaborNet (labornet.org)
- National Labor Committee (nlcnet.org)
- US Dept of Labor (dol.gov)

For more information: www.betterworld.net/labor.htm

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"The first and continuing argument for the curtailment of working hours and the raising of the minimum age was that education was necessary in a democracy and working children could not attend school."

-- Grace Abbott

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"As labor creates the wealth of the country, we demand the passage of such laws as may be necessary to protect it in all its rights."

-- John Peter Altgeld

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"This is the spirit that is back of all the great struggles of the workers to improve their working conditions. Liberty and freedom for collective bargaining is what they want and what they must have."

-- Mary Anderson

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**"Join the union, girls, and together say Equal Pay for Equal Work."
-- Susan B. Anthony**

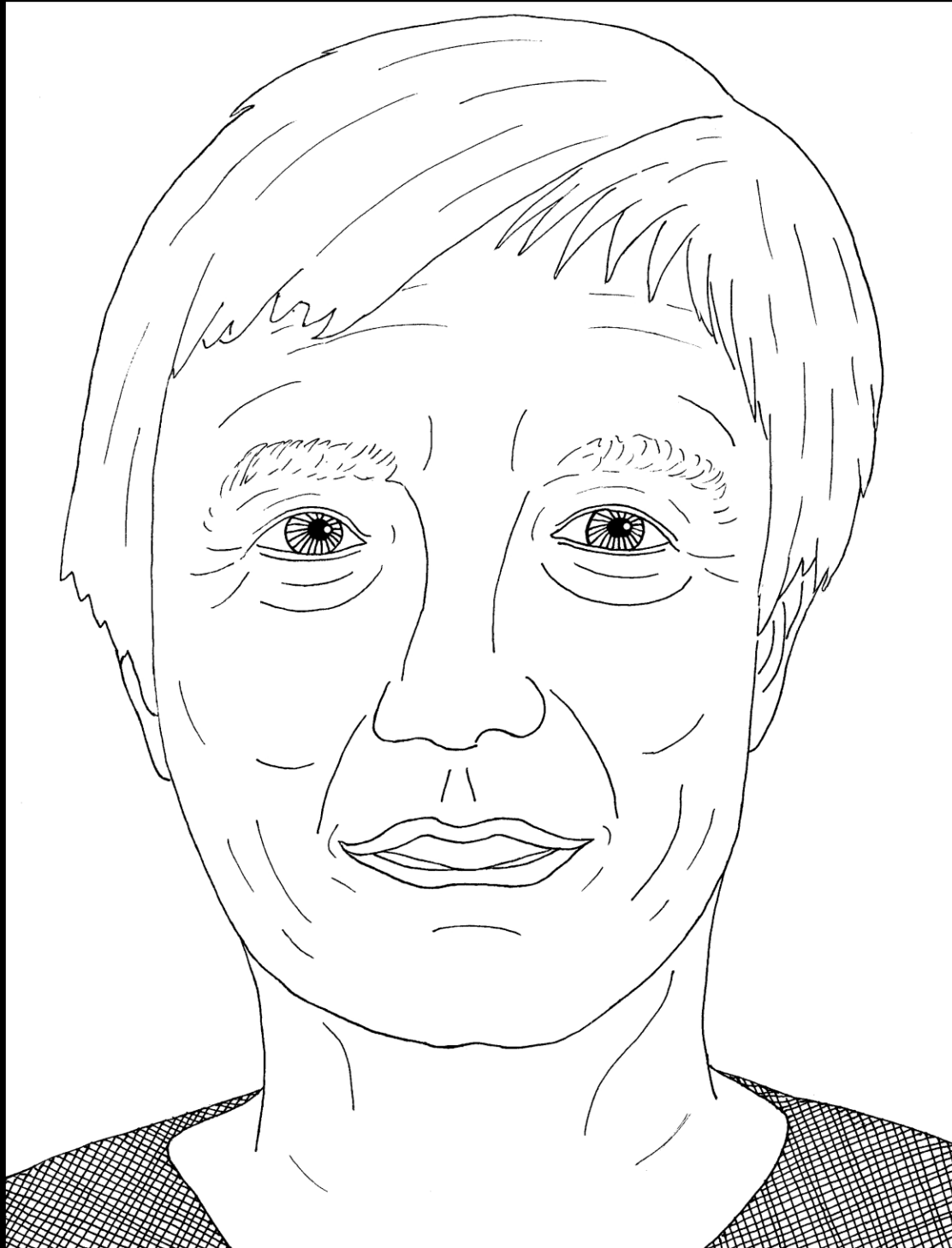
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"Where will we get the imagination to recognize that for most of human history the concept of Jobs didn't even exist? Work, as distinguished from Labor, was done to produce needed goods and services, develop skills and artistry, and nurture cooperation."

-- Grace Lee Boggs

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"...if you count the number of women and children in bonded labor, domestic slavery or sexual slavery today, there are more slaves in the world than at any other time in history."

-- Charlotte Bunch

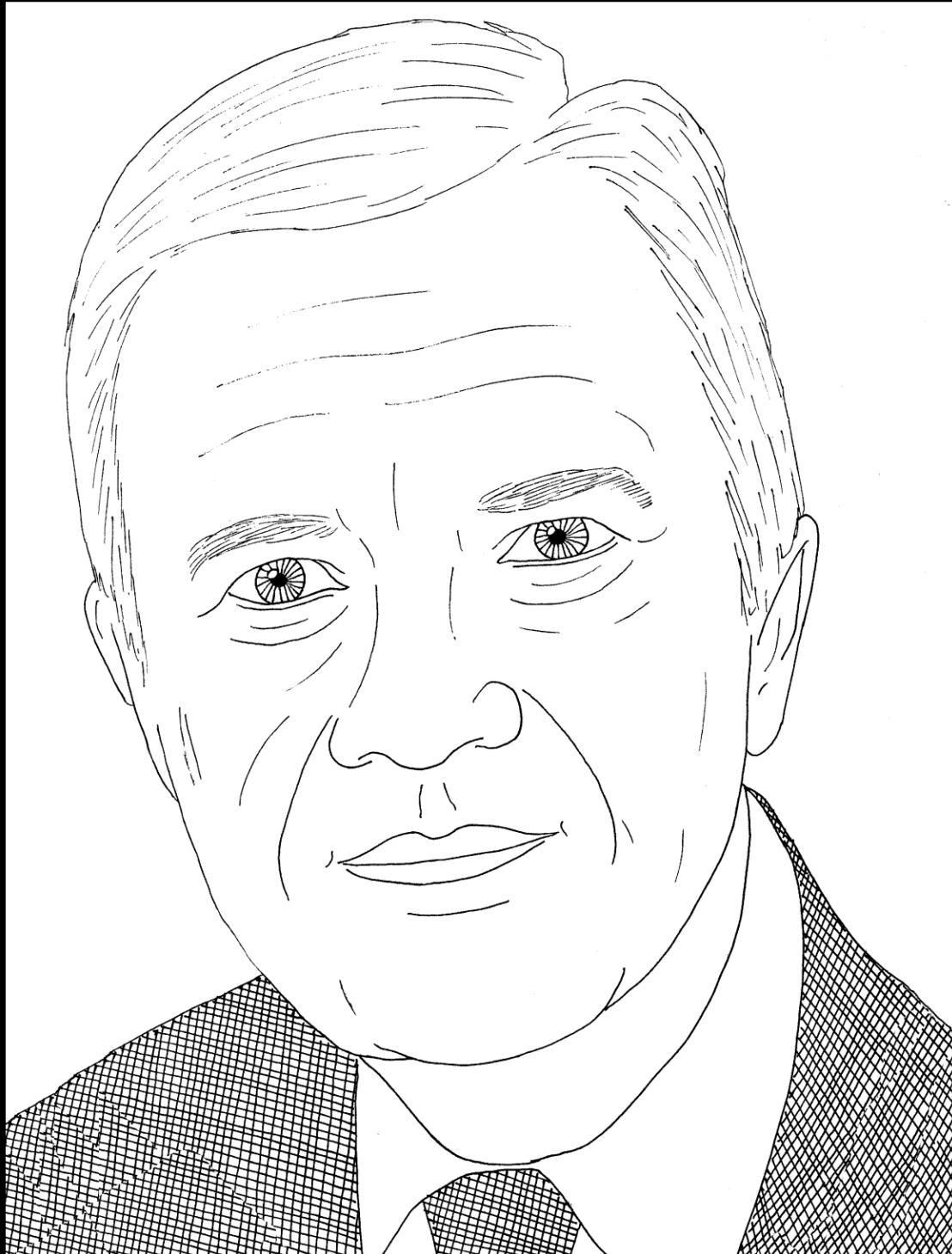
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"Every advance in this half-century-Social Security, civil rights, Medicare, aid to education, one after another-came with the support and leadership of American Labor."

-- Jimmy Carter

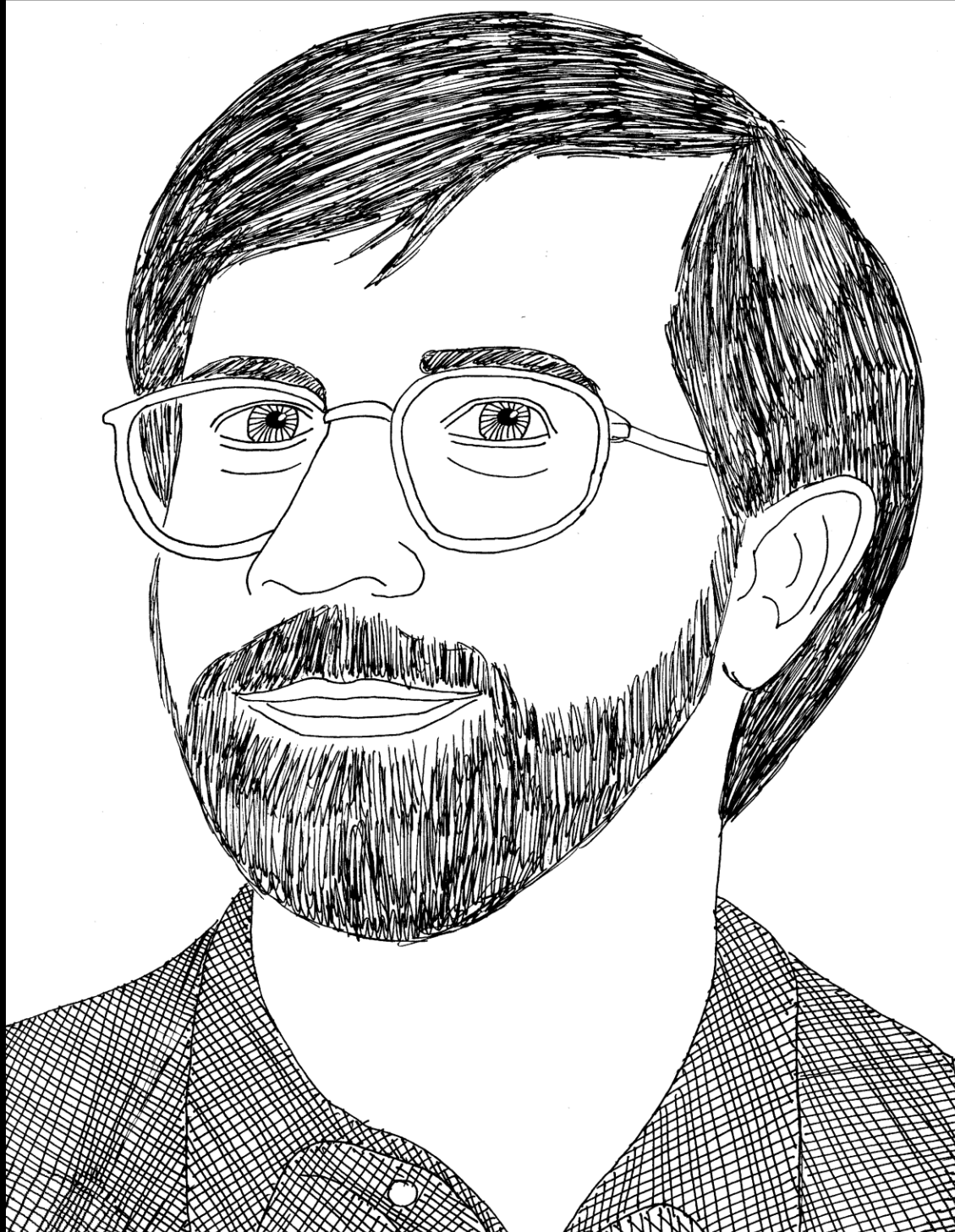
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"...there are farm movements around the world; there are environmental movements around the world; labor movements around the world involved in daily struggles around living wages, around protecting the rights of farmers to their seeds, and so on. Those struggles continue on a daily basis; they have not gone away."

-- John Cavanagh

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"The people united will never be defeated."
-- César Chavez

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"When morality comes up against profit, it is seldom that profit loses."
-- Shirley Chisholm

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**"Labor Unions are the leading force for democratization and progress."
-- Noam Chomsky**

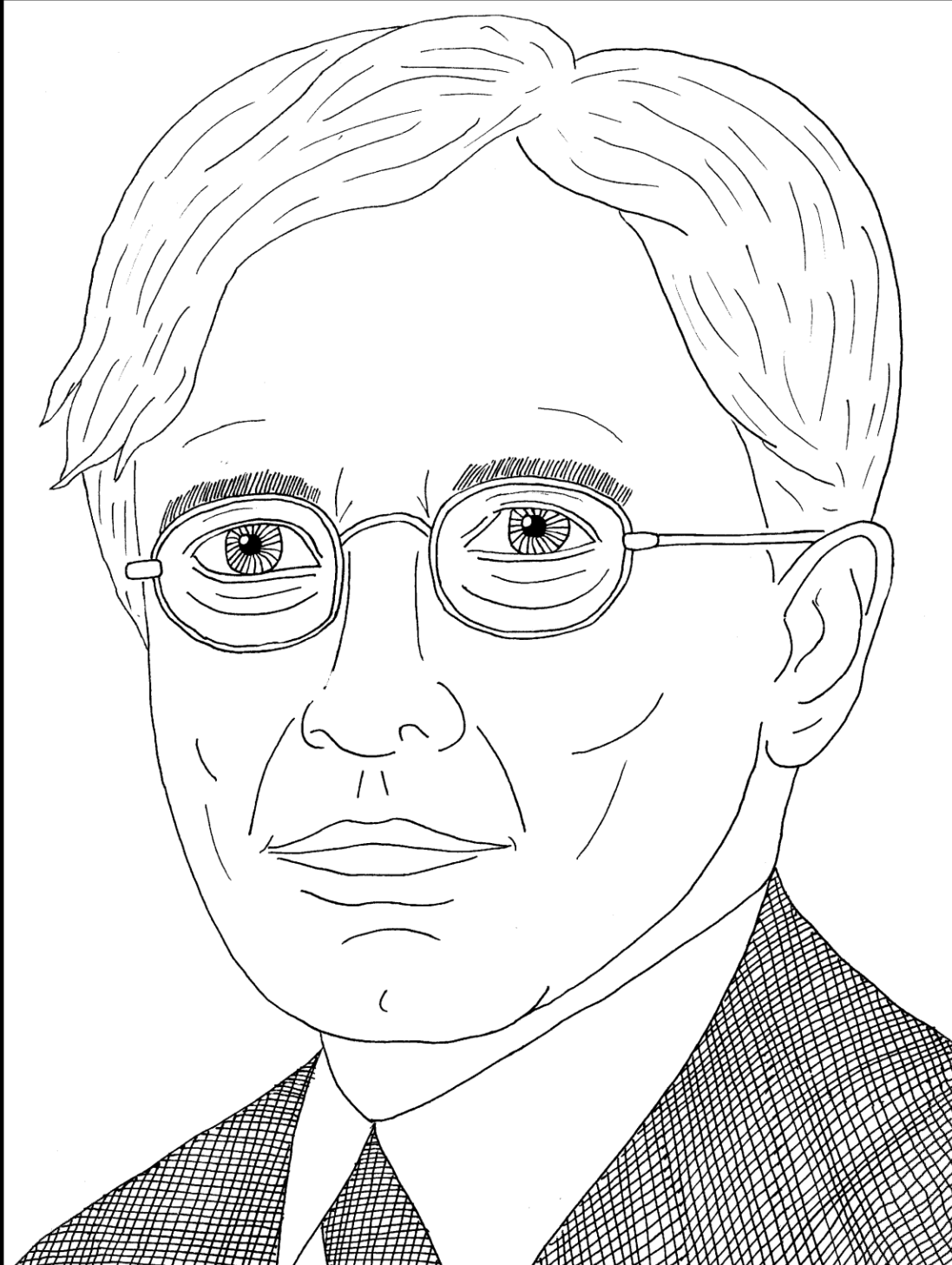
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**"This is the first great problem of modern democracy...
how to get a fair living by reasonable hours of work
leaving enough leisure for both childhood and manhood."**

-- John R. Commons

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**"There is no labor a person does that is undignified; if they do it right."
-- Bill Cosby**

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"..we see an increasingly weaker labor movement as a result of the overall assault on the labor movement and as a result of the globalization of capital."

-- Angela Davis

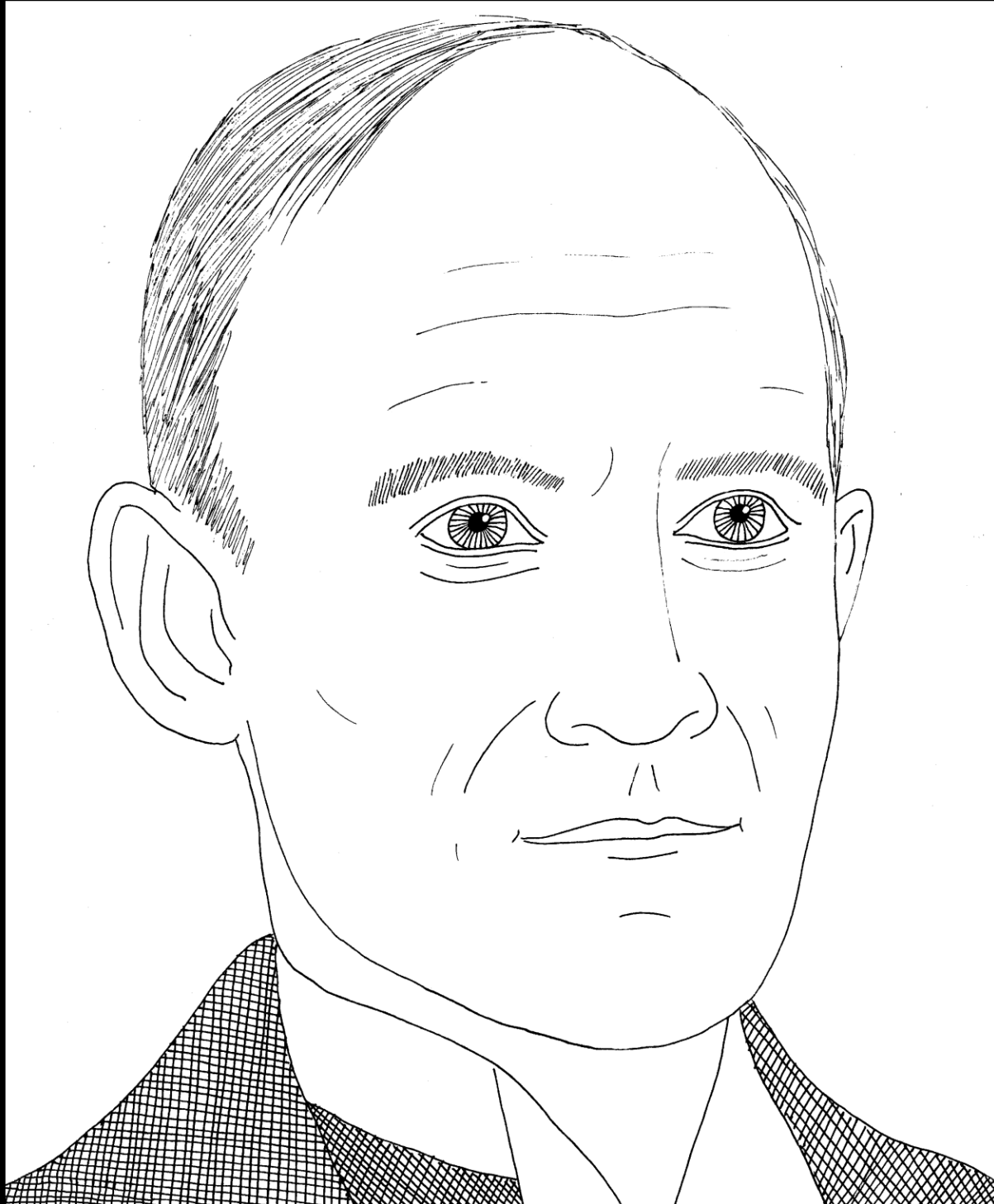
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"...labor is today the most vital and potential power this planet has ever known, and its historic mission is as certain of ultimate realization as is the setting of the sun."

-- Eugene V. Debs

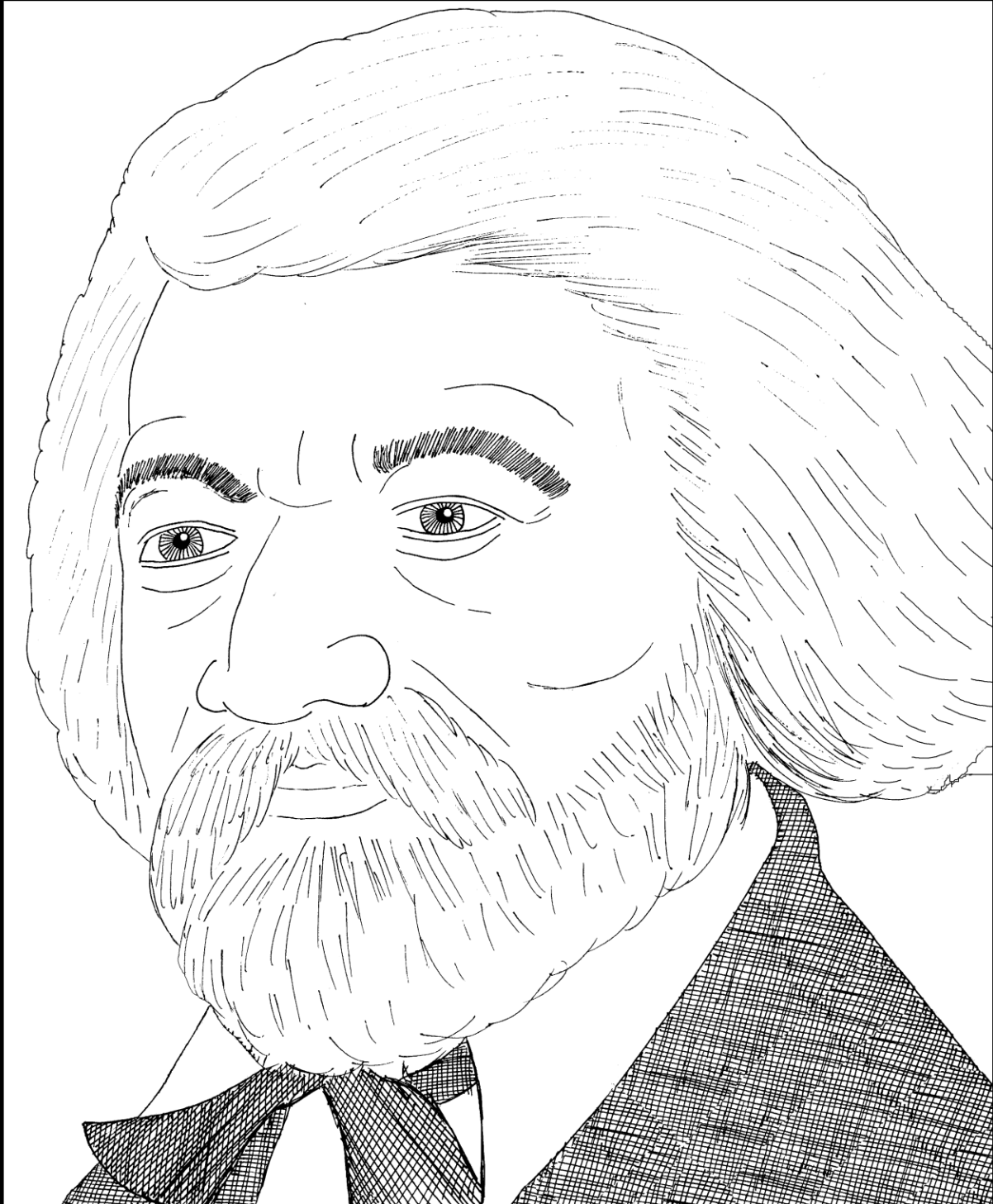
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**"People might not get all that they work for in this world,
but they must certainly work for all that they get."**

-- Frederick Douglass

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"Only a fool would try to deprive working men and working women of their right to join the union of their choice."

-- Dwight D. Eisenhower

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"There are are two kinds of people, those who do the work and those who take the credit. Try to be in the first group; there is less competition there."

-- Indira Gandhi

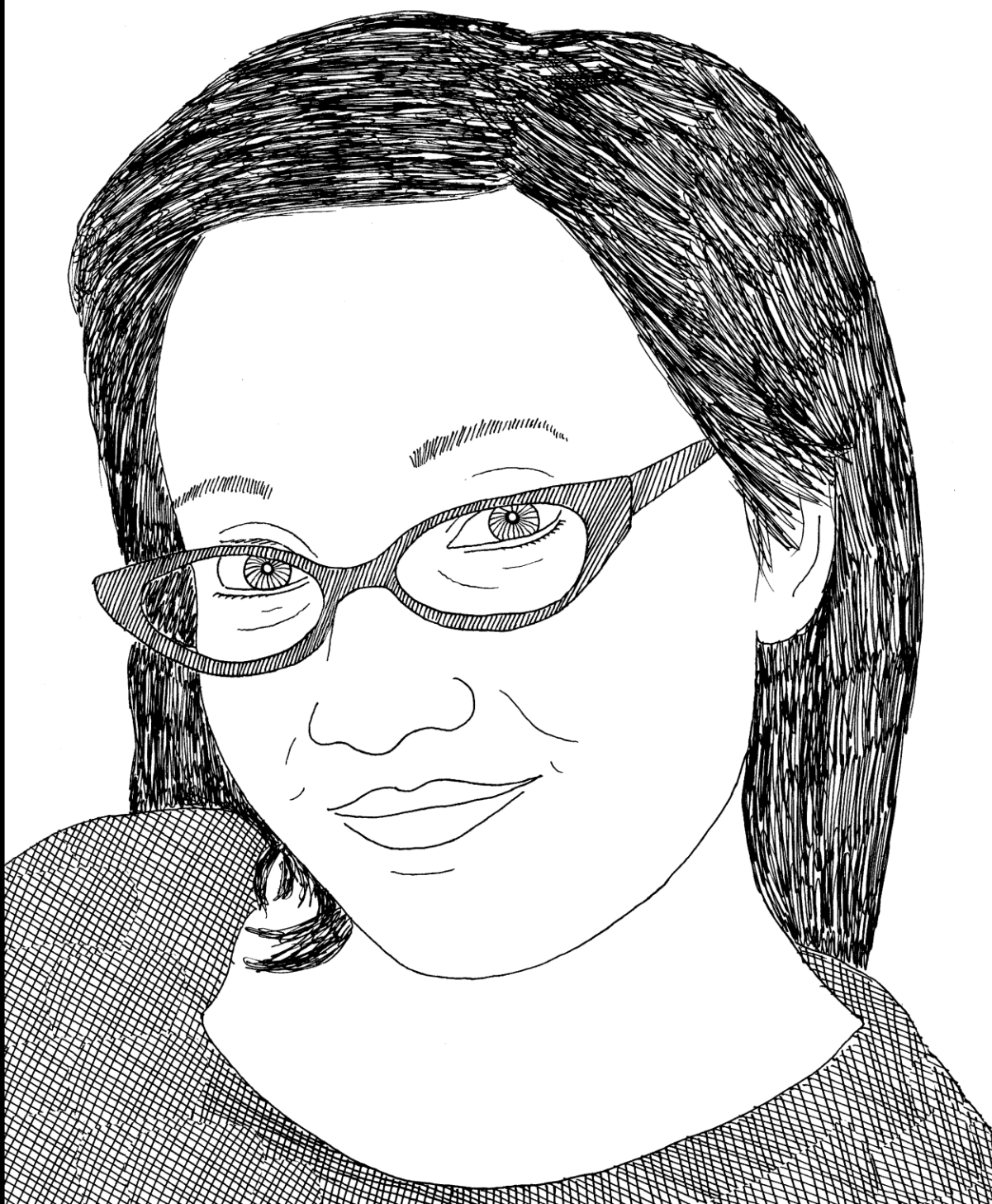
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"Why do right-wingers hate unions? Because collective bargaining is the power that a worker has against the corporation. Right-wingers hate that."

-- Janeane Garofalo

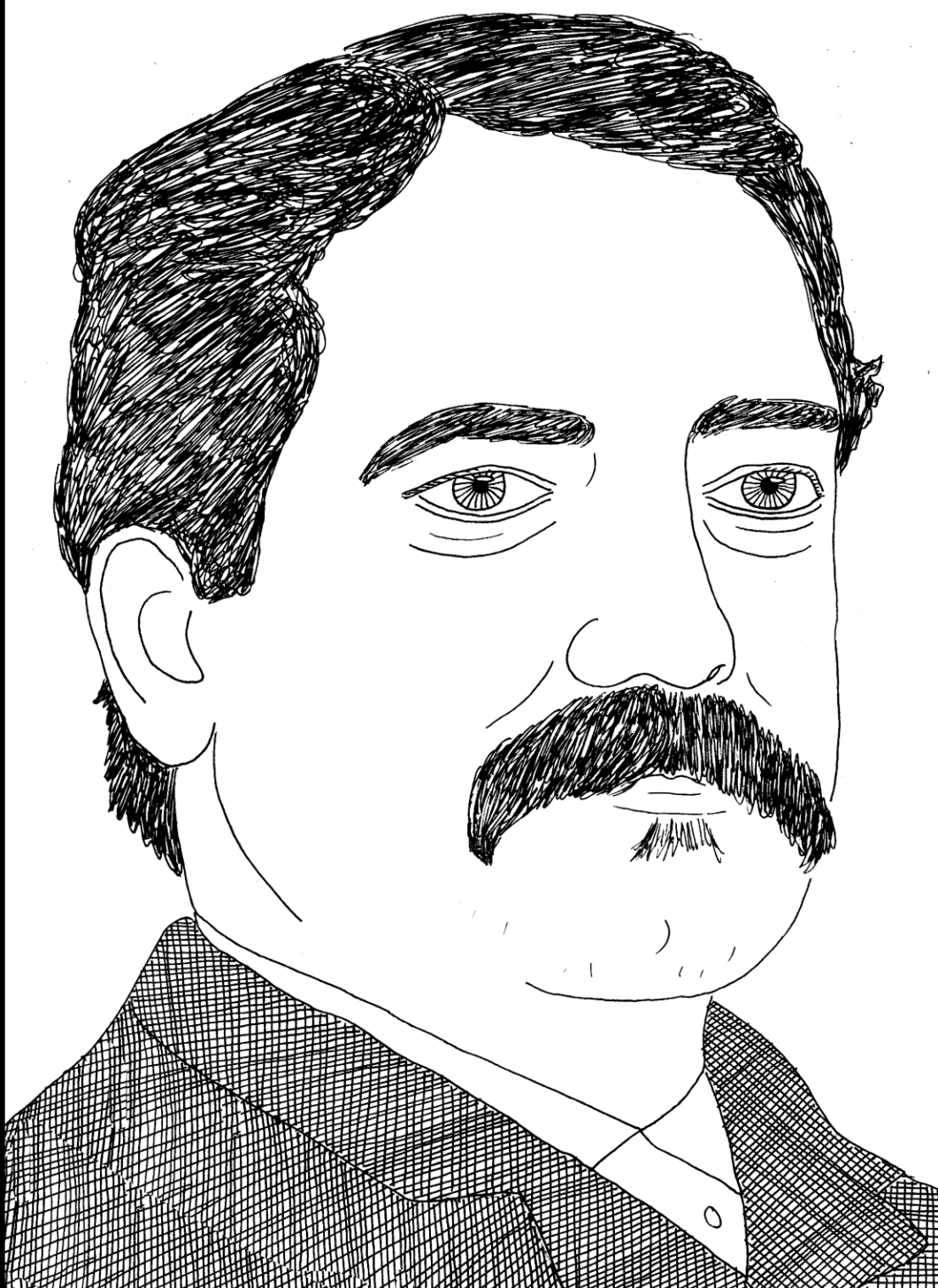
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"What does labor want? We want more schoolhouses and less jails; more books and less arsenals; more learning and less vice; more leisure and less greed; more justice and less revenge; in fact, more of the opportunities to cultivate our better natures, to make manhood more noble, womanhood more beautiful, and childhood more happy and bright."

-- Samuel Gompers

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"Don't waste any time in mourning - organize."
-- Joe Hill

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"Every man is dishonest who lives upon the labor of others..."
-- Robert G. Ingersoll

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"Although it is true that only about 20 percent of American workers are in unions, that 20 percent sets the standards across the board in salaries, benefits and working conditions. If you are making a decent salary in a non-union company, you owe that to the unions. One thing that corporations do not do is give out money out of the goodness of their hearts." -- Molly Ivins

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"My friends, it is solidarity of labor we want. We do not want to find fault with each other, but to solidify our forces and say to each other: "We must be together; our masters are joined together and we must do the same thing."

-- Mother Jones

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"We have words for racism and sexism, but wealth discrimination isn't fully recognized. It is a bias in favor of the wealthy and against labor, the environment, and the community. Concern for the public good must become the animating force of our economic order."

-- Marjorie Kelly

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"The American Labor Movement has consistently demonstrated its devotion to the public interest. It is, and has been, good for all America."

-- John F. Kennedy

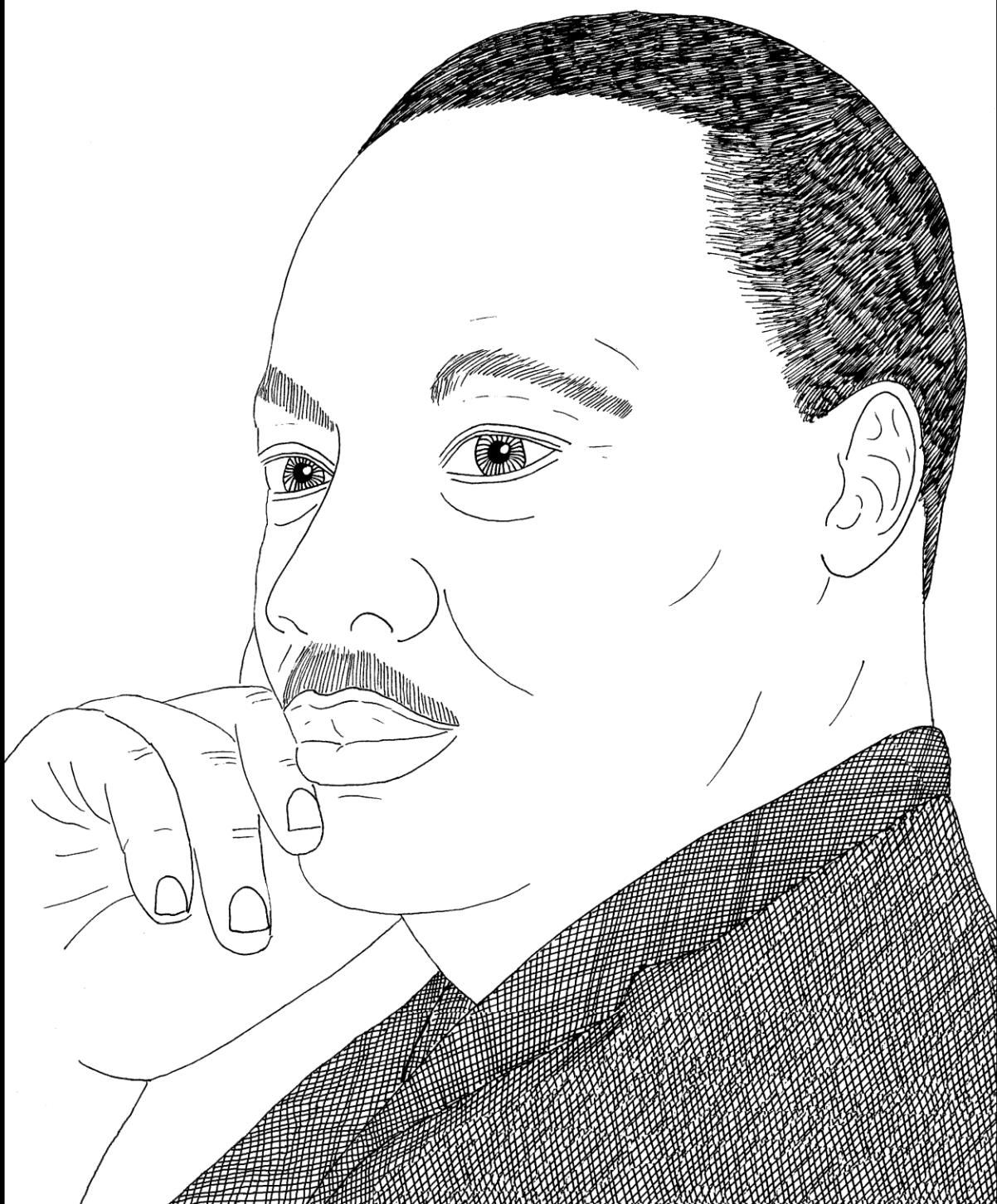
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"All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence."

-- Martin Luther King, Jr.

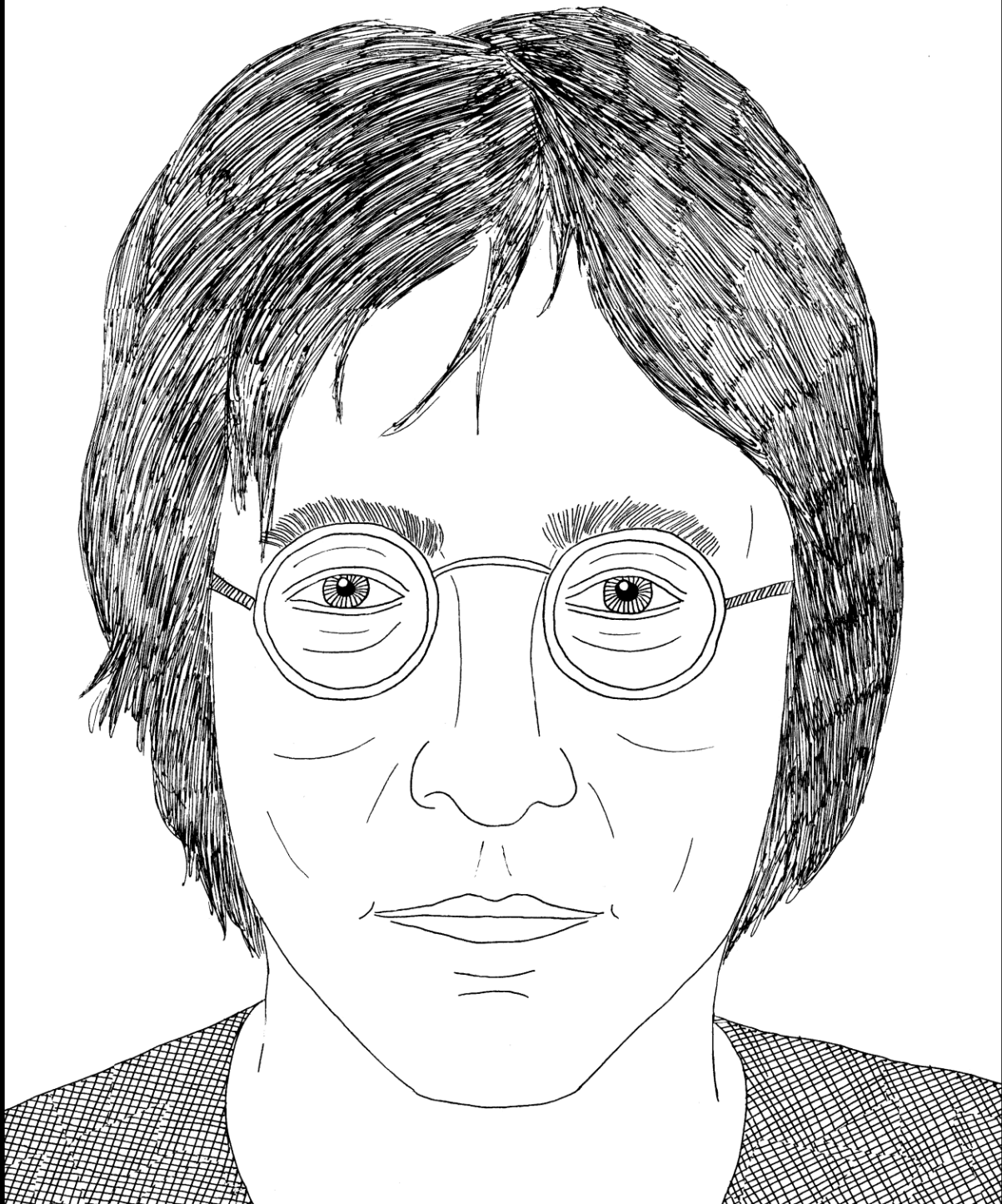
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"A working class hero is something to be."
-- John Lennon

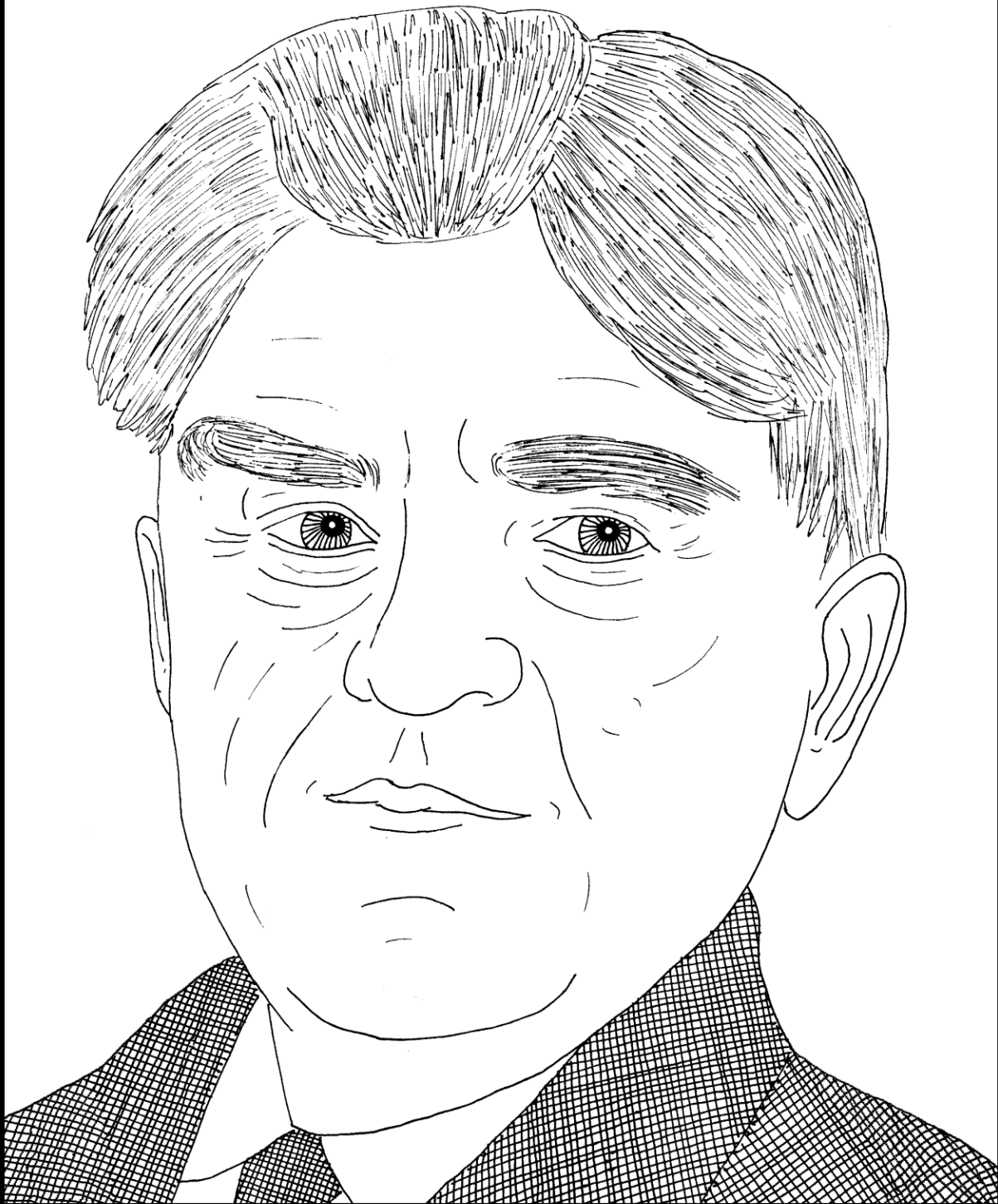
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"Let the workers organize. Let the toilers assemble. Let their crystallized voice proclaim their injustices and demand their privileges. Let all thoughtful citizens sustain them, for the future of Labor is the future of America."

-- John L. Lewis

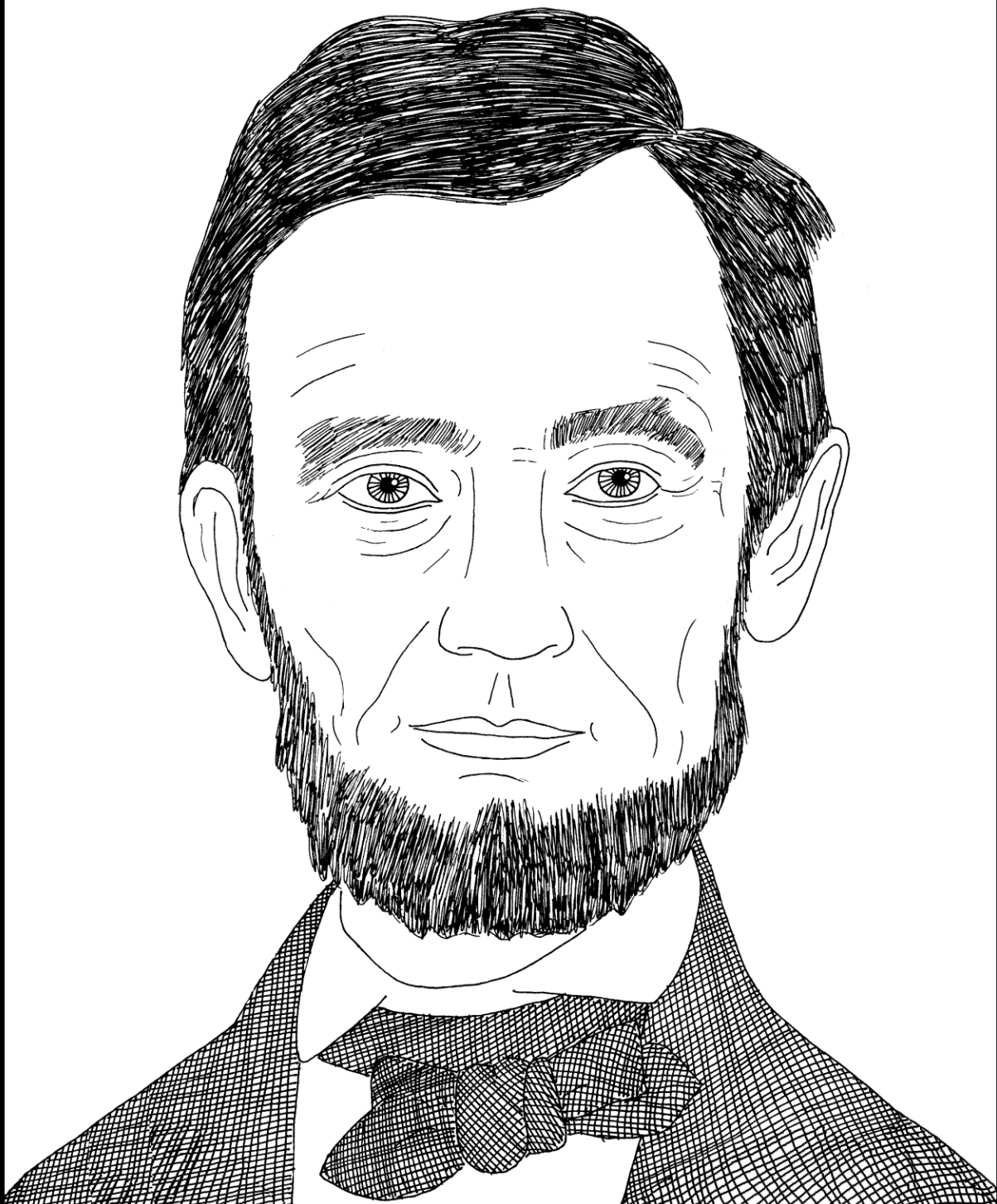
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"Labor is prior to, and independent of, capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration."

-- Abraham Lincoln

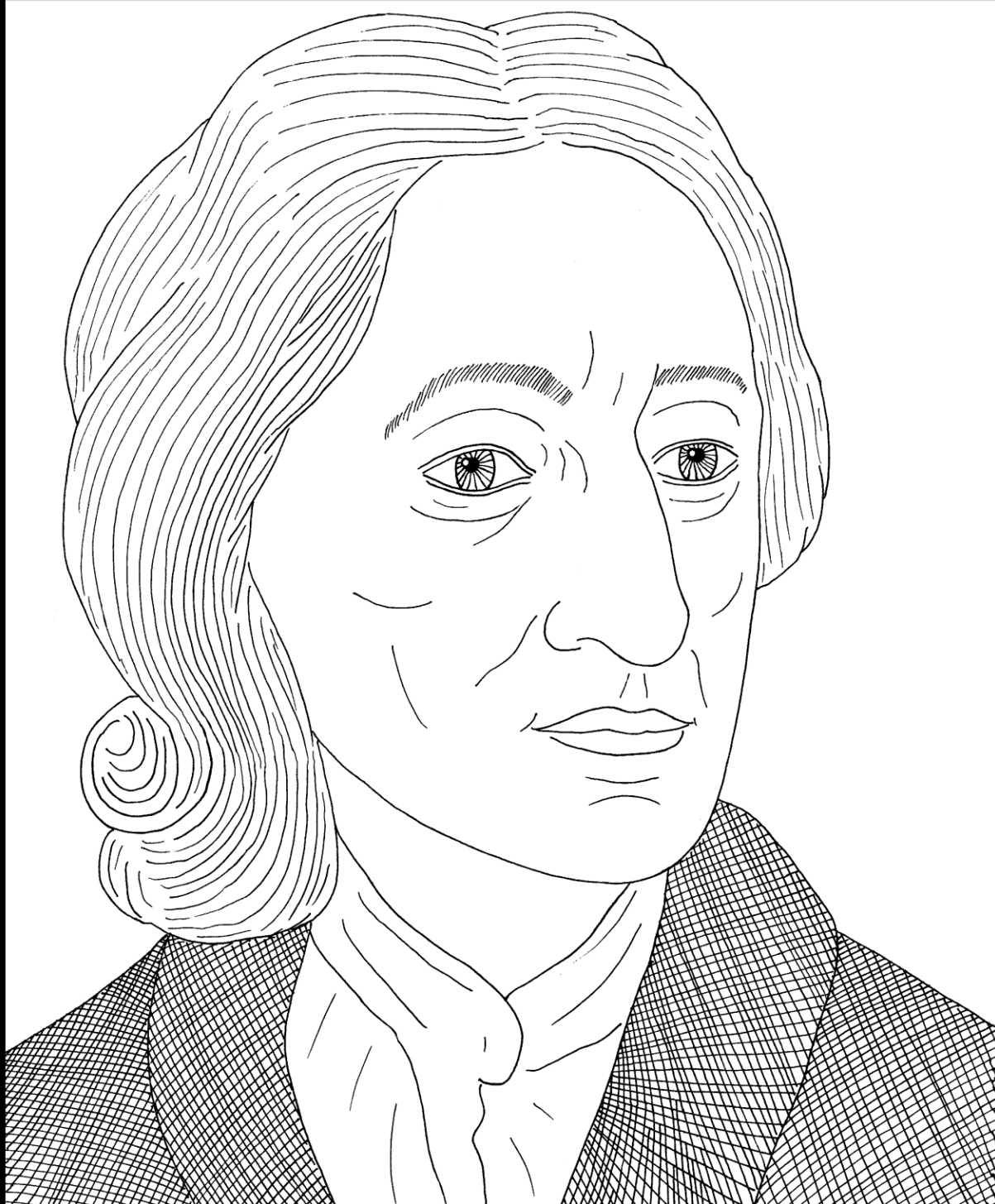
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"All wealth is the product of labor."
-- John Locke

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"The basic goal of labor will not change. It is -- as it has always been, and I am sure always will be -- to better the standards of life for all who work for wages and to seek decency and justice and dignity for all Americans."

-- George Meany

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**"Our motto is to work for peace based on social justice.
Our mandate is to improve the condition, health and
safety of workers, and our mission is universal."**

-- David A. Morse

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"In less than a century we experienced great movement. The youth movement!
The labor movement! The civil rights movement! The peace movement!
The solidarity movement! The women's movement! The disability movement!
The disarmament movement! The gay rights movement! The environmental movement!
Movement! Transformation! Is there any reason to believe we are done?"
-- Holly Near

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"Out of our first century of national life we evolved the ethical principle that it was not right or just that an honest and industrious man should live and die in misery. He was entitled to some degree of sympathy and security. Our conscience declared against the honest workman's becoming a pauper, but our eyes told us that he very often did."

-- Frances Perkins

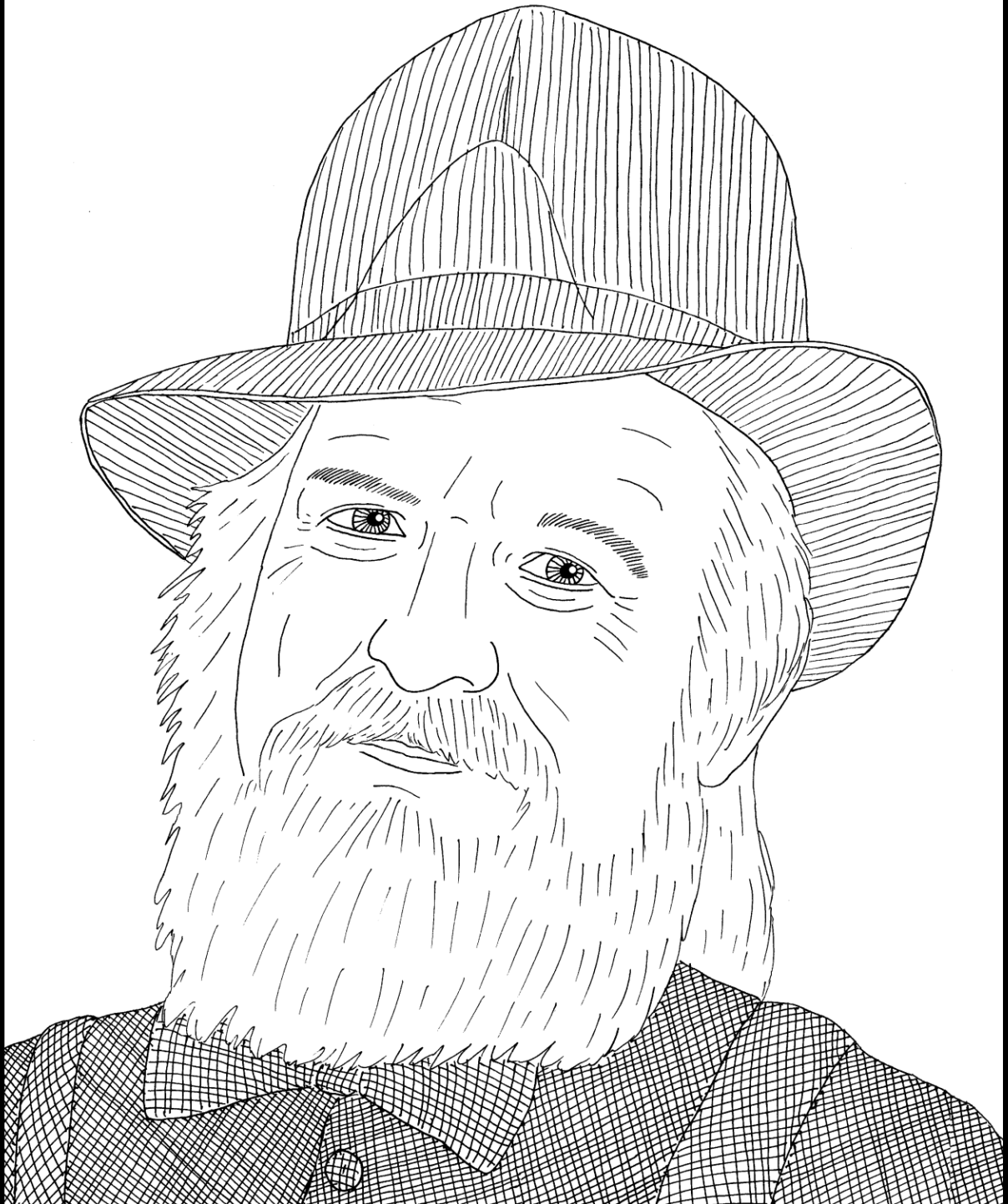
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"Kids don't have a little brother working in the coal mine, they don't have a little sister coughing her lungs out in the looms of the big mill towns of the Northeast. Why? Because we organized; we broke the back of the sweatshops in this country; we have child labor laws.... They were fought for, they were bled for, they were died for by working people, by people like us. Kids ought to know that...."

-- Utah Phillips

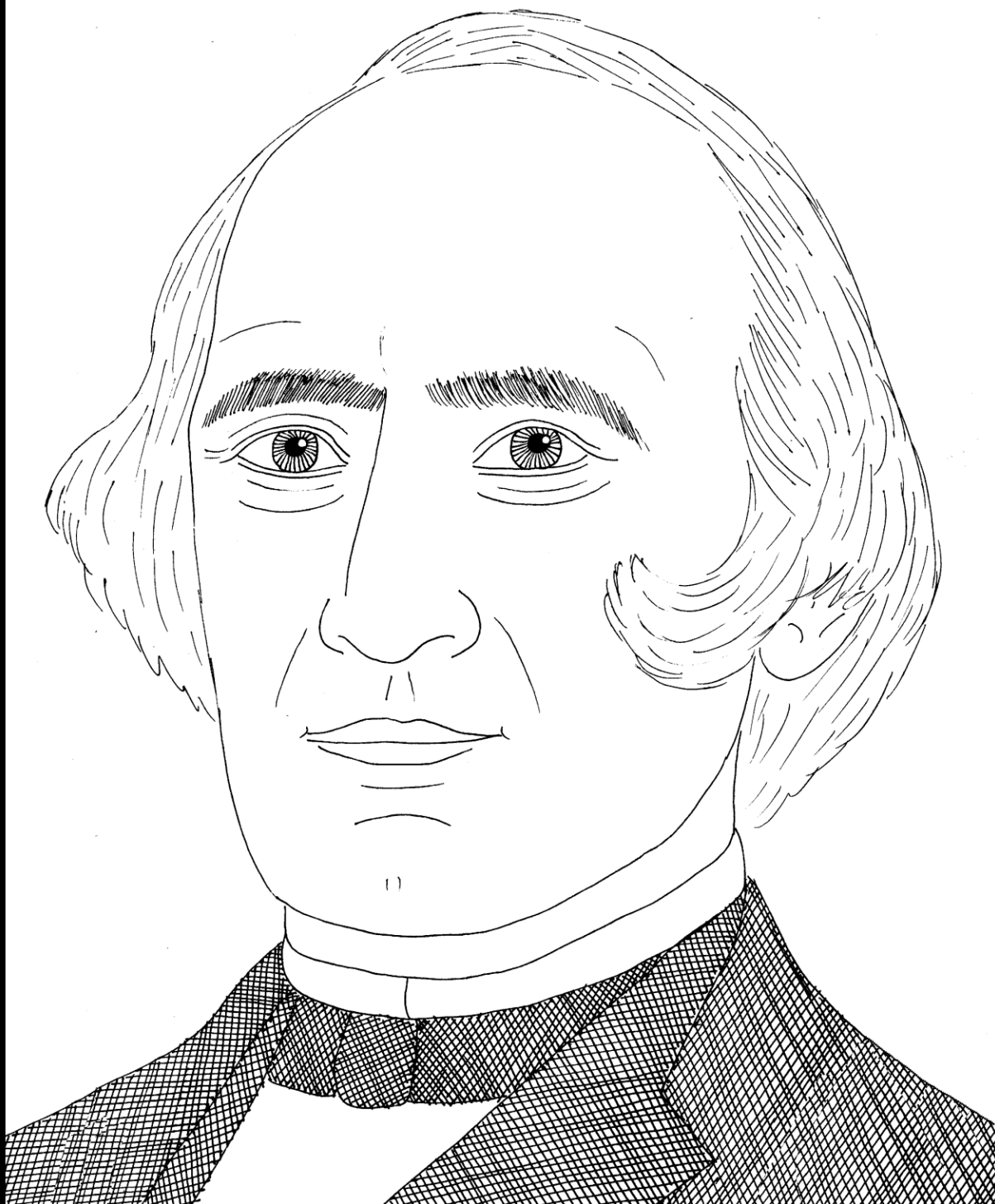
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**"The labor movement means just this: It is the last noble protest of the American people against the power of incorporated wealth."
-- Wendell Phillips**

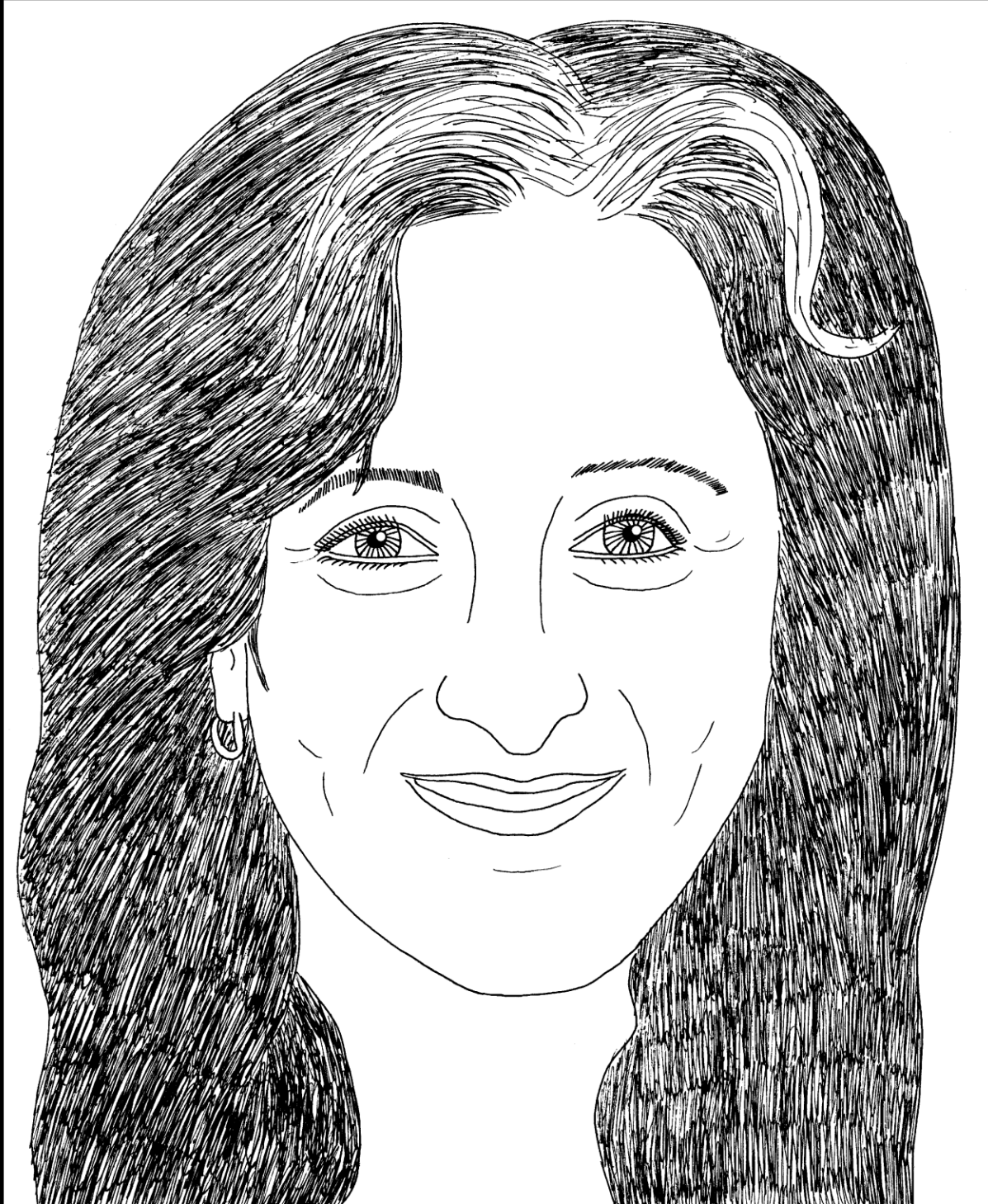
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"It's incredible to see labor unions and environmentalists getting together to stop the corporate mentality that destroys both jobs and the environment."

-- Bonnie Raitt

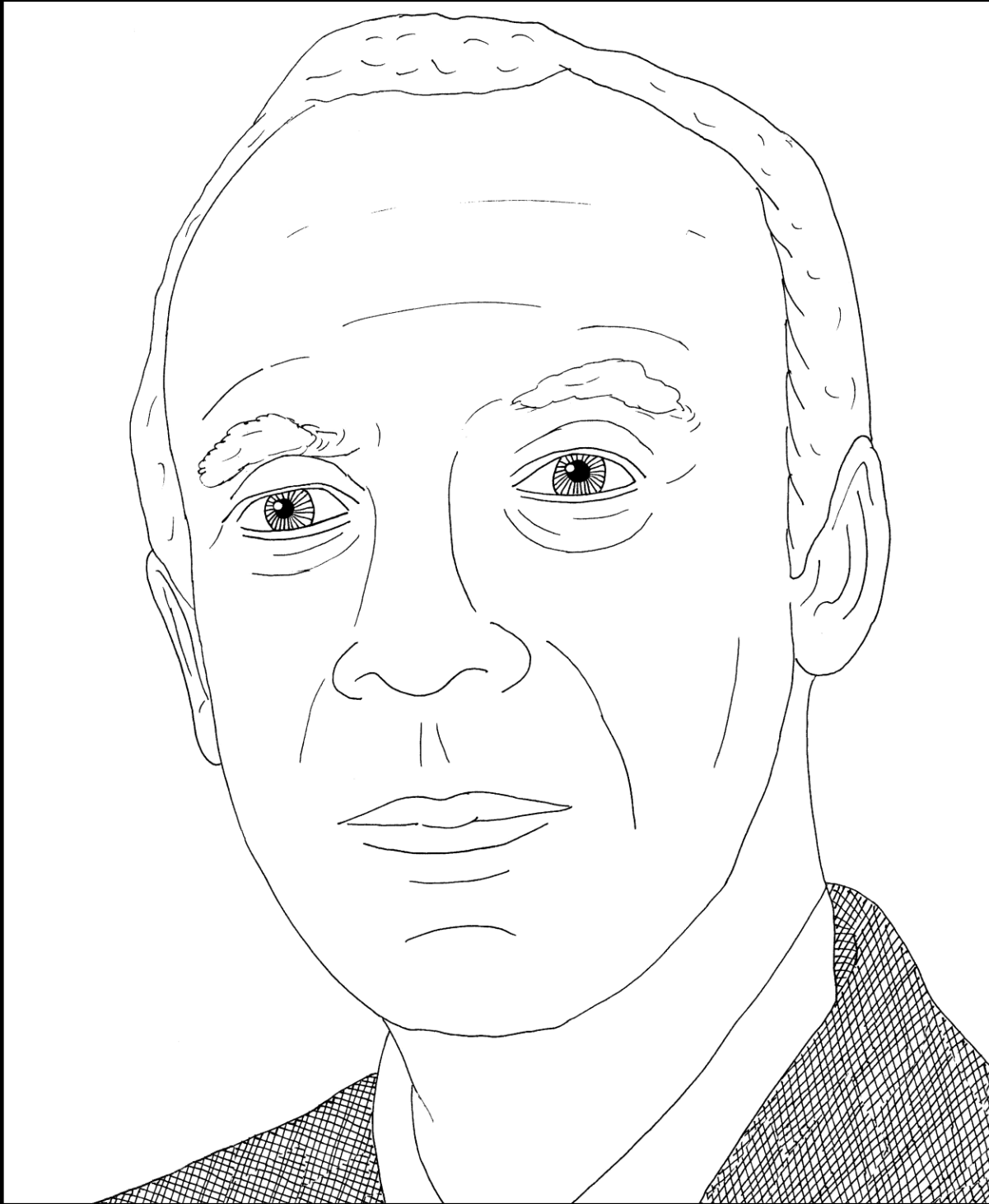
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"The essence of trade unionism is social uplift. The labor movement has been the haven for the dispossessed, the despised, the neglected, the downtrodden, the poor."

-- A. Philip Randolph

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"As long as people and the planet are being exploited, and billions of dollars are being made precisely because laborers and the environment are being abused and used up, there will be children going hungry and ecological destruction."

-- Ocean Robbins

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"You in the unions do not yet represent all of labor. But I hope some day you will, because I believe that it is through strength, through the fact that people who know what people need are working to make this country a better place for all people..."

-- Eleanor Roosevelt

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"No business which depends for existence on paying less than living wages to its workers has any right to continue in this country. By living wages I mean more than a bare subsistence level --I mean the wages of decent living."
-- Franklin D. Roosevelt

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"The internal and external ethics of an organization must be the same; you cannot talk about minimum wages for poor people and not pay minimum wages to your own workers."

-- Aruna Roy

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"Decent work is at the heart of the search for dignity for the individual, stability for the family and peace in the community."

-- Juan Somavia

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"I am also very proud to be a liberal. Why is that so terrible these days? The liberals were liberators—they fought slavery, fought for women to have the right to vote, fought against Hitler, Stalin, fought to end segregation, fought to end apartheid.

Liberals put an end to child labor and they gave us the five day work week!

What's to be ashamed of?" -- Barbra Streisand

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**"A downtrodden class... will never be able to make
an effective protest until it achieves solidarity."**

-- H. G. Wells

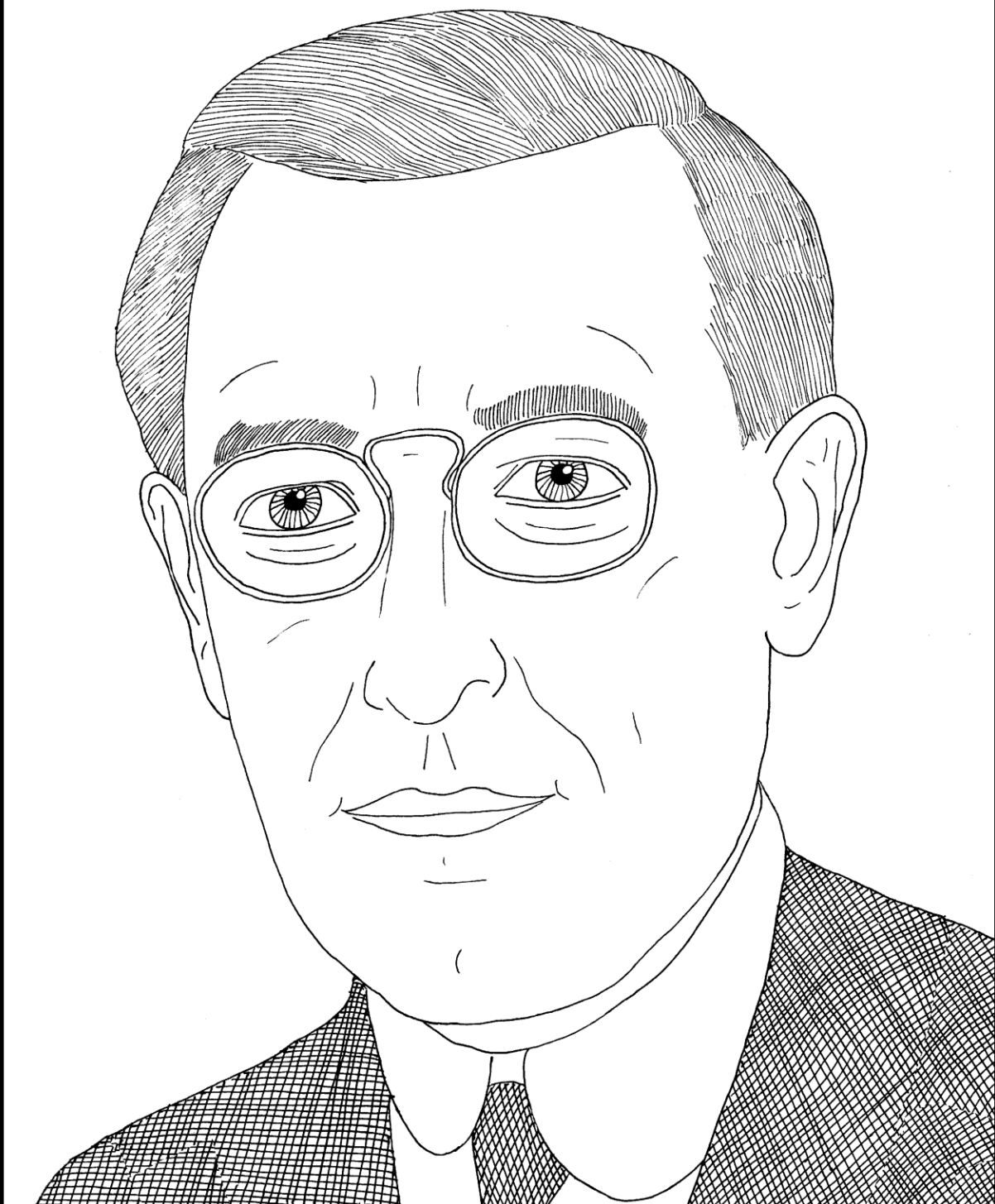
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"While we are fighting for freedom, we must see,
among other things, that labor is free."

-- Woodrow Wilson

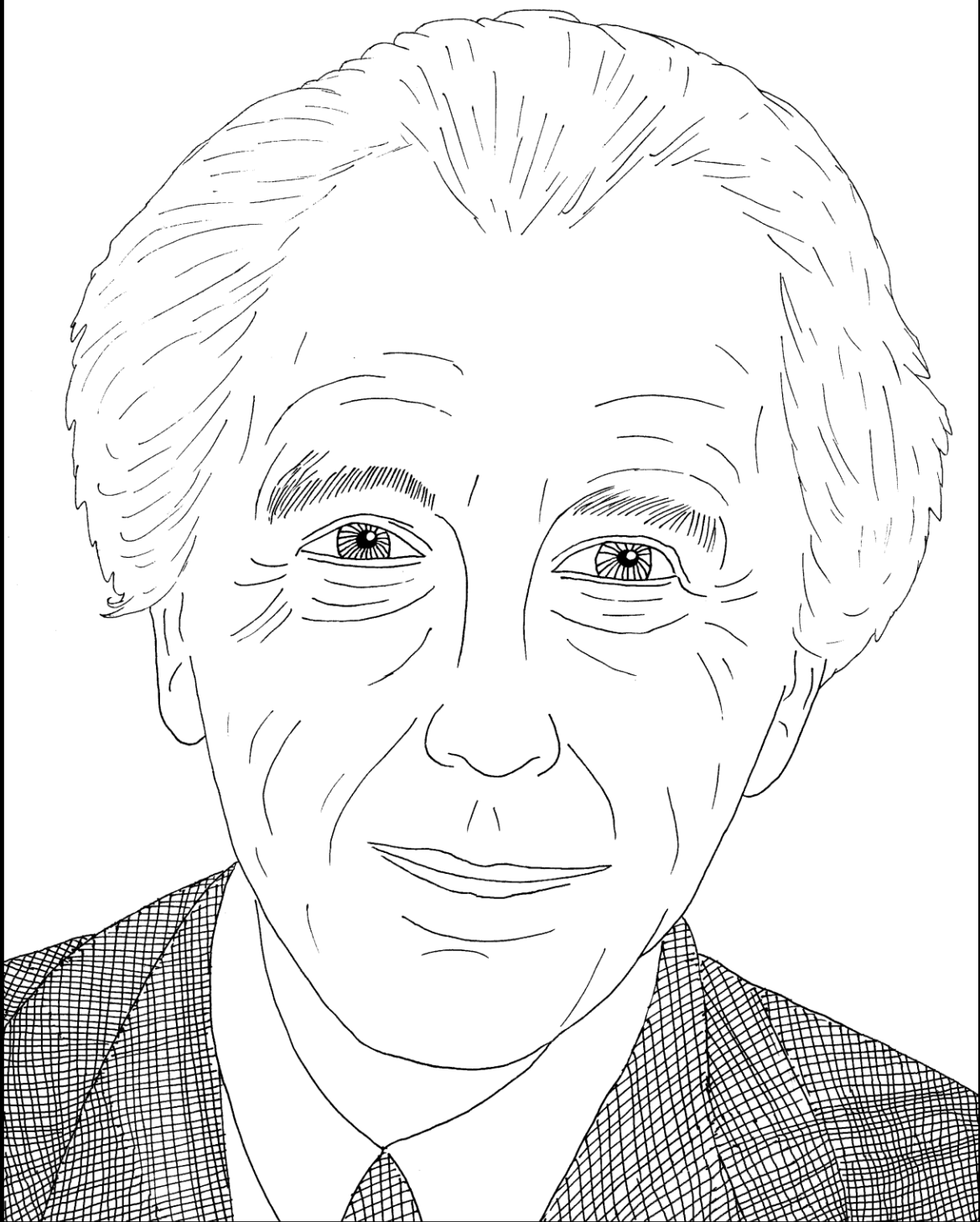
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"If capitalism is fair then unionism must be. If men have a right to capitalize their ideas and the resources of their country, then that implies the right of men to capitalize their labor."

-- Frank Lloyd Wright

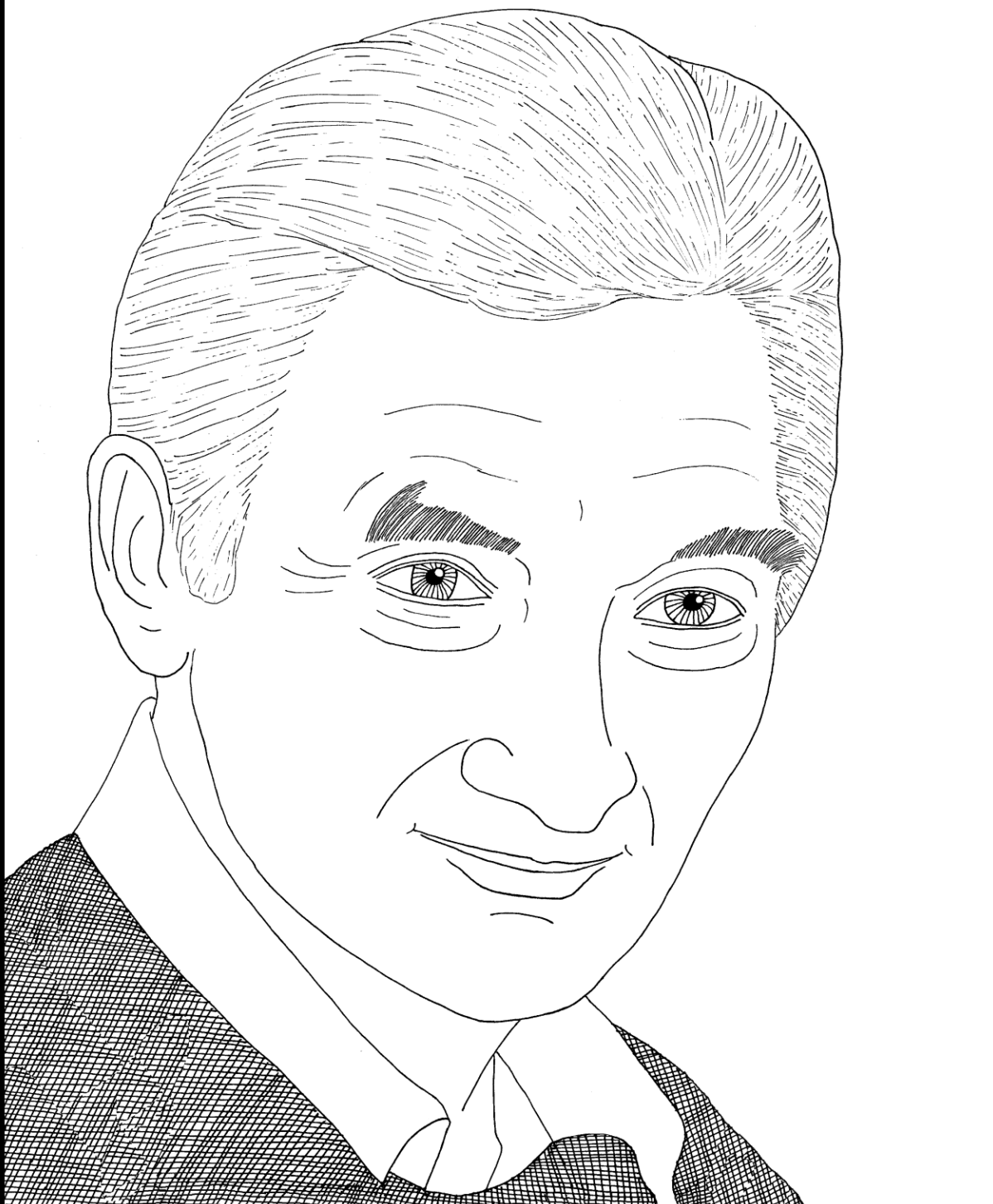
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"The strike, the boycott, the refusal to serve, the ability to paralyze the functioning of a complex social structure-these remain potent weapons against the most fearsome state or corporate power."

-- Howard Zinn

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