

The Haywood Trial

and the Anarchist Trial

Lucy E. Parsons

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There has been no event in recent years which has shown the advance made in class-conscious labor organizations more distinctly than the class trial just ended in Boise, Idaho, and its comparison with the trial of the Anarchists at Chicago in 1886.

The Anarchist trial was a class trial—relentless, vindictive, savage and bloody. By that prosecution the capitalists sought to break the great strike for the eight-hour day which was being successfully inaugurated in Chicago, this city being the storm-center of that great movement; and they also intended, by the savage manner in which they conducted the trial of these men, to frighten the working class back to their long hours of toil and low wages from which they were attempting to emerge. The capitalistic class imagined they could carry out their hellish plot by putting to an ignominious death the most progressive leaders among the working class of that day. In executing their bloody deed of judicial murder they succeeded, but in arresting the mighty onward movement of the class struggle they utterly failed.

So, too, in the trial just ended at Boise, Idaho, they wished to break up that magnificent organization, the Western Federation of Miners, by foully murdering, under the forms of law, its valiant officers and champions—Moyer, Haywood and Pettibone.

The stage-setting, preparatory for the enactment of this capitalistic conspiracy, was about the same as it was in the case of the Chicago Anarchists. There was the Pinkerton liar with his pockets bulging out with “evidence.” In the Anarchists’ case it was the eight-hour movement to be suppressed; in the Haywood case it

was the Western Federation of Miners they were after, and they wanted to make an example of its leaders.

But, lo and behold, the class-conscious wage class, which has come into existence since 1886, had not been reckoned with by the conspirators, and the radical press, which was to keep them posted, had also been overlooked. The capitalistic class began to juggle around in the law courts. This proved their undoing, because it gave the working class time to get together and take council, and then the workers realized in what great peril their brothers stood, and began to understand what a great consolidation of capitalistic interests they must make a stand against. They also realized it was money, and plenty of it, that must be collected, and the best legal talent secured, and that they should have a press which would truthfully report the proceedings of the case.

All these were denied our comrades in 1886–87. The only papers friendly to them were seized and suppressed by the authorities. The labor organizations were young, undisciplined, and had no money in their treasuries. The capitalistic press and pulpit thundered their foul slander against these victims until they succeeded in blinding the eyes and closing the ears of the public to reason, and they completed the conspiracy by packing the jury and obtaining one of the most prejudiced judges who ever presided at a trial.

Under these circumstances is it any wonder that our comrades were railroaded to the scaffold? Why, it only took that precious jury three hours to bring in a verdict of “guilty,” sending eight innocent men to the gallows. The presiding judge had the brazen effrontery to tell the jury from the bench that they deserved to be compensated for the verdict!

How changed is the public conscience in these times of the year of 1907, all owing to the growing intelligence of the working class and their alertness in coming to the rescue of their brothers. To verify this fact, let anyone who cares to take the trouble contrast the charge of Judge Gary, in the Anarchists’ case, with that of Judge Wood in the Haywood trial. Gary’s was prejudiced and vindictive to the last degree, while Judge Wood’s was calm, cool and fair. The attorneys in the case of the Anarchists requested Gary to instruct the jury in regard to the degrees of murder—murder in the second degree, manslaughter, etc.—but the bloodthirsty old villain would have nothing but murder in the first degree.

The last twenty years of my life—since that dark, sad November 11, 1887, when my dear husband and his comrades fell victims to a capitalistic conspiracy—have suddenly become a great pleasure to me, because I see in the Haywood verdict the tendency of the advanced thought of these times, and I realize that their lives were not sacrificed in vain. They only lived twenty years too soon.

For the first time in American history the working class was united and stood shoulder to shoulder. They became “class conscious” in recognizing the fact that it

was not Haywood the mine- owners were really after, but the labor organization that he represented.

While we are holding our jubilees over the complete routing of the whole “bunch,” let us not forget that we still have to deal with a crafty, cunning, unprincipled set of rascals who, smarting from their defeat, are still thirsting for innocent blood. Let us remember that Moyer and Pettibone are still in their clutches and the Pinkerton plague is still at large in society, and possibly there is another Orchard in the perspective. While we rejoice over the Haywood verdict, let us be ever watchful lest these, our brothers, fall victims of class war.

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