

Autobiography of Albert R. Parsons

Albert Parsons

1886

In compliance with your request I write for publication, in the Knights of Labor, the following "brief story of my life, a history of my experience and connection with Labor, Socialistic and Anarchistic organizations, and my views as to their aims and objects and how they will be accomplished, and also my connection with the Haymarket meeting of May 4, 1886, and my views as to the responsibility for that tragedy."

Albert R. Parsons was born in the city of Montgomery, Ala., June 24, 1848. My father, Samuel Parsons, was from the State of Maine and he married into the Tompkins-Broadwell family, of New Jersey, and settled in Alabama at an early day, where he afterward established a shoe and leather factory in the city of Montgomery. My father was noted as a public spirited, philanthropic man. He was a Universalist in religion and held the highest office in the temperance movement of Louisiana and Alabama. My mother was a devout Methodist, of great spirituality of character, and known far and near as an intelligent and truly good woman. I had nine brothers and sisters; my ancestry goes back to the earliest settlers of this Country, the first Parsons family landing on the shores of Narragansett Bay, from England, in 1632. The Parsons family and their descendants have taken an active and useful part in all the social, religious, political and revolutionary movements in America. One of the Tompkins', on my mother's side, was with Gen. George Washington at the battle of Brandywine, Monmouth and Valley Forge. Major Gen. Samuel Parsons, of Massachusetts, my direct ancestor, was an officer in the Revolution of 1776, and Capt. Parsons was wounded at the battle of Bunker Hill. There are over 90,000 descendants from the original Parsons family in the United States.

My mother died when I was not yet two years old and my father died when I was five years of age. Shortly after this my eldest brother, William Henry Parsons, who had married and was then living at Tyler, Tex., became my guardian. He was proprietor and editor of the Tyler Telegraph; that was in 1851, '52, '53. Two years later our family moved West to Johnston county, on the Texas frontier, while the buffalo, antelope and Indian were in that region. Here we lived, on a ranch, for about three years, when we moved to Hill county and took up a farm in the valley of the Brazos river. My frontier life had accustomed me to the use of the rifle and the pistol, to hunting and riding, and in these matters I was considered quite an expert. At that time our neighbors did not live near enough to hear each other's dog bark, or the cocks crow. It was often five to ten or fifteen miles to the next house. In 1859, I went to Waco, Texas, where, after living with my sister (the wife of Maj. Boyd) and going to school, meantime, for about a year, I was

indentured an apprentice to the Galveston Daily News, for seven years, to learn the printer's trade. Entering upon my duties as a "printer's devil," I also became a paper carrier for the Daily News, and in a year and a half was transformed from a frontier boy into a city civilian. When the slave-holder's rebellion broke out in 1861, though quite small and but thirteen years old, I joined a local volunteer company called the "Lone Star Greys." My first military exploit was on the passenger steamer Morgan, where we made a trip out into the Gulf of Mexico and intercepted and assisted in the capture of U.S. Gen. Twiggs's army, which had evacuated the Texas frontier forts and came to the sea coast at Indianapolis to embark for Washington, D.C.

My first military exploit was a "run-away" trip on my part for which I received an ear pulled from my guardian when I returned. These were stirring "wartimes" and, as a matter of course, my young blood caught the infection. I wanted to enlist in the rebel army and join Gen. Lee in Virginia, but my guardian, Mr. Richardson, proprietor of the News, a man of 60 years, and the leader of the secession movement in Texas, ridiculed the idea, on account of my age and size, and ended by telling me that "it's all bluster anyway. It will be ended in the next sixty days and I'll hold in my hat all the blood that's shed in this war." This statement from one whom I thought knew all about it, only served to fix all the firmer my resolve to go and go at once, before too late. So I took "French leave" and joined an artillery company at an improvised fort at Sabine Pass, Texas, where Capt. Richard Parsons, an older brother, was in command of an infantry company. Here I exercised in infantry drill and served as "powder monkey" for the cannoneers.' My military enlistment expired in twelve months, when I left Fort Sabine and joined Parson's Texas cavalry brigade, then on the Mississippi river. My brother, Maj. Gen. W.H. Parsons (who during the war was by his soldiers invested with the sobriquet "Wild Bill,") was at that time in command of the entire cavalry outposts on the west bank of the Mississippi river from Helena to the mouth of the Red river. His cavalymen held the advance in every movement of the Trans-Mississippi army, from the defeat of the Federal General Curtis on White river to the defeat of Gen. Banks' army on Red river, which closed the fighting on the west side of the Mississippi. I was a mere boy of 15 when I joined my brother's command at the front on White river, and was afterward a member of the renowned McNoly scouts under Gen. Parson's orders, which participated in all the battles of the Curtis, Canby and Banks campaign.

On my return to Waco, Texas, at the close of the war, I traded a good mule, all the property I possessed, for forty acres of corn in the field standing ready for harvest, to a refugee who desired to flee the country. I hired and paid wages (the first they had ever received) to a number of ex-slaves, and together we reaped the harvest. From the proceeds of its sales, I obtained a sum sufficient to pay for six months' tuition at the Waco university, under control of Rev. Dr. R. B. Burleson, where I received about all the technical education I ever had. Soon afterwards I took up the trade of type-setting, and went to work in a printing office in the town. In 1868 I founded and edited a weekly newspaper in Waco, named The Spectator. In it I advocated, with General Longstreet, the acceptance, in good faith, of the terms of surrender, and supported the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth constitutional amendments, and the reconstruction measures, securing the political rights of the colored people. (I was strongly influenced in taking this step out of respect and love for the memory of dear old "Aunt Ester," then dead, and formerly a slave and house servant of my brother's family, she having been my constant associate, and practically raised me, with great kindness and a mother's love.) I became a Republican, and, of course, had to go into politics. I incurred thereby the hate and contumely of many of my former army comrades, neighbors, and the Ku Klux Klan.' My political career was full of excitement and danger. I took

the stump to vindicate my convictions. The lately enfranchised slaves over a large section of the country came to know and idolize me as their friend and defender, while on the other hand I was regarded as a political heretic and traitor by many of my former associates. The Spectator could not long survive such an atmosphere. In 1869 I was appointed traveling correspondent and agent for the *Houston Daily Telegraph*, and started out on horseback (our principal mode of travel at that time) for a long tour through northwestern Texas. It was during this trip through Johnson county that I first met the charming young Spanish Indian maiden who, three years later, became my wife. She lived in a most beautiful region of country, on her uncle's ranch, near Buffalo Creek. I lingered in this neighborhood as long as I could, and then pursued my journey with fair success. In 1870, at 21 years of age, I was appointed Assistant Assessor of United States Internal Revenues, under General Grant's administration. About a year later I was elected one of the secretaries of the Texas State Senate, and was soon after appointed Chief Deputy Collector of United States Internal Revenue, at Austin, Texas, which position I held, accounting satisfactorily for large sums of money, until 1873, when I resigned the position. In August, 1873, I accompanied an editorial excursion, as the representative of the *Texas Agriculturist* at Austin, Texas, and in company with a large delegation of Texas editors, made an extended tour through Texas, Indian Nation, Missouri, Iowa, Illinois, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, as guests of the Missouri, Kansas & Texas railway, I decided to settle in Chicago. I had married in Austin, Texas, in the fall of 1872, and my wife joining me at Philadelphia we came to Chicago together, where we have lived till the present time. I at once became a member of Typographical Union No. 16, and "subbed" for a time on the Inter-Ocean, when I went to work under "permit" on the Times. Here I worked over four years holding a situation at "the case." In 1874 I became interested in the "Labor question," growing out of the effort made by Chicago working people at that time to compel the "Relief and Aid Society," to render to the suffering poor of the city an account of the vast sums of money (several millions of dollars) held by that society and contributed by the whole world to relieve the distress occasioned by the great Chicago fire of 1871. It was claimed by the working people that the money was being used for purposes foreign to the intention of its donors; that rings of speculators were corruptly using the money, while the distressed and impoverished people for whom it was contributed, were denied its use. This raised a great sensation and scandal among all the city newspapers, which defended the "Relief and Aid Society," and denounced the dissatisfied workingmen as "communists, robbers, loafers," etc. I began to examine into this subject, and I found that the complaints of the working people against the society were just and proper. I also discovered a great similarity between the abuse heaped upon these poor people by the organs of the rich and the actions of the late Southern slave holders in Texas toward the newly enfranchised slaves, whom they accused of wanting to make their former masters "divide" by giving them "forty acres and a mule," and it satisfied me there was a great fundamental wrong at work in society, and in existing social and industrial arrangements.

From this time dated my interest and activity in the labor movement. The desire to know more about this subject led me in contact with socialists and their writings, they being the only people who at that time had made any protest against or offered any remedy for, the enforced poverty of the wealth producers and its collateral evils of ignorance, intemperance, crime and misery. There were very few socialists or "communists" as the daily papers were fond of calling them, in Chicago at that time. The result was, the more I investigated and studied the relations of poverty to wealth, its causes and cure, the more interested I became in the subject. In 1876, a workingmen's congress of organized labor met in Pittsburgh, Pa. I watched its proceedings. A split occurred between the

conservatives and radicals, the latter of whom withdrew and organized the “Workingmen’s Party of the United States.” The year previous I had become a member of the “Social Democratic Party of America.” This latter was now merged into the former. The organization was at once pounced upon by the monopolist class, who, through the capitalist press everywhere, denounced us as “socialists, communists, robbers, loafers,” etc.

This was very surprising to me, and also had an exasperating effect upon me, and a powerful impulse possessed me to place myself right before the people by defining and explaining the objects and principles of the workingmen’s party, which I was thoroughly convinced were founded both in justice and on necessity. I therefore entered heartily into the work of enlightening my fellow men. First, the ignorant and blinded wage-workers who misunderstood us, and secondly, the educated labor exploiters who misrepresented us. I soon unconsciously became a “labor agitator,” and this brought down upon me a large amount of capitalist odium. But this capitalist abuse and slander only served to renew my zeal all the more in the great work of social redemption.

In 1877 the great railway strike occurred; it was July 21, 1877, and it is said 30,000 workingmen assembled on Market street near Madison, in mass meeting. I was called upon to address them. In doing so, I advocated the programme of the workingmen’s party, which was the exercise of the sovereign ballot for the purpose of obtaining state control of all means of production, transportation, communication and exchange, thus taking these instruments of labor and wealth out of the hands or control of private individuals, corporations, monopolies and syndicates. To do this, I argued, that the wage worker would first have to join the workingmen’s party. There was great enthusiasm, but no disorder during the meeting. The next day I went to the Times office to go to work as usual, when I found my name stricken from the roll of employees. I was discharged and blacklisted by this paper for addressing the meeting that night. The printers in the office admired secretly what they termed “my pluck,” but they were afraid to have much to say to me. About noon of that day, as I was at the office of the German labor paper, 94 Market Street (organ of the workingmen’s party — the Arbeiter-Zeitung, printed triweekly), two men came in and accosting me said Mayor Heath wanted to speak to me. Supposing the gentleman was downstairs, I accompanied them, when they told me he was at the mayor’s office. I expressed my surprise, and wondered what he wanted with me. There was great newspaper excitement in the city, and the papers were calling the strikers all sorts of hard names, but while many thousands were on strike there had been no disorder. As we walked hurriedly on, one on each side of me, the wind blew strong and their coat tails flying aside, I noticed that my companions were armed. Reaching the city hall building I was ushered into the Chief of Police’s presence (Hickey) in a room filled with police officers. I knew none of them but I seemed to be known by them all. They scowled at me and conducted me to what they called the mayor’s room.

Here I waited a short while when the door opened and about thirty persons, mostly in citizens dress, came in. The chief of police took a seat opposite to and near me. I was very hoarse from the outdoor speaking of the previous night, had caught cold, had had but little sleep or rest and had been discharged from employment. The chief began to catechize me in a brow-beating, officious and insulting manner. He wanted to know who I was, where born, raised, if married and a family, etc. I quietly answered all his questions. He then lectured me on the great trouble I had brought upon the city of Chicago and wound up by asking me if I didn’t “know better than to come up here from Texas and incite the working people to insurrection,” etc.? I told him I had done nothing of the sort or at least I had not intended to do so, that I was simply a speaker at the meeting, that was all. I told him that the strike arose from causes over which I, as an individual,

had no control; that I had merely addressed the mass meeting advising to not strike but go to the polls, elect good men to make good laws and thus bring about good times. Those present in the room were much excited and when I was through explaining some spoke up and said “hang him,” “lynch him”, “lock him up,” etc., to my great surprise holding me responsible for the strikes in the city. Others said it would never do to hang or lock me up. That the working men were excited and that act might cause them to do violence. It was agreed to let me go.

I had been there about two hours. The Chief of Police as I rose to depart took me by the arm, accompanied me to the door where we stopped. He said, “Parsons, your life is in danger, I advise you to leave the city at once. Beware. Everything you say or do is made known to me. I have men on your track who shadow you. Do you know you are liable to be assassinated any moment on the street?” I ventured to ask him who by and what for? He answered: “Why, those board of trade men would as leave hang you to a lamp post as not.” This surprised me and I answered, “If I was alone they might, but not otherwise.” He turned the spring latch, shoved me through the door into the hall, saying in a hoarse tone of voice, “Take warning,” and slammed the door to. I was never in the old rookery before. It was a labyrinth of halls and doors. I saw no one about. All was still. The sudden change from the tumultuous inmates of the room to the dark and silent hall affected me. I didn’t know where to go or what to do. I felt alone, absolutely without a friend in the wide world. This was my first experience with the “powers that be,” and I became conscious that they were powerful to give or take one’s life. I was sad, not excited. The afternoon papers announced in great headlines that Parsons, the leader of the strikers, was arrested. This was surprising and annoying to me, for I had made no such attempt and was not under arrest. But the papers said so. That night I called at the composing room of the Tribune office on the fifth floor partly to get a night’s work and partly to be near the men of my own craft, whom I instinctively felt sympathized with me. The men went to work at 7 p.m. It was near 8 o’clock as I was talking about the great strike, and wondering what it would all come to, with Mr. Manion, Chairman of the Executive Board of our union, when from behind some one took hold of my arms and jerking me around to face them, asked me if my name was Parsons. One man on each side of me took hold of one arm, another man put his hand against my back, and began dragging and shoving me toward the door. They were strangers. I expostulated. I wanted to know what was the matter. I said to them: “I came in here as a gentleman, and I don’t want to be dragged out like a dog.” They cursed me between their teeth, and, opening the door, began to lead me down-stairs. As we started down one of them put a pistol to my head and said: “I’ve a n-tind to blow your brains out.” Another said: “Shut up or we’ll dash you out the windows upon the pavements below.” Reaching the bottom of the five flights of stairs they paused and said: “Now go. If you ever put your face in this building again you’ll be arrested and locked up.” A few steps in the hallway and I opened the door and stepped out upon the sidewalk. (I learned afterward from the Tribune printers that there was great excitement in the composing room, the men threatened to strike then and there on account of the way I had been treated; when Joe Medill, the proprietor, came up into the composing-room and made an excitable talk to the men, explaining that he knew nothing about it and that my treatment was done without his knowledge or consent, rebuking those who had acted in the way they had done. It was the opinion of the men, however, that this was only a subterfuge to allay the threatened trouble which my treatment had excited.) The streets were almost deserted at that early hour, and there was a hushed and expectant feeling pervading everything. I felt that I was likely to fall a pitiless, unknown sacrifice at any moment. I strolled down Dearborn street to Lake, west on Lake to Fifth

avenue. It was a calm, pleasant summer night. Lying stretched upon the curb, and loitering in and about the closed doors of the mammoth buildings on these streets, were armed men. Some held their muskets in hand, but most of them were rested against the buildings. In going by way of an unfrequented street I found that I had got among those whom I sought to evade—they were the First regiment, Illinois National Guards. They seemed to be waiting for orders; for had not the newspapers declared that the strikers were becoming violent, and “the Commune was about to rise!” and that I was their leader! No one spoke to or molested me. I was unknown. The next day and the next the strikers gathered in thousands in different parts of the city without leaders or any organized purpose. They were in each instance clubbed and fired upon and dispersed by the police and militia. That night a peaceable meeting of 3,000 workmen was dispersed on Market street, near Madison. I witnessed it. Over 100 policemen charged upon this peaceable mass-meeting, firing their pistols and clubbing right and left. The printers, the iron-molders, and other trades unions which had held regular monthly or weekly meetings of their unions for years past, when they came to their hall-doors now for that purpose, found policemen standing there, the doors barred, and the members told that all meetings had been prohibited by the Chief of Police. All mass meetings, union meetings of any character were broken up by the police, and at one place (Twelfth Street Turner hall), where the Furniture-Workers’ Union had met to confer with their employers about the eight-hour system and wages, the police broke down the doors, forcibly entered, and clubbed and fired upon the men as they struggled pell-mell to escape from the building, killing one workman and wounding many others.

The following day the First regiment, Illinois National Guards, fired upon a crowd of sight-seers, consisting of several thousand men, women, and children, killing several persons, none of whom were ever on strike, at Sixteenth street viaduct.

For about two years after the railroad strike and my discharge from the Times office I was blacklisted and unable to find employment in the city, and my family suffered for the necessities of life.

The events of 1877 gave great impulse and activity to the labor movement all over the United States, and, in fact, the whole world. The unions rapidly increased both in number and membership. So, too, with the Knights of Labor. In visiting Indianapolis, Ind., to address a mass-meeting of workmen on the Fourth of July, 1876, I met the State Organizer, Calvin A. Light, and was initiated by him as a member of the Knights of Labor and I have been a member of that order ever since. That organization had no foothold, was in fact unknown, in Illinois, at that time. What a change! Today the Knights of Labor has nearly a million members, and numbers tens of thousands in the State of Illinois. The political labor movement boomed also. The following spring of 1877 the Workingmen’s Party of the United States nominated a full county ticket in Chicago. It elected three members of the Legislature and one Senator. I received as candidate for County Clerk, 7,963 votes, running over 400 ahead of the ticket. About that time I became a member of local assembly 400 of the Knights of Labor, the first Knights of Labor assembly organized in Chicago, and, I believe, in the State of Illinois. I also served as a delegate to district assembly 24 for two terms, and was, I think, made its Master Workman for one term.

I have been nominated by the workmen in Chicago three times for Alderman, twice for County Clerk, and once for Congress. The Labor party was kept up for four years, polling at each election from 6,000 to 12,000 votes. I was in 1878 a delegate to the national convention of the Workingmen’s Party of the United States, held at Newark, N.J. At this labor congress the name of the party was changed to “Socialistic Labor party.” In 1878, at my instance and largely

through my efforts, the present Trades Assembly of Chicago and vicinity was organized. I was its first President and was re-elected to that position three times. I remained a delegate to the Trades Assembly from Typographical Union No. 16 for several years. I was a strenuous advocate of the eight-hour system among trade unions. In 1879 I was a delegate to the national convention held in Allegheny City, Pa., of the Socialistic Labor party, and was there nominated as the Labor candidate for President of the United States. I declined the honor, not being of the constitutional age — 35 years. (This was the first nomination of a workingman by workingmen for that office in the United States.)

During these years of political action every endeavor was made to corrupt, to intimidate, and mislead the Labor party. But it remained pure and undefiled; it refused to be cowed, bought, or misled. Beset on the one side by the insinuating politician and on the other by the almighty money-bags, what between the two the Labor party — the honest, poor party — had a hard road to travel. And, worst of all, the workingmen refused to rally en masse to their own party, but doggedly, the most of them, hugged their idols of Democracy or Republicanism, and fired their ballots against each other on election days. It was discouraging.

But the Labor party moved forward undaunted, and each election came up smiling at defeat. In 1876 the Socialist, an English weekly paper, was published by the party, and I was elected its assistant editor. About this time the Socialist organization held some monster meetings. The Exposition building on one occasion contained over 40,000 attendants, and many could not get inside. Ogden's grove on one occasion held 30,000 persons. During these years the labor movement was undergoing its formative period, as it is even now. The un-American utterances of the capitalist press — the representatives of monopoly — excited the gravest apprehension among thoughtful working people. These representatives of the moneyed aristocracy advised the use of police clubs, and militia bayonets, and gatling guns to suppress strikers and put down discontented laborers struggling for better pay — shorter work-hours. The millionaires and their representatives on the pulpit and rostrum avowed their intention to use force to quell their dissatisfied laborers. The execution of these threats; the breaking up of meetings, arrest and imprisonment of labor "leaders," the use of club, pistol, and bayonet upon strikers; even to the advice to throw hand-grenades (dynamite) among them — these acts of violence and brutality led many workingmen to consider the necessity for self-defense of their persons and their rights. Accordingly, workingmen's military organizations sprang up all over the country.

So formidable did this plan of organization promise to become that the capitalistic Legislature of Illinois in 1878, acting under orders from millionaire manufacturers and railway corporations, passed a law disarming the wage-workers. This law the workingmen at once tested in the Courts of Illinois, and afterward carried it to the Supreme Court of the United States, where it was decided by the highest tribunal that the State Legislatures of the United States had a constitutional right to disarm workingmen. Dissensions began to rise in the Socialist organizations over the question of methods. In the fall and spring elections of 1878-'79-'80 the politicians began to practice ballot-box stuffing and other outrages upon the Workingmen's party. It was then I began to realize the hopeless task of political reformation. Many workingmen began to lose faith in the potency of the ballot or the protection of the law for the poor. Some of them said that "political liberty without economic (industrial) freedom was an empty phrase." Others claimed that poverty had no votes as against wealth; because if a man's bread was controlled by another, that other could and, when necessary, would control his vote also. A consideration and discussion of these subjects gradually brought a change of sentiment in the minds of many; the conviction began

to spread that the State, the Government and its laws, was merely the agent of the owners of capital to reconcile, adjust, and protect their — the capitalists' — conflicting interests; that the chief function of all Government was to maintain economic subjection of the man of labor to the monopolizer of the means of labor — of life — to capital.

These ideas began to develop in the minds of workingmen everywhere (in Europe as well as America), and the conviction grew that law — statute law — and all forms of Government (governors, rulers, dictators, whether Emperor, King, President, or capitalist, were each and all of the despots and usurpers), was nothing else than an organized conspiracy of the propertied class to deprive the working class of their natural rights. The conviction obtained that money or wealth controlled politics; that money controlled, by hook or crook, labor at the polls as well as in the workshop. The idea began to prevail that the element of coercion, of force, which enabled one person to dominate and exploit the labor of another, was centered or concentrated in the State, the Government, and the statute law, that every law and every Government in the last analysis was force, and that force was despotism, an invasion of man's natural right to liberty.

In 1880 I withdrew from all active participation in the political Labor party, having been convinced that the number of hours per day that the wage-workers are compelled to work, together with the low wages they received, amounted to their practical disfranchisement as voters. I saw that long hours and low wages deprived the wage-workers, as a class, of the necessary time and means, and consequently left them but little inclination to organize for political action to abolish class legislation. My experience in the Labor party had also taught me that bribery, intimidation, duplicity, corruption, and bulldozing grew out of the conditions which made the working people poor and the idlers rich, and that consequently the ballot-box could not be made an index to record the popular will until the existing debasing, impoverishing, and enslaving industrial conditions were first altered. For these reasons I turned my activities mainly toward an effort to reduce the hours of labor to at least a normal working day, so that the wage-workers might thereby secure more leisure from mere drudge work, and obtain better pay to minister to their higher aspirations.

Several trades unions united in sending me throughout the different States to lay the eight-hour question before the labor organizations of the country. In January, 1880, the "Eight-Hour League of Chicago" sent me as a delegate to the national conference of labor reformers, held in Washington, D.C. This convention adopted a resolution which I offered, calling public attention of the United States Congress to the fact that, while the eight-hour law passed years ago had never been enforced in Government departments, there was no trouble at all in getting through Congress all the capitalistic legislation called for. By this national convention Richard Trelvelick, Charles H. Litchman, Dyer D. Lum, John G. Mills, and myself were appointed a committee of the National Eight-Hour Association, whose duty it was to remain in Washington,

D.C., and urge upon the labor organizations of the United States to unite for the enforcement of the eight-hour law.

About this time there followed a period of discussion of property rights, of the rights of majorities and minorities. The agitation of the subject led to the formation of a new organization, called the International Working People's Association. I was a delegate in 1881 to the labor congress which founded the former, and afterward also delegate to the Pittsburgh (Pa.) congress in October, 1883, which revived the latter as a part of the International Working People's Association, which already ramified Europe, and which was originally organized at the world's labor congress held at London, England, in 1864. I cannot do better than insert here the manifesto of the Pitts-

burgh congress which clearly sets forth the aims and methods of the International, of which I am still a member, and for which reason myself and comrades are condemned to death. It was adopted as follows:

TO THE WORKINGMEN OF AMERICA.

Fellow Workmen: The Declaration of Independence says:

“But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them (the people) under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty to throw off such government and provide new guards for their future security.”

This thought of Thomas Jefferson, was the justification for armed resistance by our forefathers, which gave birth to our republic, and do not the necessities of our present time compel us to re-assert their declaration?

Fellow-workmen, we ask you to give us your attention for a few moments. We ask you to candidly read the following manifesto issued in your behalf; in behalf of your wives and children; in behalf of humanity and progress.

Our present society is founded on the exploitation of the propertyless by the propertied. The exploitation is such that the propertied (capitalist) buy the working force body and soul of the propertyless, for the price of the mere cost of existence (wages), and take for themselves, i.e., steal the amount of new values (products) which exceeds the price, whereby wages are made to represent the necessities instead of the earnings of the wage laborer.

As the non-possessing classes are forced by their poverty to offer for sale to the propertied their working forces, and as our present production on a grand scale enforces technical development with immense rapidity, so that by the application of an always decreasing number of human working force, an always increasing amount of products is created; so does the supply of working force increase constantly, which the demand therefore decreases. This is the reason why the workers compete more and more intensely in selling themselves, causing their wages to sink of at least on the average, never raising them above the margin necessary for keeping intact their working ability.

Whilst by this process the propertyless are entirely debarred from entering the ranks of the propertied, even by the most strenuous exertions, the propertied, by means of the ever-increasing plundering of the working class, are becoming richer day by day, without in any way being themselves productive.

If now and then one of the propertyless class become rich it is not by their own labor, but from opportunities which they have to speculate upon, and absorb the labor product of others.

With the accumulation of individual wealth, the greed and power of the propertied grows. They use all the means for competing among themselves for the robbery of the people. In this struggle generally the less-propertied (middle-class) are overcome,

while the great capitalists, par excellence, swell their wealth enormously, concentrate entire branches of production as well as trade and intercommunication into their hands and develop into monopolies. The increase of products, accompanied by simultaneous decrease of the average income of the working mass of the people leads to the so-called “business” and “commercial” crises, when the misery of the wage-workers is forced to the extreme.

For illustration: The last census of the United States shows that after deducting the cost of raw material, interest, rents, risks, etc., the propertied class have absorbed — i.e., stolen — more than five-eighths of all products, leaving scarcely three-eighths to the producers. The propertied class being scarcely one-tenth of our population, and in spite of their luxury and extravagance, and unable to consume their enormous “profits”, and the producers, unable to consume more than they receive — three-eighths — so-called “over-productions” must necessarily take place. The terrible results of panics are well known.

The increasing eradication of working forces from the productive process annually increases the percentage of the propertyless population, which becomes pauperized and is driven to “crime,” vagabondage, prostitution, suicide, starvation, and general depravity. This system is unjust, insane and murderous. It is, therefore, necessary to totally destroy it with and by all means, and with the greatest energy on the part of every one who suffers by it, and who does not want to be made culpable for its continued existence by his inactivity.

Agitation for the purpose of organization; organization for the purpose of rebellion. In these few words the ways are marked which the workers must take if they want to be rid of their chains; as the economic condition is the same in all countries of so-called “civilization,” as the government of all monarchies and republics work hand in hand for the purpose of opposing all movements of the thinking part of the workers; as finally the victory in the decisive combat of the proletarians against their oppressors can only be gained by the simultaneous struggle along the whole line of the bourgeois (capitalistic) society, so, therefore, the international fraternity of people as expressed in the International Working People’s Association presents itself a self-evident necessity.

True order should take its place. This can only be achieved when all implements of labor, the soil and other premises of production, in short, capital produced by labor, is changed into societal property. Only by this presupposition is destroyed every possibility of the future spoliation of man by man. Only by common, undivided capital can all be enabled to enjoy in their fullness the fruits of the common toil. Only by the impossibility of accumulating individual (private) capital can everyone be compelled to work who makes a demand to live.

This order of things allows production to regulate itself according to the demand of the whole people, so that nobody need work more than a few hours a day, and that all nevertheless can supply their needs. Hereby time and opportunity are given for opening to the people the way to the highest possible civilization; the privileges of higher intelligence fall with the privileges of wealth and birth. To the achievement of

such a system the political organizations of the capitalistic classes — be they monarchies or republics — form the barriers. These political structures (states), which are completely in the hands of the propertied, have no other purpose than the upholding of the present disorder of exploitation.

All laws are directed against the working people. In so far as the opposite appears to be the case, they serve on one hand to blind the worker, while on the other hand they are simply evaded. Even the school serves only the purpose of furnishing the offspring of the wealthy with those qualities necessary to uphold their class domination. The children of the poor get scarcely a formal elementary training, and this, too, is mainly directed to such branches as tend to producing prejudices, arrogance and servility” in short, want of sense. The church finally seeks to make complete idiots out of the mass and to make them forgo the paradise on earth by promising a fictitious heaven. The capitalistic press on the other hand, takes care of the confusion of spirits in public life. All these institutions far from aiding in the education of the masses, have for their object the keeping in ignorance of the people. They are all in the pay and under the direction of the capitalistic classes. The workers can therefore expect no help from any capitalistic party in their struggle against the existing system. They must achieve their liberation by their own efforts. As in former times a privileged class never surrendered its tyranny, neither can it be expected that the capitalists of this age will give up their rulership without being forced to do it.

If there ever could have been any question on this point it should long ago have been dispelled by the brutalities which the bourgeois of all countries — in America as well as in Europe — constantly commits as often as the proletariat anywhere energetically move to better their conditions. It becomes, therefore, self-evident that the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeois will be of a violent, revolutionary character.

We could show by scores of illustrations that all attempts in the past to reform this monstrous system by peaceable means, such as the ballot, have been futile, and all such efforts in the future must necessarily be so, for the following reasons:

The political institutions of our time are the agencies of the propertied class; their mission is the upholding of the privileges of their masters; any reform in your own behalf would curtail these privileges. To this they will not and can not consent, for it would be suicidal to themselves.

That they will not resign their privileges voluntarily we know; that they will not make any concessions to us we likewise know. Since we must then rely upon the kindness of our master for whatever redress we have, and knowing that from them no good may be expected, there remains but one resource — FORCE! Our forefathers have not only told us that against despots force is justifiable, because it is the only means, but they themselves have set the immortal example.

By force our ancestors liberated themselves from political oppression, by force their children will have to liberate themselves from economic bondage. “It is, therefore, your right, it is your duty,” says Jefferson — “to arm!”

What we would achieve is, therefore, plainly and simply:

First — Destruction of the existing class rule, by all means, i.e., by energetic, relentless, revolutionary and international action.

Second — Establishment of a free society based upon cooperative organization of production.

Third — Free exchange of equivalent products by and between the productive organizations without commerce and profit-mongery.

Fourth — Organization of education on a secular, scientific and equal basis for both sexes.

Fifth — Equal rights for all without distinction to sex or race.

Sixth — Regulation of all public affairs by free contracts between autonomous (independent) communes and associations, resting on a federalistic basis.

Whoever agrees with this ideal let him grasp our outstretched brother-hands!

Proletarians from all countries unite!

Fellow-workmen, all we need for the achievement of this great end is ORGANIZATION and UNITY!

The day has come for solidarity. Join our ranks! Let the drum beat defiantly the roll of battle: “Workmen of all countries unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains; you have the world to win!”

Issued by the Pittsburgh Congress of the “International Working People’s Association” on October 16, 1883

In all these matters here enumerated, I took an active, personal interest. October 1, 1884, the International founded in Chicago *The Alarm*, a weekly newspaper, of which I was elected to the position of editor, and I have held that position until its seizure and suppression by the authorities on the 5th day of May, 1886, following the Haymarket tragedy. In the year 1881, the capitalist press began to stigmatize us as Anarchists, and to denounce us as the enemies of all law and government. They charged us with being the enemies of “law and order,” as breeders of strife and confusion. Every conceivable bad name and evil design was imputed to us by the lovers of power and haters of freedom and equality.

Even the workingmen in some instances, caught the infection and many of them joined in the capitalist hue and cry against the anarchists. Being satisfied of ourselves that our purpose was a just one, we worked on undismayed, willing to labor and to wait, for time and events to justify our cause. We began to allude to ourselves as anarchists, and that name which was at first imputed to us as a dishonor, we came to cherish and to defend with pride. What’s in a name? But names sometimes express ideas; and ideas are everything.

What, then, is our offense, being anarchists? The word anarchy is derived from two Greek words an, signifying no, or without, and arche, government; hence anarchy means no government. Consequently anarchy meant a condition of society which has no king, emperor, president or ruler of any kind. In other words anarchy is the social administration of all affairs by the people themselves; that is to say, self government, individual liberty. Such a condition of society denies the right of majorities to rule over or dictate to minorities. Though every person in the world agree upon a certain plan and only one objected thereto, the objector would, under anarchy, be

respected in his natural right to go his own way. And when such person is thus held responsible by all the rest for the violation of the inherent right of any one how then, can injustice flourish or wrong triumph? For the greatest good to the greatest number anarchy substitutes the equal right of each and every one. The natural law is all sufficient for every purpose, every desire and every human being. The scientist then becomes the natural leader, and is accepted as the only authority among men. Whatever can be demonstrated will by self interest be accepted, otherwise rejected. The great natural law of power derived alone from association and co-operation will of necessity and from selfishness be applied by the people in the production and distribution of wealth, and what the trades unions and labor organizations seek now to do, but are prevented from doing because of obstruction and coercion, will under perfect liberty — anarchy — come easiest to hand. Anarchy is the extension of the boundaries of liberty until it covers the whole range of the wants and aspirations of man — not men, but Man.

Power is might, and might always makes its own right. Thus in the very nature of things, might makes itself right whether or no. Government, therefore, is the agency or power by which some person or persons govern or rule other persons, and the inherent right to govern is found wherever the power or might to do so is manifest. In a natural state, intelligence of necessity controls ignorance, the strong the weak, the good the bad, etc. Only when the natural law operates is this true, however. On the other hand when the statute is substituted for the natural law, and government holds sway, then, and then only, power centers itself in the hands of a few, who dominate, dictate, rule, degrade and enslave the many. The broad distinction and irreconcilable conflict between wage laborers and capitalists, between those who buy labor or sell its products, and the wage worker who sells his labor (himself) in order to live, arises from the social institution called government; and the conflicting interests, the total abolition of warring classes, and the end of domination and exploitation of man by man is to be found only in a free society, where all and each are equally free to unite or disunite, as interest or inclination may incline.

The anarchists are the advance guard in the impending social revolution. They have discovered the cause of world-wide discontent which is felt but not yet understood by the toiling millions as a whole. The effort now being made by organized and unorganized labor in all countries to participate in the making of laws which they are forced to obey will lay bare to them the secret source of their enslavement by capital. Capital is a thing — it is property. Capital is the stored up, accumulated savings of past labor, such as machinery, houses, food, clothing, all the means of production (both natural and artificial) of transportation, and communication, — in short the resources of life, the means of subsistence. These things are, in a natural state, the common heritage of all for the free use of all, and they were so held until their forcible seizure and appropriation by a few. Thus the common heritage of all seized by violence and fraud, was afterwards made the property — capital — of the usurpers, who erected a government and enacted laws to perpetuate and maintain their special privileges.

The function, the only function of capital is to appropriate or confiscate the labor product of the propertyless, non-possessing class, the wage-workers. The origin of government was in violence and murder. Government disinherits and enslaves the governed. Government is for slaves; free men govern themselves. Law, statute, man-made law is license. Anarchy — natural law — is liberty. Anarchy is the cessation of force. Government is the rulership or control of man by men. In the name of law — by means of statute law — whether that control be by one man (mon-arche) or by a majority (mob-arche). The effort of the wage-slave (now being made) to participate in the making of laws will enable them to discover for the first time that a human law-maker is a human

humbug. That laws, true, just and perfect laws, are discovered, not made. The law-making class – the capitalists – will object to this, they (the capitalists) will remonstrate, they will fight, they will kill, before they permit laws to be made, or repealed, which deprive them of their power to rule and rob. This fact is demonstrated in every strike which threatened their power; by every lock-out, by every discharge, by every black-list. Their exercise of these powers is based upon force and every law, every government in the last analysis is resolved into force.

Therefore, when the workers, as they are now everywhere preparing to do, insist upon and demand a participation in, or application of democratic principles in industrial affairs, think you the request will be conceded? nay, nay: The right to live, to equality of opportunity, to liberty and the pursuit of happiness is yet to be acquired by the producers of all wealth. The Knights of Labor, unconsciously stand upon a State Socialist programme. They will never be able to seize the state by the ballot, but when they do seize it, (and seize it they must) they will abolish it. Legalized capital and the state stand or fall together. They are twins. The liberty of labor makes the state not only unnecessary, but impossible. When the people – the whole people – become the state, that is, participate equally in governing themselves, the state of necessity ceases to exist. Then what? Leaders, natural leaders, take the place of the overthrown rulers; liberty takes the place of statute laws, of license; the people voluntarily associate or freely withdraw from association, instead of being bossed or driven as now. They unite and disunite, when, where and as they please. Social administration is substituted for governmentalism, and self-preservation becomes the actuating motive as now, minus the dictation, coercion, driving and domination of man by man.

Do you say this is a dream! That it is the millenium! Well, the crisis is near at hand. Necessity, which is its own law, will force the issue. Then whatever is most natural to do will be the easiest and best to do. The workshops will drop into the hands of the workers, the mines will fall to the miners and the land and all other things will be controlled by those who possess and use them. This will be, there can then be no title to anything aside from its possession and use. Only the statute law and government stand to-day as a barrier to this result, and all efforts to change them failing, will inevitably result in their total abolition.

Anarchy, therefore, is liberty; is the negation of force, or compulsion, or violence. It is the precise reverse of that which those who hold and have power would have their oppressed victims believe it is.

Anarchists do not advocate or advise the use of force. Anarchists disclaim and protest against its use, and the use of force is justifiable only when employed to repel force. Who, then, are the aiders, abettors and users of force? Who are the real revolutionists? Are they not those who hold and exercise power over their fellows? They who use clubs and bayonets, prisons and scaffolds? The great class conflict now gathering throughout the world is created by our social system of industrial slavery. Capitalists could not if they would, and would not if they could, change it. This alone is to be the work of the proletariat, the disinherited, the wage-slave, the sufferer. Nor can the wage-class avoid this conflict. Neither religion nor politics can solve it or prevent it. It comes, as a human, an imperative necessity. Anarchists do not make the social revolution; they prophesy its coming. Shall we then stone the prophets? Anarchists do not use or advise the use of force, but point out that force is ever employed to uphold despotism to despoil man's natural rights. Shall we therefore kill and destroy the Anarchists? And capital shouts "yes, yes! exterminate them!"

In the line of evolution and historical development, anarchy – liberty – is next in order. With the destruction of the feudal system, and the birth of commercialism and manufactories in the Sixteenth century, a contest long and bitter and bloody, lasting over a hundred years, was waged

for mental and religious liberty. The Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries, with their sanguinary conflicts, gave to man political equality and civil liberty, based on the monopolization of the resources of life, capital — with its “free laborers,” freely competing with one another for a chance to serve king capital and “free competition” among capitalists in their endeavors to exploit the laborers and monopolize the labor products. All over the world the fact stands undisputed that the political is based upon, and is but the reflex of, the economic system, and hence we find that whatever the political form of the government, whether monarchical or republican, the average social status of the wage-workers is in every community identical. The class struggle of the past century is history repeating itself, it is the evolutionary growth preceding the revolutionary denouement. Though liberty is a growth, it is also a birth, and while it is yet to be, it is also about to be born. Its birth will come through travail and pain, through bloodshed and violence. It cannot be prevented. This, because of the obstruction, impediments and obstacles which serve as a barrier to its coming. An anarchist is a believer in liberty, and as I would control no man against his will, neither shall any one rule over me with my consent. Government is compulsion; no one freely consents to be governed by another, therefore there can be no just power of government. Anarchy is perfect liberty, is absolute freedom of the individual. Anarchy has no schemes, no programmes, no systems to offer or to substitute for the existing order of things. Anarchy would strike from humanity every chain that binds it, and say to mankind: “Go forth! you are free. Have all; enjoy all.”

Anarchism nor anarchists either advises, abets, nor encourages the working people to the use of force or a resort to violence. We do not say to the wage-slaves: “You ought, you should use force.” No. Why say this when we know they must — they will be driven to use it in self-defense, in self-preservation against those who are degrading, enslaving and destroying them?

Already the millions of workers are unconsciously Anarchists. Impelled by a cause the effects of which they feel but do not wholly understand, they move unconsciously, irresistibly forward to the social revolution. Mental freedom, political equality, industrial liberty!

This is the natural order of things; the logic of events. Who so foolish as to quarrel with it, obstruct it, or attempt to stay its progress? It is the march of the inevitable; the triumph of the MUST.

The examination of the class struggle demonstrates that the eight-hour movement was doomed by the very nature of things to defeat. But the International gave its support to it for two reasons, viz.: First, because it was a class movement against class domination, therefore historical and revolutionary and necessary; and secondly, because we did not choose to stand aloof and be misunderstood by our fellow workers. We therefore gave it all the aid and comfort in our power. I was regularly accredited under the official seal of the Trade and Labor Unions of the Central Labor Union, representing twenty thousand organized workingmen in Chicago to assist them in the organization of Trades and Labor Unions, and do all in my power for the eight-hour movement. The Central Labor Union, in conjunction with the International, publishes six newspapers in Chicago, to wit: One English weekly, two German weeklies, one Bohemian weekly, one Scandinavian weekly and one German daily newspaper.

The trade and labor Unions of the United States and Canada having set apart the first day of May, 1886, to inaugurate the 8-hour system, I did all in my power to assist the movement. I feared conflict and trouble would arise between the authorities representing the employers of labor and the wage-workers, who only represented themselves. I know that defenseless men, women and children must finally succumb to the power of the discharge, black-list and lockout

and in consequent misery and hunger enforced by the militiaman's bayonet and the policeman's club. I did not advocate the use of force. But I denounced the capitalists for employing it to hold the laborers in subjection to them and declared that such treatment would of necessity drive the workingmen to employ the same means in self defense.

The labor organizations of Cincinnati, Ohio, decided to make a grand eight-hour demonstration of the 8-hour work-day. On their invitation I went there to address them and left Chicago on Saturday, May 1, for that purpose. Returning on Monday night I reached Chicago on the morning of Tuesday, May 4th, the day of the Haymarket meeting. On arriving home, Mrs. Parsons, who had theretofore attended and assisted in several large mass meetings of the sewing girls of the city, to organize them for the eight hour work day, suggested to me to call a meeting of the American Group of the International for that evening, in order to make arrangements, i.e., appropriate money for hall rent, printing hand-bills, provide speakers, etc., to help to organize the sewing women for 8 hours. I left home about 11 A.M., and, not being able to get a hall, finally published an announcement that the meeting would be held at 107 Fifth avenue, the office of the Alarm and Arbeiter Zeitung. We had often held business meetings at the same place. Late in the afternoon I learned, for the first time, that a mass meeting had been called at the Haymarket for that evening, the object being to help on the 8-hour boom, and to protest against the police atrocities upon 8-hour strikers at McCormick's factory the day before, where it was claimed six workmen had been shot down by the police and many others wounded. I did not fancy the idea of holding the meeting at that time, and said so, stating that I believed the manufacturers and corporations were so incensed at the 8-hour movement that they would defend the police in coming to the meeting to break it up, and slaughtering the work people. I was invited to speak there, but declined, on the ground that I had to attend another meeting that night.

About 8 o'clock P.M., accompanied by Mrs. Holmes, Mrs. Parsons and my two children (a boy six years old and a girl four years old) we walked from home to Halsted and Randolph streets. There we observed knots of people standing about, indicating that a mass meeting was expected. Two newspaper reporters, one for the Tribune the other for the Times, whom I recognized, were strolling around, picking up items, and observing me they inquired if I was to speak at the Haymarket meeting that night. I told them that I was not. That I had to attend another meeting and would not be there, and the ladies, the children and myself took a street car for down town. Reaching the place of meeting of the American group of the International, it was at once called to order and the objects of the meeting were stated to be how best to organize the sewing women of the city in the speediest manner. It was decided to print circulars, hire halls and appoint organizers and speakers, and money was appropriated for the purpose, when about 9 o'clock a committee entered the meeting and said there was a large mass meeting at the Haymarket but no speakers except Mr. Spies, and they were sent over to request Mr. Fielden and myself to come there at once and address the crowd.

We adjourned in a few moments afterwards and went over to the Haymarket in a body, where I was introduced at once and spoke for about an hour to the 3,000 persons present urging them to support the eight-hour movement and stick to their unions. There was little said about the police brutalities of the previous day, other than to complain of the use of the military on every slight occasion. I said it was a shame that the moderate and just claims of the wage-workers should be met with police clubs, pistols, and bayonets, or that the murmurs of discontented laborers, should be drowned in their own blood. When I had finished speaking and Mr. Fielden began, I got down from the wagon we were using as a speaker's stand, and stepping over to another wagon nearby

on which sat the ladies (among them my wife and children), and it soon appearing as though it would rain, and the crowd beginning to disperse and the speaker having announced that he would finish in a few moments; I assisted the ladies down from the wagon and accompanied them to Zepf's hall, one block away, where we intended to wait for the adjournment and the company of other friends on our walk home. I had been in this hall about five minutes and was looking towards the meeting, expecting it to close every moment, and standing nearby where the ladies sat, when there appeared a white sheet of light at the place of meeting, followed instantly by a loud roar. This was at once followed by a fusillade of pistol shots (in full view of my sight) which appeared as though fifty or more men had emptied their self-acting revolvers as rapidly as possible. Several shots whizzed by and struck beside the door of the hall, from which I was looking, and soon men came rushing wildly into the building. I escorted the ladies to a place of safety in the rear where we remained about 20 minutes. Leaving the place to take the ladies home we met a man named Brown (who was well known to us) at the corner of Milwaukee avenue and Desplaines street, and asking him to loan me a dollar, he replied that he didn't have the change, whereupon I borrowed a five-dollar gold piece from him. We then parted, he went his way and we started towards home. (This man Brown told of the circumstance the next day that he had met and loaned me \$5. He was at once arrested and indicted for conspiracy and unlawful assembly, thrown into prison, where he has lain ever since.)

The next day, observing that many innocent people who were not even present at the meeting were being dragooned and imprisoned by the authorities, and not courting such indignities for myself I left the city, intending to return in a few days, and publishing a letter in the newspapers to that effect. I stopped at Elgin two days in a boarding-house, when I went from there to Waukesha, Wis., a place noted for its beautiful springs and health-giving waters, pure air, etc. At this summer resort I soon obtained employment first at carpentering and then as a painter, which occupations I pursued for seven weeks, or until my return and voluntary surrender to the Court for trial. I procured the Chicago newspapers every day, and from them I learned that 1, with a great many others, had been indicted for murder, conspiracy and unlawful assembly at the Haymarket. From the editorials of the capitalist papers every day for two months during my seclusion, I could see that the ruling class were wild with rage and fear against labor organizations. Ample means were offered me to carry me safely to distant parts of the earth, if I chose to go. I knew that the beastly howls against the Anarchists, the demand for their bloody extermination, made by the press and pulpit, was merely a pretext of the ruling class to intimidate the growing power of organized labor in the United States. I also perfectly understood the relentless hate and power of the ruling class. Nevertheless, knowing that I was innocent and that my comrades were innocent of the charge against them, I resolved to return and share whatever persecution labor's enemies could impose upon them. Consequently, on the night of June 20th, I left Waukesha. At 4:30 A.M., June 21st, I boarded a St. Paul train at the union depot at Milwaukee, and arrived in Chicago at 7:30 or 8 o'clock, and repaired to the house of Mrs. Ames at 14 S. Morgan street.

I sent for my wife, who came to me, and a few minutes later I conveyed word to Captain Black, our attorney, that I was prepared to surrender. After an affectionate parting with my noble, brave and loving wife and several devoted friends, who were present, I at a little past 2 o'clock p.m. June 21, accompanied by Mrs. Ames and Mr. A.H. Simpson to the court house entrance, was there joined by my attorney, Capt. Black. We walked up the broad stairway, entered the court then in session, and standing before the bar of the court announced my presence and my voluntary surrender for trial, and entered the plea "not guilty." After this ceremony was over I

approached the prisoner's dock, where sat my arraigned comrades Fielden, Spies, Engel, Fischer, Lingg, Neebe and Schwab, and shaking hands with each as I took a seat among them. After the adjournment of the court I was conveyed with the others to a cell in the Cook county bastille, and securely locked up.

What of the Haymarket tragedy?

It is simple enough. A large number, over 3,000 of citizens, mostly workingmen, peaceably assemble to discuss their grievances, viz.: The eight-hour movement and the shooting and clubbing of the McCormick and lumber-yard strikers by the police of the previous day.

Query. Was that meeting, thus assembled, a lawful and constitutional gathering of citizens? The police, the grand jury, the verdict, the court, and the monopolists all reply: "It was not."

After 10 o'clock, when the meeting was adjourning, two hundred (200) armed police in menacing array, threatening wholesale slaughter of the people, there peaceably (the mayor of Chicago and others who were present testified so before the jury) assembled, commanded their instant dispersal, under the pains and penalties of death.

Was the act of the police lawful and constitutional? The police, the grand jury, the verdict, the court, and the monopolists all reply: "It was."

Some person (unknown and unproven) threw a dynamite bomb among the police. Whether it was thrown in self-defense or in furtherance of monopoly's conspiracy against the 8-hour movement is not known.

Was that a lawful, a constitutional act? The ruling class shout in chorus: "It was not!"

My own belief, based upon careful examination of all the conditions surrounding this Haymarket affair, is that the bomb was thrown by a man in the employ of certain monopolists, who was sent from New York city to Chicago for that purpose, to break up the eight-hour movement, thrust the active men into prison, and scare and terrify the workingmen into submission. Such a course was advocated by all the leading mouth-pieces (newspapers) of monopoly in America just prior to May 1. They carried out their programme and obtained the results they desired.

Is it lawful and constitutional to put innocent men to death? Is it lawful and constitutional to punish us for the deed of a man acting in furtherance of a conspiracy of the monopolists to crush out the eight-hour movement? Every "law and order" tyrant from Chicago to St. Petersburg cries, "Yes!"

Six of the condemned men were not present at the meeting at the time of the tragedy, two of them were not present at any time. One of the latter was addressing a mass-meeting of 2,000 workingmen at Deering's Harvester works, in Lake View, five miles away. The other one was at home abed, and knew not of the affair till the next day. His verdict is fifteen years in the penitentiary. These facts stand unquestioned and undenied before the court. There was no proof of our complicity with or knowledge of the person who threw the bomb, nor is there any proof as to who did throw it. The whole question as to who did the deed is resolved upon motive. What motive controlled the person who did the deed?

The rapid growth of the whole labor movement had, by May 1, given the monopolists of the country much cause for alarm. The organized power of labor was beginning to exhibit unexpected strength and boldness. This alarmed King money-bags, who saw in the Haymarket affair their golden opportunity to make a horrible example of the Anarchists, and by their dreadful fate give the discontented American workingmen a terrible warning!

This verdict is the suppression of free speech, free press and the assemblage of people to discuss their grievances. More than that, the verdict is the denial of the right of self-defense; it is the condemnation of the law of self-preservation in America.

As to the responsibility for the Haymarket tragedy? You have heard the side of the ruling class. I now speak for the people — the ruled. The Haymarket tragedy was the immediate result of the blood-thirsty officiousness of Police Inspector Bonfield. Mayor Harrison (commander in chief of police) was present at this meeting, and testified before the court that he heard the speeches and left just before its adjournment and went to the police station and advised Bonfield that everything at the meeting was peaceable and orderly. The mayor left for his house. Soon thereafter, Bonfield thirsting for promotion and the blood money which he knew that monopolists were eager to bestow, gathered his army and marched them down upon a peaceable, orderly meeting of workingmen, where he expected to immortalize himself by deeds of carnage and slaughter that would put to shame a horde of Apache Indians. Had he not done such brutal things before with the striking streetcar Knights of Labor, Trades Unionists and other workingmen? Why not repeat it that night also? He had received the plaudits of the capitalistic press for such acts done on other occasions. Why not again?

But Police Inspector Bonfield was only a willing agent, not the dastardly principal in this outrage. He held plenary power and obeyed what he knew to be the express desire of his masters — the money kings — who want to suppress free speech, free press, and the right of workingmen to assemble and discuss their grievances. Let the responsibility for the Haymarket tragedy rest where it belongs, to wit: Upon the monopolists, corporations and privileged class who rule and rob the working people, and when they complain about it discharge, lock-out and black-list them, or arrest, imprison and execute them. The Haymarket tragedy was, undoubtedly, the work of a deep laid monopolistic conspiracy originating in New York City and engineered by the Pinkerton thugs. Its object was to break down the eight-hour movement and Chicago was selected by these conspirators as the best place to do the work because Chicago was the center of the movement in the United States. Now, what are the facts about the conspiracy against the eight-hour movement which has resulted in breaking it down and consigning us to the executioner?

Just prior to the time set apart to inaugurate the eight-hour work day, (the latter part of April, 1886,) the New York Herald, in reference to the question, said:

“Two hours, taken from the hours of labor, throughout the United States by the proposed eight-hour movement, would make a difference annually of hundreds of millions in values, both to the capital invested in industries and existing stocks.”

Now what did this mean? It meant that the issue of the hour with the New York and Chicago Stock Exchanges, Board of Trade, and Produce Exchangers in every commercial and industrial center, was how to preserve the steadiness of the market and maintain the fictitious values of the four-fold watered stocks, then listed and then rapidly shrinking in value under the paralyzing influence of the impending eight-hour demand of the united army of labor. Hundreds of millions in money were at stake. What to do to save it? Clearly, the thing to do was to stop the eight-hour movement. The New York Times came promptly forward with its scheme to save the sinking market values. Accordingly, just four days before the grand national strike for eight hours and only one week before the Haymarket tragedy, the New York Times, one of the leading organs of railroad, bank, telegraph and telephone monopoly in America, published in its issue of April 25, 1886, an editorial on the condition of the markets, the causes of existing decline and panicky symptoms, in which it said:

“The strike question is, of course, the dominant one and is disagreeable in a variety of ways. A short and easy way to settle it is urged in some quarters, which, is to indict for conspiracy every man who strikes, and summarily lock him up. This method would undoubtedly strike a wholesome terror into the hearts of the working classes.

“Another way suggested is to pick out the labor leaders, and make such examples of them as to scare the others into submission.”

The sentiment was echoed at once by the New York Tribune, which said:

“The best policy would be to drive the workingmen into open mutiny against the law.”

The organs of monopoly (including the Chicago press), all over the United States took up the cry, and re-echoed the diabolical scheme. Something must be done to trump up charges against the leaders.

The first of May arrives, the great eight-hour strike is inaugurated. Forty thousand men are standing out for it in Chicago. Chicago is the stronghold of the movement, and 40,000 more threaten to join in the demand. An eight-hour mass meeting is held on the Haymarket, Tuesday, May 4. A bomb is thrown, several policemen killed, the leaders are arrested, indicted for conspiracy and murder, and seven of them sentenced to death. What’s the result? It worked as the monopolists said it would. The labor leaders are 11 picked out and made such examples of as to scare the others into submission.” Strikers were “summarily locked up. This method would undoubtedly strike a wholesome terror into the hearts of the working classes,” said the Times.

The eight-hour strike is broken and the movement fell to pieces, all over the country.

Commenting on the business situation on the 8th day of May, 1886, four days after the Haymarket tragedy, Bradstreet, in his weekly review, said, as telegraphed through the Associated Press and published in all the Chicago papers: “Of the 325,000 men who struck for eight hours, about 65,000 have gained it. Chicago was the center of the strike, but the movement all over the country has greatly weakened in the past few days. Stocks were very much depressed the first two days of the week (the 3rd and 4th of May, the days of the McCormick and Haymarket trouble), but have recovered their strength the last days of the week.” The eight-hour strike is practically ended, since the Haymarket affair in Chicago.

The desired result was attained. Prices of stocks, bonds, etc., were restored. It was accomplished by the fatal Haymarket bomb.

Who threw the bomb? Who inspired its throwing? John Philip Deluse, a saloon-keeper, living in Indianapolis, Indiana, makes an affidavit, supported by the affidavits of two other men, who were present, and witnessed and heard it (all three men well-known citizens of Indianapolis), that a stranger stepped into his place on Saturday, May 1, with a satchel in his hand, which he placed upon the bar while he ordered a drink. The stranger said he came from New York City, and was on his way to Chicago. He spoke of the labor troubles. Pointing to his satchel he said: “I have got something in here that will work. You will hear of it.” Turning at the door as he went out, he held up his satchel and pointing to it again, said, “You will hear of it soon.”

The prediction of the man came to pass. It was heard round the world. The description of this man tallies exactly with that given by the witness Burnett, who saw him throw the bomb at the Haymarket.

The leaders, as well as many others, not at the meeting of the Haymarket, were arrested and punished, the others “scared into submission,” and it resulted as the New York Times said, viz.: “This method will undoubtedly strike a wholesome terror into the hearts of the working classes.”

The conspiracy to bring about this result originated among the monopolists of New York City, at Pinkerton's headquarters.

Was Police Inspector Bonfield, and States Attorney Grinnell a party to it? Was the millionaire "Citizen's Association" of Chicago a party to it? They have, I understand, supplied unlimited sums of money to bring about our conviction. I solemnly believe all these men were either parties to the Haymarket tragedy, or to the conspiracy for our conviction. This conclusion is irresistible, when taken in connection with the admitted fact that, to bring about our conviction, the constitution and the law has been ruthlessly trampled under foot.

Without fear, or favor, or reward, I have given the untiring energies of the past ten years of my life to ameliorate, to emancipate my fellow wage-slaves from their hereditary servitude to capital. I do not regret it; rather while I feel the satisfaction of duty performed, I regret my inability to have accomplished more than I have done.

During these ten years (from 1876 to 1886) I have traversed the states of Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Wisconsin, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and New York, sometimes under the auspices and direction of the Knights of Labor, at other times Trades Unions and socialist organizations. Covering this space of time I have addressed probably a half million workingmen and women, and organized, or assisted in organizing many labor organizations. No man can truthfully say I have ever yet betrayed a trust, violated a pledge, or swerved from my conception of duty in the labor movement.

I have worked for my living and supported myself since 12 years of age. I have made some enemies. My enemies in the southern states consisted of those who oppressed the black slave. My enemies in the north are among those who would perpetuate the slavery of the wage workers. My whole life has been sober and industrious; was never under the influence of liquor, was never arrested for any offense, and voluntarily surrendered for trial in the present case.

I married in 1872 and since 1873 have lived in Chicago with my family. In all my labors for the up-lifting and emancipation of the wage-worker I have had the earnest, honest, intelligent, unflagging support of that grandest, noblest, bravest of women-my loving wife. We have two children, a boy of 7 years, and a girl 4 years old.

For free speech and the right of assembly, five labor orators and organizers of labor are condemned to die. For free press and free thought three labor editors are sent to the scaffold. "These eight men," said the attorneys of the monopolists, "are picked up by the grand jury because they are the leaders of thousands who are equally guilty with them and we punish them to make examples of them for the others." This much for opinion's sake, for free thought, free speech, free press and public assembly.

This Haymarket affair has exposed to public view the hideous enormities of capitalism and the barbarous despotism of government. The tragedy and the effects of it have demonstrated first: That government is power, and statute law is license, because it is privilege. It has shown the people, the poor, the wage-slaves, that law, statute law is a privilege, and that privileges are for sale to those who can buy them. Government enacts law; the police, the soldier and the jailor at the behest of the rich enforce it. Law is license, the whole earth and all it contains has been sold to a few who are thus authorized by statute law, licensed to rob the many of their natural inheritance. Law is license. The few are licensed by law to own the land, the machinery, the houses, food, clothes and shelter of the people, whose industry, whose labor created them. Law is license; law, statute law, is the coward's weapon, the tool of the thief. By it humanity has ever been degraded and enslaved. By law mankind is robbed of its birthright, liberty transformed into

slavery; life into death; the fair earth into a den of thieves and murderers. The untold millions, the men, women and children of toil, the proletariat, are by law deprived of their lives, their liberties and their happiness. Law is license; Government — authority — is despotism.

Anarchy, natural law, is liberty. Liberty is the natural right to do what one pleases, bounded and limited only by the equal right of every one else to the same liberty. Privileges are none; equal rights for all. Liberty, Fraternity, Equality.

The trial throughout was a travesty on justice. Every law, natural and statute, was violated in response to the clamor of the capitalist class. Every capitalist newspaper in the city, with one exception, called for our blood before the trial began, demanded our lives during the trial and since. A class jury, class law, class hate, and a court blinded by prejudice against our opinions, has done its work, we are its victims. Every jurymen swore he was prejudiced against our opinions; we were tried for our opinions and convicted because of them. The jury according to its own statements since the verdict (they served nearly two months) entertained themselves each night with either card playing or they played the fiddle, the guitar, the piano, and “sang songs” and gave parlor recitations and theatricals. They had carriage rides at the expense of the people amounting to one hundred and forty dollars; and their board bill was \$3.50 per day at a fashionable hotel amounting to over \$2,300; they had a fine time, a very pleasant and merry time. Mr. Jurymen Todd said he was a “clothing salesman and a Baptist.” “Then,” said he, “this was a picked jury, they were all gentlemen.” Of course, these gentlemen, who have a profound contempt for the vulgar, dirty working classes had to bring a verdict befitting gentlemen. So highly appreciated was their verdict that Chicago millionaires proposed and so far as any one knows did contribute a purse of (\$ 1 00,000) one hundred thousand dollars to this jury as a reward for their verdict. The jury has besides been lionized, wined, dined, banqueted, and given costly presents, and sums of money, since the rendering of their verdict.

The influences which are at work forcing upon the people the social revolution arise out of the capitalist system. Necessity is the mother of invention; it is also the father of progress and civilization. The justification for the social revolution is recorded throughout all the pages of history. Our fathers proclaimed it in the immortal Declaration, July 4th, 1776, as follows:

We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they were endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE TO ALTER OR ABOLISH IT.

Will the coming revolution be peaceable or violent?

But now, when the workingmen of American refuse to “give their consent to be any longer governed” by the profit mongers, labor exploiters, children slayers and home despoilers, they are at once put down, and kept down by the strong arm of military power, against their will and without “their consent,” in the name of “law and order.”

It is against this barbaric use of force, this violation of every natural right that Anarchists protest, and for protesting, die!

The only fact established by proof, as well as by our own admission, cheerfully given before the jury, was that we held opinions and preached a doctrine that is considered dangerous to the

rascality and infamies of the privileged, law-creating class known as monopolists, to whom, with the prophets of old, we say:

Go to, now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you; and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasures together for the last days.

– James V., 1–3

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Albert Parsons
Autobiography of Albert R. Parsons
1886

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The Haymarket Autobiographies
ALBERT R. PARSONS, born: June 24 1848 — Montgomery, Ala, USA. Sentenced: Death Executed:
November 11 1887.

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