

The Wheel of Fortune

Lucy E. Parsons

January 16, 1908

Since the sudden stoppage of the big wheel in Wall Street, which is the center of the capitalistic universe, havoc has been played in the industrial ranks generally. The wheels in the factories have ceased to revolve, the fires have been drawn, and hundreds of thousands of the wage-earning class have been, and are being, thrown upon the highways in the country and the city streets.

Reader, can you realize its effects? Maybe not, so let us take a stroll through the streets of this wonderful city of Chicago.

It is two p.m. The afternoon papers are just out; a thousand or more people are buying them, perhaps paying out their last penny. They read the "ads" eagerly; off they dash pell mell in a mad race, trying to outstrip each other in their mad rush to reach the job. So many appear at the place that the boss has to close the door to prevent its being carried away by storm.

This is no overdrawn picture; it actually occurs every day in hundreds of places in this city, and of course in hundreds of other cities.

The free coffee wagons and soup kitchens are in full operation, and all the police stations and cheap lodging-houses are filled to suffocation. Charity is the dope being handed out by the robber class at present to the poor people to keep them quiet, and it is successful at least for the time being.

Coffee wagons, soup kitchens and cheap lodging-houses are being patronized by men only. What has become of the women? About as many women as men were discharged. To the "underworld" they soon will sink, some of them never to rise again!

And this panic is only two months old! What, in the name of justice, is in store for us in the near future?

In the face of these hellish conditions there are radicals who preach to us about peace, intellectual education, and the like. Why should all the lamblike peace be on the side of the working class? Why should they be quiet while starving or receiving just sufficient for their laborious toil to keep body and soul together and to produce more slaves for the bosses? The spirit of resistance seems to have forsaken the working class.

I believe in peace at any price—except at the price of liberty. But this precious gift the wealth-producers already seem to have lost. Life—mere existence—they have; but what is life worth when it lacks those elements which make for enjoyment?

Advocating peace is a good thing in its way; but, like many other things, it can be overworked.

In this city there are fully 100,000 persons out of employment, and the number is on the increase.

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