
The CB&Q and Pinkerton Conspiracy

by Eugene V. Debs

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Conspirators, in all ages, have been detestable creatures. Webster defines conspiracy as "a combination of men for evil purposes; an agreement between two or more persons to commit some crime in concert, as treason, sedition, or insurrection." Conspirators always have the commission of some crime in view. Conspirators are criminals in the most odious sense of the term. Their methods are the most villainous that can be conceived. They adopt unhesitatingly any means, no matter how vile, to accomplish their ends. A conspirator is always a coward, always a sneak, without one redeeming quality of head or heart.

A conspirator is always a liar. In carrying out his plots, truth is never considered. He does not hesitate to commit perjury, and, if to consummate his devilish designs murder is required, he is readily demonized for the bloody deed. It is impossible to exaggerate their hellish characteristics. They excite universal abhorrence. Judas Iscariot and the high priests, bent on the death of Christ, can always be contemplated with profit, when the purpose is to arrive at a correct estimate of the depravity of conspirators, and in the case which we shall discuss, Judas fitly represents a Pinkerton detective, while the officials of the CB&Q may stand for the high priests who urge him forward in his damnable work.

It is not required that we should rewrite the history of the strike of the engineers, firemen and switchmen on the CB&Q. The readers of this *Magazine*, all Brotherhood firemen, know it by heart. And yet, it seems prudent in discussing the CB&Q and Pinkerton conspiracy, to refer again to some of the more prominent facts connected with the strike. In the first place, it is the most notable strike of railroad employees that ever occurred in the United States. One of the great-

est, richest and most prosperous railroad corporations in the country, under the control of despicable officials, arrogant and venal, systematically pursued a course of injustice toward its employees. They would neither arbitrate nor make concessions. They preferred a policy of injustice and defiantly challenged the oppressed employees to strike. As a last resort this was done. The weeks and the months sped by. What was the result to the CB&Q? Demoralization on every mile of its tracks, daily disasters, wreck and ruin everywhere. The splendid property passed into the hands of scabs, incompetent men, a large percent of whom were vagabonds, the filth and scum, discarded and discredited men, known to be characterless. What was the further result? The downfall of the property, the loss of millions of money. Travelers and shippers shunned the tracks of the CB&Q. Receipts went down while expenses increased. In the markets, where CB&Q stock once stood high, there were no buyers and values went down, steadily down. Capitalists looked on in amazement. A thousand times a day the strike was declared "off," but it would not go, it would not down. There stood the sturdy engineers, firemen, and switchmen, appealing to the world to bear testimony to the rectitude of their conduct and the righteousness of their cause, and declaring, "Sink or swim, survive or perish," we stand and plead for justice. There was moral grandeur in the spectacle. Poor, but not purchasable, idle but willing to work, they had made demands becoming American skilled workmen, and they would not retreat. Manifestly, the attitude of the heroic men was exasperating to the officials of the CB&Q. They had played their game of arrogance, injustice and falsehood. They had lied to the public, lied to each other and lied to the stockholders of the property, but their policy had panned out in disaster.

The question then arose in the minds of these depraved and irritated officials, "if a conspiracy could not be inaugurated which would crush the strikers and put the CB&Q on its feet again?" The idea was regarded as fortunate. True, it involved perjury and forgery, crimes against God and man, society and the state, but the officials were desperate. Every other device had failed. The case demanded heroic treatment. The strike was not off, wrecks multiplied. The scab was not a success, profits had gone glimmering. The last resort was to form a conspiracy with the Pinkertons.

We have written of the Pinkertons. The pages of the *Magazine* bear testimony of our estimate of the Pinkerton detectives. We regard them with unspeakable loathing. By inheritance and association they

are the foulest blots and blotches upon our civilization. They are distorted, deformed, hideous, mentally and morally. Their trade is treason, their breath pollution, and yet, the officials of the CB&Q formed a conspiracy with these professional liars, perjurers, forgers, cutthroats, and murderers, to overcome a strike, the result of a policy of flagrant injustice.

The people of Chicago and the country generally had become justly alarmed upon the subject of dynamite. If, therefore, any plausible lie could be concocted whereby the strikers on the CB&Q could be shown to favor the use of dynamite, a tidal wave of indignation could be set in motion which would inure to the benefit of the CB&Q and forever wreck the Brotherhoods, whose members were engaged in the strike. The idea took deep root in the minds of the CB&Q officials and the conspiracy was at once formed between them and the Pinkertons.

The first step taken in the program was to select a number of the Pinkerton thugs to play the role of locomotive engineers or firemen, become members of the lodges of these brotherhoods, gain the confidence of the strikers then report proceedings to the CB&Q officials.

To carry out the plot, the Pinkerton detective becomes at once the most blatant, the fiercest and the most unscrupulous man to be found. His indignation knows no bounds. He is from the first in favor of extreme measures. He denounces the CB&Q officials and their heartless policy. He glows and burns with resentment, and finally, at the proper time suggests the use of dynamite. He knows where it can be obtained. He volunteers to go and procure it. Thus the professional scoundrel in the employment of the officials, schemes and plots for the downfall of men, workingmen, who are simply demanding fair pay for honest work and in whose minds the thought of crime against life and property never entered until it was injected by these paid villains of a great railroad corporation.

We invite our readers to contemplate the picture. In the sacred precincts of friendship, fraternity, and confidence, a hired apostate, a traitor, a creature whom it would be a compliment to call a villain, ingratiates himself, selected for his smooth-tongued hypocrisy, with a cheek of brass and a tongue trained to treason, on the one hand with fiery invectives he denounces the CB&Q officials, and on the other hand deplors the injustice to which the workingmen have been subjected — watches with eager eye and bated breath the influence of his scheme and reports to his co-conspirators how things stand. Day and

night, in storm and shine, he follows his victims through every lane and avenue, until at last, rejoicing in the prospects, he reports that the plot is a success and that some thoughtless, misguided man has been won over to the dynamite scheme. This done the CB&Q officials with a grand flourish of trumpets for the purpose of obscuring the cruel wrongs they had perpetrated, seek to secure popular approval and cast obloquy upon men who, in their struggle for their rights had never so much as dreamed of perpetrating a crime against life or property, and against whose integrity no such charge could be made or sustained, except as shown to be the result of a conspiracy entered into between the CB&Q officials and the vile creatures known as the Pinkertons.

If it can be shown — if it is ever shown in a court of justice that any engineer, fireman, or switchman on the CB&Q favored the use of dynamite, it will be shown that a Pinkerton detective, in the employ of the CB&Q, a member of the CB&Q and Pinkerton conspiracy, suggested the use of the explosive, and that prior to the concoction of the plot by the CB&Q and the Pinkertons to inveigle railroad employees to do wrong, no thought or purpose of criminal acts ever had an existence in their minds.

In discussing the personnel of the conspiracy, no epithet within the entire range of the language need be omitted out of any regard for the proprieties of language, but it would seem that in the entire sweep of villainy, the creatures known as Kelly and McGilvery, have earned a weight of infamy rarely obtained by a Pinkerton. The warts on the repulsive backs of dungeon toads are a thing of beauty in comparison. When Pinkertonism can produce adepts in crime and railroad officials can employ them, it is safe to say that society is corrupt and that law is a sham — and yet, such creatures, such scoundrels, are employed to plot crimes, and are brought into court to swear away the characters and liberties of men, as much superior to them as an archangel is superior to a cobra. A sadder or a more humiliating spectacle cannot be exhibited. It brings all courts where such abominable specimens of humanity are permitted to have any standing, into everlasting odium — in fact, it makes the courts where the facts are known, a party to the conspiracy, and in making the testimony of such abnormally developed apostates, traitors and liars, the measure of any penalty at all upon their victims, brings law, courts, judges and juries into contempt, and buries them beneath an eternal weight of ignominy.

The two miserable wretches, Bowles and Wilson played their part in the conspiracy as its managers had prepared for them, and with Kelly and McGilvery, must take their places in the pillory to be spit upon by all men who have the remotest conceptions of honor or self-respect, or who are not inoculated with the Pinkerton virus, more deadly in its influence than the fabled Upas.¹

The country is called upon to witness the denouement of a conspiracy which in its inception and in its progress, discloses a sum total of infamy rarely if ever recorded. A corporation once honored and respected, controlled once by men of honor, character and probity, deliberately bargains with thugs, sneaks, perjurers, villains of the lowest order, that men, whose only crime was a righteous demand for honest pay, might be robbed of reputation and of liberty. What the final result will be no one can tell nor foresee. It may be that some one of the victims of the CB&Q's. injustice may have his liberty sworn away by a Pinkerton perjurer. It will not be the first time in the history of the world that traitors and conspirators have won. But the case will not be without its compensations. The convicted men, should the conspiracy triumph by the aid of the perjuries of the Pinkerton scamps will not be disgraced — they will only swell the list of martyrs who have suffered for a righteous cause and exalted it by their fidelity. But Pinkertonism will have arrayed against it, and all its devilish devices, every workingman in America who is worthy of the right to wield a ballot.

Another compensation will be the federation of certain Brotherhoods of railway employees for protecting their rights against the oppressions of employers. Under the various necessities brought into prominence by the CB&Q strike, the brotherhoods have gained rather than lost strength.

Already public sentiment is reacting. The infamy of the conspiracy is being fully comprehended, and the indications are that when the trial comes and all the interior facts are known, and the conspiracy exposed, the management of the CB&Q will harvest sufficient odium to sink it in the estimation of honorable men to the fathomless depths of infamy, where Pinkertonism has its abode.

¹ A deciduous tree native to tropical Africa, Indonesia, and the Philippines, the sap of which is used for poison darts. It was believed at one time that the fragrance of the tree was itself toxic.