

Arrest of Moyer and Haywood a Diabolical Plot (February 22, 1906)

The secret arrest of President Charles H. Moyer and Secretary William D. Haywood, of the Western Federation of Miners, and the secret extradition from their homes in Denver by means of a special train to Boise City, Idaho, and their incarceration there upon the alleged charge of complicity in the assassination of Governor Steunenberg, of Idaho, is the latest of a long series of outrages perpetrated upon these leaders by the western mine owners and their Standard Oil allies in their desperate determination to crush out the Western Federation of Miners, the only thing that stands in the way of their absolute and despotic sway in the mountain states. Governors of states are their tools, judges their vassals, editors their special pleaders, and preachers their apologists and defenders. The police departments of the cities are their personal watchmen and the state militia their private armies.

But one thing they could not get in their clutches. The rigid integrity, unflinching loyalty, intrepid courage, and unceasing vigilance of the leaders of the Western Federation baffled every attempt they made to corrupt and crush organized labor. For once they were dealing with men whose honor was absolutely proof to the jingle of gold.

These men must be put out of the way. Fair (?) means had failed. Foul ones are now in order. Pirates have no scruples. Murder will succeed where gold fails.

That is why this whole infamous outrage was concocted and perpetrated in secret instead of the requisitions being issued and the arrests and extraditions made in the usual way and under the forms of law.

Every detail was prearranged in this dark and devilish conspiracy, this foul and damnable plot, hatched out in the festering brains of the mine owners and eagerly and sympathetically entered into and carried into execution by their political hirelings, the governors of Colorado and Idaho, and clinched by the railroad corporations — to ambush, kidnap, and destroy the officials of a labor union they had not gold enough to debauch, cunning enough to outwit, or power enough to frighten or intimidate.

In all the history of the country there is no parallel to this monstrous outrage. It is as black and infamous as any crime of the Inquisition committed in the Middle Ages.

The charges are preferred in the dark by unknown persons, the tools of corporations who do anything they are paid to do, from arson to assassination; the governors of two alleged sovereign states, both the venal vassals of the same corporations, pool their powers to pounce upon the unsuspecting victims, and the railroad corporations have the special train all ready to tear these men, free citizens of the republic, from their families and ace them over a cleared track to separate cells in a foreign penitentiary to await their doom.

Language fails utterly to do justice to the cold-blooded brutality of these hyenas in human form; and I cannot but wonder if the railroad men who handled that train knew what a crime they were committing against their brethren in toil, and if they did, what kind of union hearts they carried in their bodies.

Moyer, Haywood, Pettibone, St. John, and their associates had no more to do with the assassination of Steunenberg than babes unborn. I know them thoroughly well, and they are brave and honorable men to the last drop in their veins. Cowardly assassination does not lurk in their honest, fearless natures.

To every decent man the very thought of assassination is shocking and abhorrent, but is it strange that Frank Steunenberg came to his death by that ignominious means? Is there not in the tragedy the element of retributive justice? Ask the hundreds of innocent miners brutally bull-penned by him in the Coeur d'Alene! Ask the defenseless wives and daughters of these same bull-penned victims who were insulted and violated by the black hirelings in uniform who were doing Steunenberg's bidding! No defense of assassination is attempted in saying that when ex-Governor Steunenberg was blown into eternity he but reaped what he himself had sown, for even the dogs cannot stand between men and the consequences of their acts.

What, then, is the object of these swift and summary proceedings against Moyer, Haywood, and their co-workers? The slimy "sleuth" who "worked up" the case tells us bluntly that it is to murder them, to get them out of the way. Brutally horrible as is this confession, now that the victims are safely within the walls of a plutocratic bastille, it is to be commended as the only straightforward feature of the whole criminal conspiracy.

And now that we understand the program of the plutocrats, what are we going to do about it? Fold our hands supinely and see our comrades murdered to glut the vengeance of our enemies for having been true to us? Are we, the workingmen of the land, whom they have so loyally and fearlessly served at such a terrible price to themselves to desert them in the hour of their direct need? No! By the gods we will have the manhood to stand by them, and if they hand these innocent victims, these incorruptible men, we will make hem hang or shoot us also, for it is infinitely better to die like men than to live in the damning disgrace of our own craven cowardice.

Moyer and Haywood and their associates could have had millions of dollars if they had been corruptible. They have had rare opportunities to line their pockets by betraying labor, but they have spurned the dirty gold of the bribe-givers and have stood faithfully at their posts, and now they must die, for the Standard Oil brigands have decreed it and their command is the supreme law of the land.

The miserable pretext that more confessions have been made, that incriminating testimony has been “unearthed,” that the lives of other political and judicial hirelings have been “threatened,” that certain unexploded bombs have been “dug up,” will not deceive men who have had experience with these corporate criminals and know, as the writer knows by his own personal experience, that they are totally destitute of scruples and will stop at nothing to put out of the way any who refuse to do their bidding.

If ever the working class had true leaders, Moyer, Haywood, and their colleagues are those leaders. They have fought the good fight; they have stood staunch and true, and that is their crime and their only crime — loyal devotion to the working class — and this is the crime of crimes against the Standard Oil bandits that rule the nation, crush and rob the people, and riot in the bloody booty.

If Moyer and Haywood are criminals, so are all workingmen who know their rights and dare maintain them. If they ought to be hanged, so ought we, and there is but one course for us to pursue, and that is to call upon all who are read to do their duty to come to the front and see that fair play is done their comrades, or fight to the last ditch and, if need be, die there. Patrick Henry said, “We must fight.” It looks very much as if that point has again been reached. A hundred thousand courageous men can strike terror to the hearts of the craven criminals who have throttled the republic. Even a few thousand who have the right spirit can turn the tide.

Appeal to the courts, does someone suggest? What courts? The courts that belong to the criminals that are murdering us? The late Judge Lyman Trumbull and the late Judge John Reagan, great jurists and honest judges, both declared that the courts were controlled by the plutocracy, and more recently Judge Steele, of the Supreme Court of Colorado, declared that civil liberty had been stabbed to death by the supreme court of that state, while District Attorney Jerome, of New York, charged that the supreme court of that state was the creature of a saloon-keeping boss of corporate capital.

The plutocrats control Congress, the courts, the army and navy, and we have but ourselves to rely on, and the sooner we realize this fact and act accordingly the better it will be for the working class and the country at large.

Moyer, Haywood, Pettibone, St. John, and their comrades are not only innocent of crime, but they are the manliest of men. They have been tried by fire and proved true. That is at once their virtue and their crime. Their honor is unsullied, their character stainless. They have fought for labor and bear the scars of battle upon their bodies. They are our comrades. We know them and we love them, and by the eternal we are not going to dishonor them and disgrace our cause by abandoning them to their enemies.

The working class of the United States are about ready for action. Thousands upon thousands will scorn to act like whipped spaniels when their leaders are ambushed by the hirelings of their exploiters.

The cooked-up testimony of sneaks and assassins in the service of capital shall not hang the honest men in the service of labor. Upon this issue all the organized workers of the land will unite and a million others will join with them. From Massachusetts and New York to California and Washington, and from Minnesota to the gulf the working class will arise and their tramp will be heard in the land, and the plutocracy, by God, would better think twice before they attempt to carry their murderous program into execution.

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