
Current Events, Part 1: False Glory, Repression, and the Future (September 2, 1899)

We have heard a great deal about the “glorious victories” won for miners during the last two years. It is a ghastly lie. The only victory I know of is the \$3,600 job snatched from the enemy by Ratchford, the understudy of Mark Hanna.¹

Here in Indiana hundreds of them are idle and suffering. In Illinois, according to the official report of [UMW] State Secretary Ryan,² they are on strike at 14 different points. At Girard [Kansas] the other day they issued an appeal for charity, declaring that they were homeless and hungry. The “glorious victories” have reduced them to common beggars — and they belong to the union to a man.

Oh, miners, will you not open your eyes and will you not use your brains and see and think for yourselves?

You have won no victories worthy the name. You are slaves, every last one of you, the victims of the wage system, and as long as the mines you work in are privately owned you will be robbed while at work and clubbed and shot like dogs when you quit.

Arouse from your slavery, join the Social Democratic Party and vote with us to take possession of the mines of the country and operate them in the interest of the people, as well as the railroads, factories, and all the means of production and distribution, and then, and only then, will “glorious victories” have been achieved and you and your comrades be free and our families happy.

Patriotism.

The American “patriot” is the biggest humbug on earth. Under pretense of loving his country, he struts and swaggers, prates about the “flag” and the “glories of war,” and makes a spectacle of himself generally. This “patriot” is never so ready to respond to the call of “his country” as when half-famished working slaves are to be shot at — at so much per shot.

The boss “patriots” are the plutocrats. They do their share of the fighting in sumptuous banqueting halls where amidst the roar of champagne corks they glorify the “flag,” while the poor fool “patriots” murder one another, according to the ethics of “civilized warfare,” for \$13 a month.

Roosevelt of New York may be held up as the typical American patriot. He has the face of a bulldog and a heart to match. That such a savage is elected Governor of the leading state in the Union is proof enough that we are yet a million miles from civilization. According to the capitalist program this ideal “patriot” is to be made President in 1904, but he will hear something “strenuous” drop by that time and when he takes a second look he will see a socialist President in the seat his “patriotic” pantaloons yearned to warm.

The “patriotic” war in the Philippines blackens the blackest page in the 19th century. It is fiendish without a redeeming feature. All war is murder and I am opposed to the shedding of human blood, but since this war is forced upon the Filipinos, I regret that they lack the power and means to blow up every battleship that lands there. I am with and for the Filipinos, and hope with all my heart that they may yet repel the invaders and achieve their independence.

I am not a “patriot,” as that term is defined by the lexicon of capitalism. “All the world is my country and all mankind are my countrymen.”³

Not being a fetish worshiper I see no difference between a flag and any other piece of cotton goods. All flags look alike to me, but since we have not yet outgrown this fetish, mine is the blood-red flag of socialism.

Idaho.

The “bullpen” of Idaho is the joint product of Republican, Democratic, and Populistic administration. The pictures drawn of this hellhole by reliable correspondents are enough to make decent devils blush with shame. The Democratic-Populistic Governor Steunenberg and the Republican General Merriam,⁴ monsters of degeneracy, constitute the tsars of this domain. Here hundreds of honest workingmen, without a charge against them, are corralled like cattle, starved like outlaws, and shot like mad dogs, and while the outrages are being perpetrated in the name of “law and order” their wives are made victims of the lust of their brutal keepers.

We often hear that violent revolution is close upon us, but this is only bluster, for if there were but the faintest revolutionary spirit abroad, the Idaho "Bullpen" would fan it into flame like a cyclone and such fiends as Steunenberg, Merriam, and other degenerate tools of the Standard Oil Company would be hung higher than Haman.⁵

Some of these miners may remember what I told them nearly three years ago about coming events, about voting with the old parties and about socialism. They were not ready for socialism then, but now that their unions are broken up, their homes desolate, and themselves prisoners or exiles, and all this by the capitalist system which they have supported by their own votes, they will be compelled to realize that through socialism alone is there escape from the tyranny of capitalist rule and the atrocities of the wage system.

Dreyfus.

It requires no accurate observer to discover that Dreyfus, the victim of the foulest conspiracy ever conceived, is not being given a fair trial.⁶ The refusal of the court to adjourn when his counsel was stricken down by an assassin shows clearly enough which way the wind blows. But whether he is tried fairly or not, one thing is certain and that is that the French people are wide awake, and sooner or later justice will be meted out in spite of hell and the French army. For the epauletted conspirators, from first to last, there is a day of retribution and when it comes there will be such an accounting as even the people of France have never witnessed.

It is not Dreyfus alone that is on trial. Militarism, honeycombed with rottenness, is also arraigned before the high court of the French nation and when the final verdict of the French people shall have been reversed, militarism in France will have been crushed out of existence forever. Through it all there is a mighty mustering of the forces of socialism, and, out of it all there is certain to emerge the socialist republic.

The Cleveland Boycott.

The Street Railway Employees of Cleveland and their sympathizers are putting up a brave fight and we can only hope that victory may perch upon their banner. But they are fighting, barehanded, a powerful foe, backed by municipal clubs and state bayonets.

The attitude of [Peter M.] Arthur, the renegade chief of the Brotherhood of Engineers, is refreshing, but not at all surprising. The rich old labor leader is simply true to his base record. He is against the Cleveland strikers and against labor generally. He is the pliant tool of the railroads and in 1894 made a record black as a crow's wing. The Brotherhood of Engineers knows all this and has known it for years and still, to satisfy the general managers, who are the real rulers of the brotherhood, they continue to crown this traitor to labor "Grand Chief," and for such a brotherhood, honest men should have only unmitigated contempt.

The SDP.

The progress our party is making must be a source of gratification to every member. We now have an unbroken chain of branches stretching across the continent, from New England to the Golden Gate. Day by day there are new accessions to our ranks and in 1900 the party will be in superb fighting form.

The carbuncle at New York has come to a head and the pus is flowing freely. Purification is bound to follow, but in the meantime the olfactory nerves will be put to the severest test.

Private advices give assurance that our party stands high with the leaders of the European socialist movement. We have every reason to take courage and put forth the mightiest efforts at our command.

There is a united socialist party just ahead, and its initials will be SDP.

Published as "Current Events Passed in Review" in *Social Democratic Herald*, vol. 2, no. 11, whole no. 61 (Sept. 2, 1899), pg. 1.

¹ M.D. Ratchford, President of the United Mine Workers' Union during the 1897 coal strike, did not seek re-election in 1899. Later that year he joined the Federal Industrial Commission as its token labor representative — apparently the reference made here.

² William D. Ryan was Secretary-Treasurer of District 12 (Illinois) of the United Mine Workers of America from 1897 to 1908.

³ Slight misquotation of a line of William Lloyd Garrison (1805-1879): "My country is the world; my countrymen are mankind."

⁴ General Henry Clay Merriam (1837-1912), based in Denver, was the commander of federal forces which intervened in the 1899 Coeur d'Alene miners' strike.

⁵ Allusion to *Esther*, chapter 7, verses 6-10.

⁶ Captain Alfred Dreyfus (1859-1935) was a French military officer of Jewish-Alsatian ethnicity that was wrongly convicted of providing military secrets to the Germans. He would spend five years imprisoned on Devil's Island in French Guiana before his final exoneration in 1906.