

PEACE BY STANDING ARMY

by Henry George

Speech at the labour meeting, Cooper Union, New York, July 12, 1894, called to protest against President Cleveland's sending Federal troops to Chicago during the great railroad strike. The interruptions of the audience are here inserted to show the full nature of the speech.

Mr. Chairman and Fellow Citizens:

I come here to-night at considerable personal inconvenience, to discharge what I believe to be a duty. I come here to talk to you, as I have always talked, frankly and plainly. In some things I do not agree with the men who have invited me to come here. In some things I probably differ from the majority of this audience. I do not believe in strikes. (Hisses and faint cheers.) I am not disposed to denounce George M. Pullman. (Prolonged hisses and groans.) I come here as a citizen, as a Democrat— (Slight applause, followed by hisses and groans, continuing for several minutes)

I come as a Democrat who, from his great tariff message in 1887, has earnestly and with all his strength and ability supported Grover Cleveland (more hisses and groans), to protest against his action. (Great cheers.)

I come here to say what no daily paper in New York City has dared to say—that the action of Grover Cleveland (hisses and cries of "Order!") in throwing the standing army, without call from local authority, into the struggle between the railroads and their workmen, was in violation of the fundamental principles of our Government, and dangerous to the Republic. Governor Altgeld (loud cheering) has spoken the true Democratic doctrine. (Renewed hisses.) You men who are hissing the name of Democracy know no more about that doctrine than do the so-called Democrats who rule and rob this city. The Democracy that I am talking about, the Democracy to which I belong and as a representative of which I stand here, is not that Democracy; it is the Democracy of Thomas Jefferson! It is not the false Democracy of to-day, but it is the true Democracy; the Democracy that believes in equal rights to all and special privilege to none; the Democracy that would crush monopolies under its foot. (Cheers.) It is not the Democracy which now rules, but the Democracy that I trust soon will. (Long cheers.)

I am not a lawyer. I have had no time to make a special study of the matter from a legal standpoint. I cannot say how far, if at all, the President has violated the written law of the land. But this I do say positively: he has violated that law more important than the written law; he has violated the fundamental principles of our polity. (Cheers.)

The doctrine that the Federal power should be allowed to interfere in that in which it is not directly concerned is a foundation stone of our Republic. Governor Altgeld and Governor Waite are right. (Cheers.) If the standing army is to be sent into the States of this nation as it has been sent into the State of Illinois and other States, if the Federal Executive of its own motion is to undertake to keep the peace between citizens throughout the land, what shall the end be? We shall need a standing army of hundreds of thousands of men. The moment this principle is acknowledged, there is an end to local self-government, the Republic dies, and in all but name and hereditary succession the Empire has come. It is the lesson of the history of the world—peace kept by a standing army is incompatible with a true republic. (Loud cheering.)

This is a time for every sober man who loves his country and wishes to see it exist in peace and plenty to redeem its promise and fulfil its high destiny, to enter his protest against this Presidential action, temperately, firmly, unequivocally. (Cheers.)

But it is said that the President's action has been to maintain law and order. Let that be granted. Does the end always justify the means? I yield to nobody in my respect for law and order and my hatred of disorder, but there is something more important even than law and order, and that is the principle of liberty. I yield to nobody in my respect for the rights of property, yet I would rather see every locomotive in this land ditched, every car and every

depot burned and every rail torn up, than to have them preserved by means of a Federal standing army. That is the order that reigned in Warsaw. (Long applause.) That is the order in the keeping of which every democratic republic before ours has fallen. I love the American Republic better than I love such order. (Long cheering.)

What is the pretence that is made a justification for the action of the President? It is that the running of the mail trains of the United States has been interfered with D&os has been indicted and arrested, charged with conspfracy to interfere with the mails of the United States. (Groans and hisses.) Is that charge a true or a fair one? (shouts of "No!") I do not believe that there is an honest man to-day who will say that he believes in his heart that there is any basis for this charge. Debs from the first declared that he and. those who were following him were anxious to carry the mail trains of the United States.

But the railroads used the United States mail as a tool to crush labour organisation. (Cheers.) The railroads were the real conspirators so far as conspiracy to interfere with the transportation of the mails is concerned. (Loud cheers.) They did not carry nor attempt to carry the mails on the regular mail trains as usual. If they had, Bobs and his men would have seen to it that the mail cars went through. What they did do was to change the position of the mail cars, and to scatter the mails among all. their trains, and demand then that all trains should be run through because there was mail matter on them. (Cries of "Shame!" and long hissing.)

The conspiracy was by the millionaire monopolists. They deliberately conspired to use the mails so as to call upon the Federal Government to send its troops to crush down their employees. (Cries of "That is right!")

Look at Calif6rnia, where this struggle has been fiercest. I know something of that State. Citizen of New York as I now am, yet the greater part of my life has been spent in California. The people of that State are an orderly and law-abiding people. Do you suppose that they would look easily upon any movement that contemplated an interference with the mail service, which means so much to them? I know that they wovld not. I have not been in California for years, yet to-night I would stake my life that the great majority of the people of that State are in sympathy with the employees as against the railroad monopolies. Can there be stronger proof that if law is on one side, justice and liberty are on the other side? When a law-loving people sympathise with violations of law, there must be injustice behind the law. (Applause.) .

The masses of California hate the railroad power, and there is reason why they should. It has been the railroad power that has utterly demoralised California politics and debauched its public service. Ifis the railroad power that has given the control of that great State into the hands of a few railroad magnates—such a control as no prince ever exercised over his principality.

I stood by when the first spadeful of earth was turned in Sacramento for the Pacific roads. The men who were then back of that enterprise were but moderately wealthy men—the richest of them worth perhaps \$100,000. Today those men, or those who have succeeded them, are multi-millionaires. How did they get their great fortunes? Not as C. P. Huntington says in a newspaper paragraph this evening – by industry and frugality. (Laughter.) They got those fortunes by robbery—by robbery that is worse than highway robbery because it has been coupled with the bribery of those whom the people elected to serve them in high office, even on the benches pf their courts. (Cheers.)

These men have used what they got in trust from the Nation and the State, to corrupt the Government of Nation and State. . They have bought their way from primary elections to the United States Senate; they have made the managers of both parties their henchmen, put their friends on the bench, controlled newspapers, and kept lawyers under fee to take no case against them; they have throttled enterprise and held the State in a bond of iron. Over and over the people of California have rebelled at the ballot only to find after election was over that the railroad was still in control. (Cheering.)

What is true of California is true of other Western States, and true in large degree all over the country. And this great corrupt power, not content with legislative control, has been looking forward to the use of the Federal courts and of the standing army. We have been building ships of war that are of no use unless for the purpose of furnishing some pleasant gentlemen with pleasure trips and of furnishing the Carnegies with money. (Cheers and laughter.) We now

have a standing army of 25,000 men, and there are demands that it shall be increased to 50,000 men. In the days when our Government was weaker, when we had hostile savages on our frontier lines, and had real fighting to do, we had an army of only 10,000 men and a navy in proportion.

What is the reason that we are building ships of war and increasing the size of our army? It is because the millionaire monopolists are becoming afraid of a poverty-stricken people which their oppressive trusts and combinations are creating. It is because great wealth, unjustly acquired, always wants the security of standing armies and navies. (tong cheering.)

I want to speak with the utmost respect of Mr. Cleveland. (Prolonged hissing and groaning.) No man has been given such high honour from the American people. They made him President once, and then after a four years lapse showed theft confidence in him by making him President again, a compliment never paid to any man before. He has received higher honour from the American people than even did George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln or Ulysses S. Grant.

(A voice, "Why did you support him?")

Why I supported him—why against politicians and powers he was elected—was because I believed, and the people believed, he had sounded the key-note against monopoly. I am slow to attribute to Mr. Cleveland anything but the best motives, but the facts are plain. Not only has he left undone that which he had asked the warrant and received the command of the people to do, but from the very first, I am sorry to say, he seems to have taken the side, wantonly taken the side, of those very monstrous monopolies that have oppressed the people and which they believed he would begin to break down. (Loud cheering.)

It is at least the fact that his Federal appointments in California have been such as the railroad magnates themselves would have dictated had they been allowed to dictate, and I am not so sure that they were not. To the most important Federal office in California Mr. Cleveland appointed a man who was denounced at a Democratic State Convention as a traitor to his party because he had sold out to the railroad companies. Mr. Cleveland did this in spite of the fact that these things were formally presented to him by representative men of California. (Hisses.) And his other California appointments, so far as I have learned, are of the same character.

With Democratic lawyers of national reputation to choose from, one of Mr. Cleveland's first steps was to take as his Attorney-General a corporation attorney, a man whom I, and I think most of you, never had heard of. I refer to Mr. Olney. (Groans.)

It is from such capturing by great corporate interests of the legal machinery and law courts of the Federal Government that we get injunctions that look to the punishing of a man for not going to work when he did not choose to go to work, and I fear it is from the same power that the order comes which sends the standing army into States where the State authority has not asked for it, and even protests against its presence. (Groans.)

You have heard of the Senate sugar investigation, an investigation designed to do nothing except to find out facts. (Laughter.) When in Washington, before that investigation was ordered, or the newspaper charges which compelled it had been made, I was told by reliable authority that a Democratic United States senator, who has been once, and if I mistake not twice, Chairman of the National Democratic Executive Committee and consequently in a position to know, was declaring that the Sugar Trust interests must be taken care of in the tariff revision because it had contributed \$200,000 to Mr. Cleveland's election. Whether the railroads made any such contributions I do not know. (Laughter and cries of "Certainly they did!" "Sure!" and "You bet!")

I said in beginning that I came here to say what our daily papers in New York dared not say. That is true as far as my knowledge goes. But it has only been true since last Saturday. On last Friday, the 6th, the greatest of our Democratic papers, the "New York World," came out in a long and ringing article denouncing the use by President Cleveland of the standing army. On Saturday it ate its words of the day before and applauded the President, and has continued to do so ever since. What brought about such a change? If telegrams could be dragged out as the telegrams of the strike managers have been, we might find out; but it certainly was not a change of heart, a change of conviction. It is

ominous to find the entire press applauding action which violates so grossly American principles and American tradition; but it is even more ominous still, it seems to me, to see the ease with which a power that has bent courts and executive to its will can between sunrise and sunset wheel around a great paper—a paper that in so many things has stood as the exponent of true Democratic principles. (Great applause.) But I must stop. (Cries of “No, no; go on I” from all parts of the hail.) I would, indeed, like to go on, but I have exceeded my time, and others are to follow. Still, something yet I must say, but I must be brief. The purpose of this meeting is not only to express opinion on the action of the President but to consider the industrial situation.

Well, what are we going to do about it? (Cries of “Impeach Cleveland I” “We have the ballot!” “Let us have political action!”)

There is no royal road to relief. It cannot be found in electing this man or that man, or in merely changing from this party to that party. Political action amounts to nothing unless it is the expression of thought; not impulse. This is a time which calls for our best and most sober thought. Consider what is proposed. On the one side there are calls for a general strike. Can anything be accomplished by a general strike? A strike unaccompanied by violence is simply a test of endurance—a trial of who can live longest when the exertion of labour is stopped. Now, as a matter of fact, who can live longest when the earnings of labour are stopped—the men who have wealth in store or the men who are dependent on their daily earnings for their daily bread? the rich man or the poor man? (Applause, and cries of “The rich!”) Yes; the rich man every time. (Continued applause.)

Again, we are told that arbitration is the sovereign remedy—that we must have compulsory arbitration. This is as idle and more dangerous than the cry we used to hear for bureaus of labour statistics. Compulsory arbitration! That must mean, if it means anything, that behind the arbitrators there must be power to enforce their decree. Have you considered what compulsory arbitration means? Arbitrators must be appointed. In the long run who will get the arbitrators, the rich men or the poor men? (Cries of “The rich I” “The rich every time!”) Yes; judging from experience, the rich. Are you willing, then, to submit your wrongs to arbitration? (Cries of “No!”) To call for the establishment of courts which, if they amount to anything at all, are to have power to compel you to work when you do not want to work? (“No, no I” and applause.)

Then there is a third proposition. The “Morning Journal” of this city is the proposer. It concedes and declares the impolicy and weakness of strikes. It proposes instead of striking that the men in sympathy with the Pullman strikers should keep at work, save their money, and raise a fund which should enable every Pullman striker to leave Pullman! Well, supposing you did. Where are you to take them? (Laughter.) Is there a city, a town, a hamlet in this country where their trades are carried on, that there are not to-day three idle men in those trades for one at work? (Applause.) Suppose you did raise money to take these Pullman strikers out of Pullman, could anything better please Mr. Pullman? Poor as are the wages he pays, would he have any difficulty in filling his works were the strikers removed? (Applause.)

I speak of this proposition because it brings us to the heart of the labour question. Strikes, labour troubles, low wages, all the bitter injustice which the masses are feeling, come at bottom from the fact that there are more men seeking work than can find opportunities to work. (Applause and cries of “That is it!”) Yet the country abounds in opportunities. Its natural resources are so great as to seem without limit. The trouble is that the natural resources have been monopolised. (Much applause.)

Let me tell you what I have told you many times before. It is something I must tell you, or I should be dishonest. This whole great organised labour movement is on a wrong line—a line on which no large and permanent success can possibly be won. Trades-unions, with their necessary weapon, the strike, have accomplished something and may accomplish something, but it is very little and at great cost. The necessary endeavour of the strike to induce or compel others to stop work is in its nature war, and furthermore it is war that must necessarily deny a fundamental principle of personal liberty—the right of every man to work when, where, for whom and for what he pleases. Those who denounce labour organisations and their works use this moral principle against you. Stated alone, it is their strength and your weakness. (“That is true!”)

But above the wrongs which strikes involve, there is a deeper, wider wrong, which must be recognised and asserted if the labour movement is to obtain the moral strength that is its due. It is the great denial of liberty to work which provokes these small denials of liberty to work. It is the shutting up by monopolisation of the natural, God-given opportunities for work that compels men to struggle and fight for the opportunity to work, as though the very chance of employment were a prize and a boon. (Applause.)

The key to the labour question is the land question. The giant of monopolies is the monopoly of the land. That which no man made, that which the Almighty Father gives us, that which must be used in all production, that which is the first material essential of life itself, must be made free to all. In the single tax alone can labour find relief. (Great and long continued applause.)