

Statement to the *Appeal to Reason*
on the Haywood Verdict
(July 29, 1907)

Terre Haute, Ind., July 29 [1907]

The acquittal of Haywood, as announced by the press dispatches, is a distinct triumph of the organized workers of the nation — the greatest, I think, in all the history of the labor movement. The report came as a great and gratifying surprise to me, as it did, I am sure, to us all. I expected a mistrial based upon a disagreement of the jury, and I do not know of anyone who was sanguine enough to predict an absolute acquittal. It is not that any of us had the slightest doubt as to Haywood's innocence, but there was every reason, until Judge Wood delivered his instructions to the jury, to regard the proceedings with suspicion and to be prepared for a verdict that would correspond to the kidnapping.

The turn in the trial came with the instructions of the judge, which were in striking contrast to his holdings and decisions during the entire trial. The judge virtually instructed the jury to find in favor of the defendant. There is something mysterious about this, and I confess myself unable to fathom it. Of one thing, however, I am sure, and that is that the ruling element of the capitalist class concluded that it could not afford the conviction of Haywood, and I am satisfied that pressure was brought to bear on the court by some powerful interests to secure his acquittal.

It is this that constitutes the victory of the working class, and it is great enough to cause universal rejoicing. The lawyers for the defense, notably Darrow, Richardson, and Murphy,¹ served the defendant loyally and with exceptional ability and fidelity. But of itself their magnificent defense would have availed no more than the innocence of the defendant.

Guilty or not guilty, defense or no defense, the conspiracy of the mine owners and smelter trust, with the connivance of Standard Oil, backed by President Roosevelt and approved by the United States Supreme Court, had for its purpose the execution of Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone. There was to be a repetition of the judicial massacre at Chicago 19 years ago.² As to that there is not the slightest doubt. McParland boldly

announced the plot. Gooding confirmed it, and the capitalist press echoed and re-echoed it from shore to shore.

Then came the unexpected. The alarm was sounded by the labor press and the workers of the nation arose as if by magic and issued a cry of protest that startled the nation. It was this, and this alone, that thwarted the infamous conspiracy. But for this our three comrades would long since have sealed their fidelity to labor with their martyrdom.

The verdict of acquittal has put a quietus on this entire prosecution. It completely vindicates our comrades, and they stand before the world without a blemish. It is also a triumphant vindication of the labor press and the labor movement, and both will be vitalized and strengthened by it beyond measure.

This historic verdict not only vindicates our comrades, but impeaches their detractors, especially Theodore Roosevelt, president of the United States, and if he has so much as a spark of humane manhood he will tender Moyer and Haywood the most humble apology for the cruel outrage he perpetrated in using the prestige of his high official position to prejudice their cause and consummate the conspiracy of the mine owners to send them, though innocent, to the gallows. The supreme court is also scathingly rebuked by this verdict, with the single exception of Justice McKenna. Every one of its subservient members should hand his head in shame.

The whole organized working class, with but a few wretched exceptions, which need not be named here, will rejoice in this glorious victory. It has demonstrated the power of the labor movement and is exclusively the victory of that movement. Let us all unite in love and congratulations to our three comrades who have passed through the ordeal of fire and in joyous acclaim of the new era which now dawns to the working class. The trial and the verdict both emphasize the necessity for industrial unionism and for socialism, and from this time forward the movement along these lines will be accelerated with such force as to bear down all opposition. The blow the capitalist conspirators aimed at the labor movement has recoiled upon themselves.

The revolutionary movement of the working class has received an impetus that nothing else could have given it, and all over the land the organized workers have caught the new spirit, are falling into line and joining in the demand for the overthrow of capitalist despotism and the establishment of the socialist commonwealth.

The trial is over, comrades, and the victory won, but this is only the beginning. We have been imbued with fresh courage, greater strength, and stronger determination, and now we must unite our class as never before and move on to the next conflict and the next until final victory is achieved and the working class proclaims its emancipation to the world.

Eugene V. Debs

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¹ Murphy (XXXX-XXXX) INSERT FOOTNOTE HERE

² Reference is to the Haymarket affair.