

**Big Interests Are the Power That Rules:
Letter to the Editor of the *Terre Haute Star*
(circa November 30, 1908)**

Editor, *Star*, Terre Haute:—

In your editorial on “Aspects of Popular Government” in yesterday’s issue, which I read with much interest, the following paragraph appealed for comment:

In the recent election two champions of the square deal were beaten — Roosevelt and Beveridge. They were marked for slaughter by Big Business and the people stood idly by in indifference or in hostility to their champions. In New York the alliance between Wall Street and Tammany Hall was obvious. In Indiana the desires of Big Business were executed by the brewery trust.

It all depends, Mr. Editor, on what is meant by “the square deal.” In the campaign of 1904 Big Interests contributed about \$6 million to the Roosevelt campaign fund, solicited, in part, by Mr. Roosevelt himself, while the Pennsylvania Railroad system alone furnished him with more than \$100,000 worth of palatial free transportation.

In the late election Mr. Roosevelt ventured to make the charge you now repeat, namely, that “in New York the alliance between Wall Street and Tammany Hall was obvious.” Immediately following this charge Judge Alton B. Parker, Democratic candidate for president in 1904, made a speech at Plattsburg, NY, in which he said the alliance charged by Mr. Roosevelt was really between the Republican Party and Wall Street. He then produced a circular issued by the Republican leaders appealing to Big Interests for funds and proceeded to read the names of the contributors to Mr. Roosevelt’s New York campaign fund, among which were Cornelius Vanderbilt, Ogden Mills,ⁱ Cornelius Bliss,ⁱⁱ and other representatives of Big Interests, owners of corporations, and directors of trusts and other financial institutions.

Judge Parker succeeded in showing that at least half the Big Interests represented in Wall Street were financing Mr. Roosevelt’s Republican campaign, admitting candidly that the other half were financing Tammany and the Democratic campaign.

And still Mr. Roosevelt stands for the square deal!

When the mine and smelter trust kidnapped three labor leaders and attempted to hang them, and they appealed to the Supreme Court, Mr. Roosevelt, then president, invited the members of that tribunal to the White House and read to them a letter he had written in which he denounced the said labor leaders as “undesirable citizens.” The Supreme Court ignored their constitutional rights, denied their appeal, and turned them over to the executioner of Big Interests.

All the Big Interests in the land applauded this exhibition of the square deal. But a little later when the federal court, which Mr. Roosevelt had always maintained must be treated as an almost sacred and infallible institution, decided against him in his suit growing out of the Panama Canal scandal, he denounced Judge Andersonⁱⁱⁱ of the federal bench at Indianapolis, according to Harry New,^{iv} as “a damned jackass and crook.”

All of which simply shows that the square deal is entirely a matter of point of view. The wolf devouring a lamb undoubtedly stands for the square deal — from his point of view.

The kind of a square deal Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Beveridge^v stand for is not the kind that will be of any good to the common people. One of Senator Beveridge’s staunches supporters in the late campaign was David M. Parry, millionaire manufacturer, ex-president of the manufacturer’s association, and one of the bitterest and most implacable enemies of organized labor in the United States.

Mr. Parry, too, is a vaunted champion of the square deal, and yet he would, if he had the power, destroy every labor union and reduce the working class to a state of unresisting vassalage.

In Senator Beveridge Mr. Parry clearly sees a true champion of the square deal.

If the brewery interests financed Kern^{vi} and the Democratic Party in Indiana, it is quite as certain that the commercial and manufacturing interests financed Beveridge and the Republican Party.

They are alike, Mr. Editor — only more so.

The Republican and Democratic parties are financed from the same source and maintained for the same purpose, and that is to serve Big Interests, and if the Democratic Party secures complete control of Congress, it will be just as subservient to Big Interests as the Republican Party has been under the administrations of Presidents Roosevelt and Taft.

Here in Terre Haute, Big Interests rule with autocratic sway, and this is all the same whether the Republicans or the Democrats have a majority in council. The power that rules is the power that owns, and this is and will be Big Interests until triumphant socialism dispossesses Big Interests and supplants the present economic despotism with an industrial and social democracy.

More and more of the American people, opening their eyes to the real situation confronting them, and looking first over the record of the Republican Party and then that of the Democratic Party, exclaim: "A plague on both your houses," and turn toward the rising revolutionary movement that is to usher in the era of the square deal for all mankind.

Eugene V. Debs.

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ⁱ Darius Ogden Mills (1825-1910) was a multimillionaire financier with investments in railroads and banking.

ⁱⁱ Cornelius Bliss (1833-1911) was a millionaire businessman and Republican Party stalwart. Bliss was Secretary of the Interior during the William McKinley administration.

ⁱⁱⁱ Albert Barnes Anderson (1857-1938) was first appointed to the federal bench by Theodore Roosevelt in December 1902. He would be promoted from district court to the US court of appeals in 1925, remaining in that capacity until the time of his death.

^{iv} Harry S. New (1858-1937) was a prominent journalist and political activist. New was elected as a Republican to the US senate from Indiana in November 1916. He later served as postmaster general during the Harding and Coolidge administrations.

^v Albert J. Beveridge (1862-1927) was a progressive Republican ally of Theodore Roosevelt from Indiana. He was elected to the first of two terms to the US senate in November 1898 before falling to defeat in a bid for a third term in 1910. He turned to the writing of history in his later years, winning a Pulitzer Prize in 1920 for his four volume biography of Supreme Court Justice John Marshall.

^{vi} John W. Kern (1849-1917) was an Indiana lawyer elected as a Democrat to the US senate in November 1910, a race in which he defeated incumbent Senator Albert J. Beveridge.