

Idaho Election Should Prove Historic (July 28, 1906)

The eyes of the country, particularly of the working class, will be turned toward Idaho in the battle of ballots this fall. A situation not only unique, but unprecedented in American politics, is presented in that Mountain state, and in consequence of that situation, the political contest this year, which would ordinarily attract little attention beyond the boundaries of the state, promises to prove of such historic interest as to be memorable in the annals of a nation.

This being a congressional year, the campaign throughout the country will be a national one and most of the states, including Idaho, also have their state elections, and in the case of Idaho, for reasons every workingman in the land well understands, the state election will completely overshadow the national election in the importance of its outcome.

In the state campaign in Idaho this year there will be involved not only a national, but an international issue. In the persons of Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone, the whole working class of the nation is in jail in Idaho, the whole working class is on trial in Idaho, and the whole working class must prepare for its defense in Idaho.

When the criminal governor of Idaho conspired with the criminal governor of Colorado to kidnap our loyal and devoted leaders in defiance of national and state constitutions, and in brutal contempt of the common decencies shown even to convicted felons, they not only committed rape upon the law and outrage upon humanity, but they committed an assault upon the working class of the nation and the world.

That is the political issue in Idaho this year AD 1906.

The criminal governor of Idaho will deny this, but his word is of no value. A high official of the state who tramples under foot the law he has sworn to uphold to curry favor with plundering corporations is not to be believed, even under oath. Governor Gooding has forfeited all claim to veracity as well as official integrity upon the principle that an evil-doer will naturally lie to cover up his crime.

The kidnapping governor, his kidnapping pals, and kidnapping administration are on trial this year, and the case will be called in the court of the people on election day.

Governor Gooding snatched our brothers in the dead of night and ran with them to his mountain cave to do them to death; he stole them as any other robber steals from and perhaps slays his innocent victims, and he resorted to this monstrous crime because he knew that he had no case against his intended victims and that he could never get them in his cruel claws by any fair or lawful means.

In this arch-conspiracy, which will bear the name of Gooding to eternal infamy, the governor's accomplice and accessory was one James McParland, whose red-handed and black-hearted career has been laid bare to the nation.

The citizens of Parsons, Kansas, where McParland had his rendezvous at a deadfall in which many a wayfarer met his doom during the early days when the Bender family lay in ambush for their victims,¹ held a mass meeting recently, attended by public officials, merchants, clergymen, lawyers, doctors, and the people in general, and passed resolutions branding McParland, the kidnapping pal of Governor Gooding, as the most hardened and conscienceless criminal out of the penitentiary.

At the same time the citizens of Winnemucca, Nevada, where William D. Haywood, the imprisoned victim of the Gooding-McParland combine lived, met and unanimously bore written testimony to his clean character, his unimpeachable integrity, and his upright and blameless life.

It is not that Haywood, Moyer, and Pettibone are bad men and have committed crime that merits punishment, but that they are good men and absolutely innocent that now worries the governor, for he dares not allow them to go to trial before an aroused nation whose keen eyes are fixed upon him and his gang, and beneath whose keen and penetrating flashes he quails and cowers like a midnight assassin caught red-handed in the act.

In the conspiracy against labor, for such it is, the sole object is to fasten infamous crime upon its leaders by the use of perjured testimony and sensational "confessions," and Governor Gooding and his sodden henchmen are the political tools of the Standard Oil trust and its allied parties in crime in this dastardly attempt to crush out all opposition to corporation plunder and trust rule.

That is the Idaho case in a nutshell, and if Governor Gooding and his accessories carry out the conspiracy and deliver the goods there will be smooth sailing to a seat in the United States senate and to other desirable sinecures in which these political apostates may enjoy blood-bought luxuries as the reward of their revolting crimes.²

Upon this issue — and there is no other in Idaho this year — the Republican Party stands for Governor Gooding, James McParland, Harry Orchard, Prosecutor Borah, Standard Oil and its official organ, the Boise Statesman, the Federal Mining Co., Amalgamated Copper Co., Colorado Fuel and Iron Co., and other brigands, kidnappers, and cracksmen; and upon that issue the working class represented by the Socialist Party and all their friends and sympathizers and all who love justice and abhor crime, especially when committed in the name of law — upon that issue the Socialist Party will meet the Republican Party face to face in battle array in the approaching campaign, and no quarter will be asked or given.

In this fight between lawless corporate power and the working class there will be no compromise. The issue must be squarely met, and no subterfuges will be tolerated.

Where the Republican candidate speaks, no matter in what out-of-the-way camp or digging, his “hurrah-for-the-flag” harangue must be punctured with the interrogatory, “How about Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone?”

Let that cry be heard at every Republican meeting and don’t allow a single Columbian orator to dodge it.

In this connection the Democratic party is ignored as it has no place in the fight. It is neither on one side or on the other. It just wants to break into office, and so it sympathizes with both sides, and opposes both by turns, hoping to sneak into the political pie factory while the fight is going on.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic chieftain and peerless champion of the “common people” has not opened his mouth to say a single word of protest since Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone were ambushed in the interest of his friends, the silver mine owners of the West, and his silence in the presence of such an atrocious crime against the working class is more eloquent than speech in fixing his true status as the “friend of labor.”

There are about 60,000 votes in Idaho and of these about eight percent, or 5,000, have been cast for socialism. The field is, therefore, an inviting one from the socialist point of view, and becomes fascinatingly so in contemplating the life and death issue involved in the present campaign.³

Now, comrades, let the socialists and the workers and their friends of all the nation roll up their sleeves and itch in to win the fight for Idaho. The fight can be won and the state redeemed and our innocent brothers set

free and vindicated, and the kidnappers wiped out and relegated to eternal oblivion.

Let every available socialist speaker turn toward Idaho, so that the state can be thoroughly canvassed and the people aroused. All the people require is that falsehood shall be exposed, facts stated, and the truth made known.

They will take care of the rest.

Every nook and corner of the state must be sought out and its voters aroused to the enormity of the crimes about the blacken the escutcheon of the state. Let no county, no township, no ward, no precinct, no schoolhouse or crossroads be overlooked.

Next in order is the spread of socialist literature. The state ought to be sown knee-deep in it. Every socialist paper should be circulated as widely as possible, and chiefly in Idaho, *The Socialist*, published at Caldwell by Comrade [Hermon] Titus,⁴ who, from the very start, has shown the most commendable interest and activity in this case, and who, for the very prompt, thorough, efficient, and courageous service rendered by him, deserves the recognition, confidence, gratitude, and support of every workingman in the land.

The Socialist will be published on the field of battle, in the very center of the contest. It will be in position to give the latest and most reliable news, impart the soundest counsel and advice, expose the machinations of the malefactors, and hurl its shot and shells at the blowholes in the armor of the enemy.

It therefore becomes the duty of every comrade to constitute himself a special agent to swell the circulation of *The Socialist* during this campaign that it may reach the people and fulfill its extremely important mission in this crucial contest.

To Governor Gooding and his pirate crew all we have to say is:

Lay on, MacDuff,

And damned be him that first cries, "Hold, enough!"⁵

¹ John Bender was the patriarch of a murderous family who operated in rural Labette County, located 13 miles west of Parsons, Kansas. He, his wife, and two children — nicknamed “the Bloody Benders” in the contemporary press — befriended passing travelers, inviting them into their home only to rob and murder them. At least a dozen people were killed in this manner before the family’s deeds were discovered in the summer of 1873. Before they could be apprehended, the family fled the area and vanished. Multiple theories about the fate of the family were bandied in the press over the next decade.

² Incorporates handwritten correction of a typographical error made in copy of this article preserved in the Debs scrapbooks.

³ Republican governor Frank R. Gooding was re-elected to a second two-year term of office in the November general election by a majority of about 10,000 votes.

⁴ Radical newspaper publisher Hermon Titus briefly moved his weekly, *The Socialist*, from Toledo, Ohio to Caldwell, Idaho to better cover the Moyer-Haywood affair. He subsequently would return with the paper in 1907 to its original home, Seattle, Washington.

⁵ From *The Tragedy of MacBeth* [1603], act 5, scene 8, by William Shakespeare (1564-1616).