

Show Your Hand (January 5, 1907)

The supreme court decision in the Moyer-Haywood-Pettibone case marks a historic epoch and makes this the most important issue before the nation.¹

This decision constitutes the blackest chapter in the annals of that tribunal. It not only legalizes kidnapping, but means that the workingman has no right the capitalist is bound to respect.

We shall see!

The working class of the nation must, shall, and will again be aroused. The former demonstrations were tame compared to those which this infamous decision will now convoke from sea to sea.

The working class must save these men.

The president of the United States, the miserable mountebank, has shown his hand, pronouncing our comrades guilty without a trial and sending his fat Man Friday to Idaho to pave the way for the execution of his sentence.²

We pronounce our comrades innocent and we shall now proceed to show our hand, and before they get through with their program of kidnapping and murder they will wish they had never begun it.

In an early issue of the *Appeal* I shall have more to say upon this subject. Meantime, it is suggested that a series of meetings be promptly arranged for by all labor and socialist organizations, culminating in a monster international demonstration to be held on the anniversary of the outrage upon our comrades. In this connection it is suggested that all labor and socialist papers issue a special edition, to be known as the *kidnapping anniversary edition*, with which to flood the land and make known to every man, woman, and child this hideous crime against the working class, pointing out in red letters the precise politicians, beginning with the president, who are responsible for it.³

¹ The case of *Pettibone v. Nichols*, a case which began with a writ of habeas corpus challenging the legality of the arrest and transfer of George Pettibone, was argued before the supreme court on October 10-11, 1906. Writing for the majority on December 3, Justice John Marshall Harlan wrote that while Pettibone may not have met the legal requirements of a fugitive from justice in Idaho, nevertheless the fact that he had “no reasonable opportunity to present these facts” to a court “before being taken from Colorado constitutes no legal reason why he should be discharged from the custody of the Idaho authorities.”

² Portly Secretary of War William Howard Taft made a last minute 1906 campaign appearance in Boise in support of the re-election effort of Republican Idaho Governor Frank R. Gooding. Speaking before a packed auditorium of 4,000 supporters on November 3, Taft declared that if Gooding was defeated “the people of the state would serve notice on the world that criminals or men charged with crime...can bring down condemnation upon the officers of law having the courage to bring them to trial.”

³ February 17, 1907 was recognized as the labor and socialist movement as “Kidnapping Day,” with the *Appeal to Reason* issuing a special edition with a print run of 3 million copies — said to have been the largest edition of any newspaper in the world up to that date.