

“Bat” Masterson a Fiction Writer:  
Letter to the Editor of the *New York Telegraph*  
(circa May 10, 1907)

Editor, *Telegraph*,  
New York.

Dear Sir:—

In your issue of the 5th Inst. there appears an article by W.B. “Bat” Masterson on Moyer and Haywood, the union officials now being tried in Idaho, which has been widely copied. Let me call your attention to the fact that you failed to label this article fiction. I never read such a tissue of false statements and misinformation, and it seems unbelievable that a great metropolitan daily such as the *Telegraph* would deliberately circulate such rot as sober truth. I shall not ask for space enough to expose all these glaring untruths, but only one or two of them to show the character of the article. I could easily dispose of all the rest in the same way.

The article begins with the Coeur d’Alene riots and says that the careers of Moyer and Haywood begin with these riots.<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, neither Moyer nor Haywood was in these riots or had anything to do with them. Neither one of them was near there at the time. Ed Boyce was at that time president, and James Maher secretary, of the Western Federation of Miners. Moyer and Haywood had no official connection with the union, and had never been heard of at that time, nor for many years afterwards.

Next, the article describes the strike in Colorado and the fight on Bull Hill under the administration of Governor Waite<sup>2</sup> and says:

Moyer and Haywood were the first to make their escape. They ran like scared coyotes at the first crack of a gun and allowed about twenty of their men to be tried and convicted and sent to the penitentiary for long terms without so much as raising their hands to help them.

This is pure fiction. There is not a word of truth in it. As a matter of fact Moyer and Haywood were not at Bull Hill, nor had any part in this strike, nor were in the state of Colorado at all at that time, nor for several years afterwards. These facts can be easily verified. As to the Coeur

d'Alene statement, call on Governor Gooding of Idaho; and as to the Bull Hill statement, on Governor Buchtel of Colorado. Both are deadly enemies of Moyer and Haywood but they know the facts as I have stated them and as your article has misstated them.

The rest of the article is made up mainly of the same kind of stuff and it is this that is palmed off on the people as showing the character of Moyer and Haywood. To thus lie about men who are on trial for their lives is in itself a crime that certainly no respectable paper, even the Telegraph, should be guilty of.

The capitalist papers are now flooding the country with whole pages of such malicious falsehoods, made to order to influence public sentiment by their hireling scribes. Their purpose is clear. Moyer and Haywood must be hanged because they could not be corrupted to betray and deliver the working class; and, to justify this monstrous crime, the capitalist press engages in the conspiracy to make the American people believe in advance of the trial that they are murderers, and that no mercy must be shown them.

Of course there have been crimes committed in the Rocky Mountains during the past 15 years. No one disputes that. In the war between capital and labor it is only too true that blood has been shed, but the assumption is monstrously false that capital is wholly innocent and that labor is wholly responsible for this bloodshed. I need not say to you that capital rules today and is equal to any crime that may be necessary to perpetuate its sway. You know that. Everybody knows it. Men who will not bow to its imperious rule must be murdered. That fits the Moyer and Haywood case precisely.

Fortunately you can no longer deceive the working class and the people, as you once did by such criminal mendacity. The working class now has a press of its own and this letter will be read by ten million people whether you publish it or not.

***Eugene V. Debs***

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<sup>1</sup> Assuming that Masterson wrote chronologically, this refers to a strike in the summer of 1892 called over a reduction of wages and expansion of working hours. Gun battles between strikers and company security guards took place at several mines in the area, with two killed in the conflict. Martial law was declared and both National Guard and US Army troops inserted. About 600 strikers rounded up and held without formal charges in miserable concentration camp conditions known as the “bull pen.”

<sup>2</sup> This refers to the Cripple Creek strike of 1894. Populist Davis H. Waite was a one-term governor of Colorado, serving from January 1893 to January 1895.