

Americans! Arouse Yourselves!

Lucy E. Parsons

September 24, 1905

It has not been so many years ago since it was an accepted fact that this was a middle-class Republic. Hence it was immune against those upheavals that have in times past disturbed the equanimity of the “better classes” of Europe. If there are any such persons at the present time hugging these delusions we would be pleased to have them peruse the following extracts, taken from an interview with James R. Keene, of Wall Street fame. He says:

It is my firm conviction that the day is coming when the individual small merchant will cease to exist. In his place will be millions of persons working for wages and salaries whereas yesterday and today there were and are proprietors. In other words, I believe the time is coming when practically all mercantile and industrial affairs will be conducted by corporations.

Now, Americans, what are you going to do about this evil wave that is rushing in upon you and yours like an inundating flood? Are you going to stand still until it carries you off into the ocean of wage-slavery? Are there not enough there already struggling for a wretched existence?

Oh, I think I hear you say, “Why, I am going to use the ballot, the freeman’s weapon, and elect good men to office, who will seize the boa constrictor-like trusts and control them. Are we not free-born American citizens?”

Oh, are you, though? Not too much assurance, please. Let us see what Alton B. Parker has to say. When asked to comment on the admission of George W. Perkins, vice-president of the New York Life Insurance Company, that Mr McCall had contributed \$50,000 of the funds of the company to the Republican campaign fund last year, Mr. Parker said:

Yes, I believe I ought to say, now that there is no political excitement to distract the public attention, that the president of the New York Life was not the only such contributor. The officers of other great life insurance companies, such as the Equitable and the Mutual, also contributed from the policy-holders funds for campaign purposes last year. What has been proved in the case of the New York Life undoubtedly would be proved in the other cases. Were there an investigation of railroad, manufacturing and other corporations, it would be found that these life insurance officers were not the only corporation officers who put their hands into the treasury and took out moneys belonging to widows and orphans to help secure a partisan triumph.

That their acts were unlawful and their purposes corrupt goes without saying. Such men desire the triumph of that party which will better serve their personal financial interests and will—for contributions, past, present and future—continue to protect those interests by lenient legislation and by pretense at execution of law which shall be tenderly blind to all their offenses. That party they espouse in the boardroom, and contribute to it of the moneys they hold in trust, and, occasionally, a little of their own. . . .

The officers responsible for these raids upon the treasuries of corporations have received their reward in unfettered management of life insurance corporations; in unembarrassed raids upon the public through trusts—condemned by both common and statute law; in refusal to punish criminally the officers of railroad and other corporations violating the laws, and in statutory permission to manufacturing corporations to levy tribute on the people.

There can be no hope of checking the unlawful aggressions of officers of great corporations so long as they may thus form a quasi-partnership with the organization for the dominant political party. For, in the hour when the administration official seeks to punish the offender he is reminded by the head of the organization of the magnitude of the contributions of the corporation.

There is, however, something worse, if possible, than the escape of such offenders from justice. It is the gradual demoralization of voters and the dulling of the public conscience caused by the efforts to make these vast sums of money procure the ballots they were intended to procure, corruptly and otherwise.

Reader, have you read the above carefully? Yes? Then we ask you again: What are you going to do about it? Forty years ago a wail came up from the Sunny South that 4,000,000 black slaves were held in bondage. The eloquent Wendell Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison and many others depicted the auction block, the wail of innocent childhood, the anguish of womanhood who were compelled to do their master's bidding. It is not quite so bad in the North today, it is true, but how many of the wage class, as a class, are there who can avoid obeying the commands of the master (employing) class, as a class? Not many, are there?

Then are you not slaves to the money power as much as were the black slaves to the Southern slaveholders? Then we ask you again: What are you going to do about it? You had the ballot then. Could you have voted away black slavery? You know you could not because the slaveholders would not hear of such a thing for the same reason you can't vote yourselves out of wage-slavery.

The trusts will not allow you to vote them out of power because they are the power, as is shown by the interview given above.

All that the master class care for is to rush their "hands" through the factory grist, get all there is of strength and vitality out of them to pay interest on their watered stock, and when they are practically exhausted, then turn them over to the tender mercies of their police, to be "run in" as vagrants.

This is the fate which awaits many of the middle class and the wage-class. What are you going to do about it? Are you going to serve notice on these thieves, and highway robbers, sitting in high places of "honor" and "trust," that by the eternal god of justice, and by the manhood in you, that you will not, in this land of plenty, allow your children to become the mere hirelings and

dependents upon the sweet will of their children?

Remind them that the sword still hangs upon the wall and the heart still beats within the man, and that that sword will be unsheathed again, if necessary, in defense of your rights. Give them to understand that you will not stand patiently by and see your hard earnings squandered by a luxuriating class of idlers. If the American manhood will arouse itself and speak to those fellows in plain language, not to be misunderstood, they can save themselves, their country and their children, from the fate of poverty which awaits them.

Will you do it?

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Lucy E. Parsons
Americans! Arouse Yourselves!
September 24, 1905

The Liberator
excerpts

theanarchistlibrary.org