
The Black Flag!

*The Emblem of Hunger Unfurled
by the Proletarians of Chicago:*

**The Red Flag Borne Aloft by
Thousands of Workingmen on
Thanksgiving Day:**

*The Poverty of the Poor is Created
by the Robberies of the Rich:*

**Speeches, Resolutions, and a Grand
Demonstration of the Unemployed,
the Tramps, and Miserables of the City**

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A few days before Nov. 27 [1884], Thanksgiving Day, it was decided by some of the working people of Chicago that the day should be observed in a proper and suitable manner. Steps were taken at once to carry out this resolution and 25,000 copies of the following circular were distributed throughout the city:

To the Wage-Workers, the Unemployed, and “Tramps!”

Women and Men, Sisters and Brothers: His Excellency, the Governor [John Marshall Hamilton], has by official decree ordained that next Thursday [Nov. 27, 1884] shall be devoted by the citizens of this state to thanksgivings. You, too, are called upon to “give thanks.” Thanks, because your masters refuse to give you employment! Thanks, because you are hungry and without home or shelter! Thanks, because your masters have kindly taken away from you whatever you have created! thanks,

because your masters have adopted precautions to end your miserable existence by the bullet of the police or militia when your burden grows unbearable to you and you refuse to die in your hovel in due observance to "law and order."

Yes, you must give thanks that you are permitted to dare the blizzards of the winter without an overcoat, without...shoes and clothes, while mountains of good clothing, which you made, spoil in the storehouses! Give thanks that you are allowed to suffer the bitter pangs of hunger, while millions of bushels of grain decay and rot in our elevators! For this purpose a great Thanksgiving meeting has been arranged for you on Market Square. The same will take place at 2:30 o'clock on next Thursday. After the meeting a grand demonstration will be held to express our gratitude to our most benevolent, generous, and kind "Christian Brothers" on Michigan Avenue, etc. To them we are principally indebted for the glorious institutions which have brought about the blessed condition we enjoy. Every man and woman, and everyone who feels the sting of mockery contained in this official order for Thanksgiving, should be present.

The Committee of the Grateful,
Working People's International Association.

The day designated, Thursday the 29th of November, opened in sleet and rain. The wind blew sharp and frosty and left a stinging, uncomfortable sensation upon exposed portions of the face or hands. At the time of the announced, 2:30 pm, over 3,000 persons had assembled on Market Street, between Madison and Randolph. The mingled rain and sleet fell un pityingly from above, while the ground beneath was covered with mud and water. The severity of the weather shows something of the spirit that must be in the people who were not deterred by it.

Before the meeting was called to order a stranger mounted the stand and said he would call them to order. He said, "What you want is guns, you don't want to be here talking." Just then several persons stepped up to him and told him the regular arrangements had been made for the speakers, but he could be heard in the end if so desired.

The meeting was soon called to order by A.R. Parsons. He said, "We are assembled here on this Thanksgiving Day as the representatives of the disinherited class of the earth to speak in the name of the 40,000 unemployed workingmen of Chicago, 2 million in the United States, and 15 million in other civilized countries." He likened the good dinners the capitalists were enjoying today to the feast of

Belshazaar, they were wrung from the blood of our wives and children, and the champagne thus obtained ought to strangle them.

“In all the churches today they are preaching the Scriptures to the capitalists. But let us read the Scriptures as they are written, and see what their Bible has to say of them.” He then read:

“St. James, Chapter 5, says: ‘Go to now, ye rich men, weep and how for your miseries which shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. He have reaped treasure today for the last days. Behold the hire of the laborers which have reaped down your fields and which you have kept back by fraud crieth. Woe to them that bring about iniquity by law.’ The prophet Habakkuk says: ‘Woe to him that buildeth a town by blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity!’ The prophet Amos says: ‘Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor to fail from the land, that ye may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes!’ The prophet Isaiah says: ‘Woe unto them that join house to house and lay field to field till there is no place that they may be alone in the midst of the earth!’ Solomon says: ‘There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed of their filthiness; a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and how their eyelids are lifted up! A generation whose teeth are knives to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.’”

He closed by saying that we do not intend to leave this matter in the hands of the Lord, or wait for an improved future existence. We intend to do something for ourselves, and do it in this world.

He introduced as the first speaker C.S. Griffin, who said:

“This is an International assembly. It represents no locality or state or nation, it is an assemblage of men in the interest of humanity. We have no quarrel with each other, and we object to being drawn up in line and set to cutting each other’s throats, to gratify the political schemes of any government. We do not believe any government, or any class, or any system of industry ought to be allowed to pit man against man, for any cause, and to get at the root of all these evils we must go to the foundations of property rights and the wage system. The old system of labor and capital could no longer meet the demands of our advanced civilization.

“Today the whole cry is against overproduction, because it operates against humanity. This is all wrong. An overproduction ought to be a blessing instead of a curse, as it now is. Now, when the market is glutted with clothing, the mills shut down and thousands are thrown out of work and consequently deprived of the means to get any of that oversupply, and the result is that men must go ragged because there is too much clothing in the country. This is true of all other things. People must live out of doors because there are too many houses in the country. There are so many houses now vacant that there is no demand for more, therefore the builders are idle and cannot earn the money to pay rent with.

“Think of it! Ragged because there is too much clothing in the country. Living outdoors because there are too many houses in the country. Hungry because there is too much bread in the country, and freezing because there is too much coal in the country. Can this continue? Is there a man so blind that he cannot see that this system must be changed? No man can wear more than one suit of clothes at a time, or live in more than one house at a time, and we know that our ability to consume cannot be greatly increased under any system, while under the present it is growing weaker, and the genius of the age is still inventing and increasing the producing power. The overproduction is on the increase and must continue.

“Must this overproduction be continued as an accumulating lever against the more unfortunate, or shall we uproot the system and let the world enjoy its abundance, and be more happy the more they produce? A system that tells the working classes that the more they produce the less they shall have of it to enjoy, is a check on all human progress and cannot continue. The only remedy for this evil is to continue production and to refuse to pay for anything. Everything must be made free to all mankind. We can no longer measure the world with dollars. No man should control anything he has no personal use for. Possession should be his only title, and that title alone should be respected.”

Mr. Parsons then called for the resolutions, which were read as follows:

Whereas, We have outlived the usefulness of the wage and property system, that it now and must hereafter cramp, limit, and punish all increase of production, and can no longer gratify the necessities, rights, and ambitions of man; and

Whereas, The right of property requires four times more effort to adjust it between man and man than is required to produce, manufacture, and distribute it; therefore be it

Resolved, That property rights should no longer be maintained or respected. That the great army of useless workers (among which are lawyers, insurers, brokers, canvassers, jailers, police, politicians, armies, and navies), including all useless employees whose sole business is to adjust property claims between man and man, should be deprived of this useless and corrupting employment; and be allowed to spend their energies producing, manufacturing, and delivering the necessaries and luxuries of life.

As this is impossible so long as man continues to pay or receive pay for productions; therefore be it further

Resolved, That no man shall pay for anything, or receive pay for anything, or deprive himself of what he may desire that he finds out of use or vacant.

While none can eat more than they ought, under any system, or wear more than one suit of clothes at a time, or occupy more than one house at a time, yet as a free access to all will require more production, therefore be it further

Resolved, That any person who will not spend a reasonable portion of energy in the production, manufacture, or distribution of the necessaries, comforts, and luxuries of life, is the enemy of all mankind and ought to be treated as such. He who will willfully or maliciously waste is no better!

As this system cannot be introduced against existing ignorance, selfishness, and distrust, without the force of arms and strong explosives, therefore be it

Resolved, That when all stores, storehouses, vacant tenements, and transporting property are thrown open and held open to the free access of the general public, the good of mankind and the saving of blood requires that all forcible opposition should be dealt with summarily as fast as it may present itself. But none should be harmed or offended for holding opposite opinions; and lastly be it

Resolved, That as natural law provides that the more one has the more he wants, therefore the gratification of human desires only can stimulate human ambition. Therefore our policy is wise, humane, and practical and ought to be enforced at the earliest possible moment, with a just regard for numbers and implements.

As an expression of our thankfulness in this Thanksgiving Day,

Resolved, That we are thankful because we have learned the true cause of poverty and knew the remedy, and can only be more thankful when the principles are put in force.

The next speaker was Samuel Fielding. He began by ironically addressing the crowd as Christian brothers, in imitation of the opening of the church services, and immediately began to expose the hypocritical character of their blessings, and of the Governor's proclamation, in which they called upon all people to thank God for their great prosperity, when so many were in actual want in the midst of abundance, and providing no changes for the better, and holding up to ridicule all who try to present the remedy:

"If it is proper for those who have an abundance to give thanks, then it is proper for those who are deprived of all to give curses. How many of you have got something to be thankful for? We don't want to listen to this talk about future blessings, or that we who are poor were born to be poor, or wait for God to help us. When I was a boy my mother taught me to say, 'Our Father, who art in heaven;' but so far as I know he has never left there. He is where he's got a good thing, and he is going to stick to it. He never will come here until things are better arranged than they are now.

"Our motto is liberty, equality, and fraternity. We do not believe in robbing or abusing a man because he is colored, or a Chinaman, or was born in this country or that. Our international movement is to unite all countries for the mutual good of all, and do away with the robber class."

The next speaker was August Spies. He pointed to the black flag and said this is the first time that emblem of hunger and starvation has been unfurled on American soil. It represents that these people have begun to reach the condition of starvation of the older countries. We have got to strike down these robbers that are robbing the working people.

In answer to a call from some Germans in the crowd, Mr. Schwab took the stand and spoke for a few minutes in German.

That finished the regular speaking, and the man who first took the stand and the chairman introduced him. He said: "When the slaves wanted liberty they did not stop for anything. We got our guns, and that is the way to do. Get your guns out and go for them. That is

all I've got to say." Three cheers were given for the "Social Revolution."

The meeting then adjourned.

The audience then fell into line by fours, forming a procession of 3,000 men, and then moved off headed by a band, which woke the echoes of the lofty buildings around to the strains of "The Marseillaise." Two large flags, one black and the other red, headed the procession. About midway the procession there were two more large flags, one black and the other red. The following mottoes were displayed in the line of march:

"Why we thank? Because our capitalistic christian brothers are happily enjoying our turkeys, our wines, and our house!"

"Shall we thank our 'Lords' for our misery, destitution, and poverty?"

"Workmen organize!"

"Liberty without equality is a lie!"

"Private capital is the reward of robbery."

"Thanks to the lords who have the kindness to feat upon our earnings."

"Praise to our heavenly and earthly 'lords,' they have made of us miserable tramps and slaves."

"Exploitation is legal theft."

"All workmen have identical interests."

"The priesthood subserves the expoliator."

"Privilege is injustice."

"No greater crime in our days than poverty."

"Down with wages-slavery."

"The turkeys and champagne upon the tables of our grateful capitalists are very cheap — we paid for them!"

"Our capitalistic robbers may well thank their Lord, we their victims have not yet strangled them."

"The proletariat must be their own liberator."

The line of march was taken up as follows: south on Market Street to Monroe; on Monroe to State; north on State to Oak; thence to Rush; north on Rush to Chicago Avenue; west to Dearborn; north

on Dearborn to Schiller; west to Lasalle; south on Lasalle to Erie; thence to Wells; and south on Wells to offices of *The Alarm* and *Arbeiter Zeitung*, No. 107 Fifth Avenue, the point of destination. Here the crowd assembled, amid the strains of "The Marseillaise," the waving of the black and red flags, and the cheers of the thoroughly aroused proletariat.

Mr. Parsons spoke from the first floor window of the building, and congratulated the men upon the great success of the demonstration. He said that they had shown by their acts that while they knew they were slaves and bondsmen they were discontented, rebellious slaves, determined to emancipate themselves at any cost. He introduced Samuel Fielding, who made a brief and eloquent speech. He said they had this day given fair warning and made a protest that would be heard, and that in the near future the working class would also make that protest felt. He urged them to organize and prepare for the inevitable conflict which the capitalistic class would force upon them. He said that all nationality and creeds were swallowed up in the International, which made of all mankind a band of brothers, and by securing justice to each would bring peace, prosperity, and happiness to all.

Three cheers were proposed and given for our comrades the Anarchists of France and Austria, the Socialists of Germany, the Nihilists of Russia, and the Social Democrats of England. Three cheers were also given for the noble stand taken by our brothers in the Hocking Valley, Ohio. Amid cheers for the "Social Revolution," and the greatest enthusiasm the meeting was adjourned and the great crowd quietly dispersed.

Scenes and Incidents.

The snow and raid fell continuously, but it did not seem to dampen the ardor in the least of the thousands who marched in the line. As the procession passed the Palmer House, the band struck up "The Marseillaise" and the procession cheered and groaned alternately. Many comments were made by spectators on the sidewalk. One gentleman who evidently "puts up" at the Palmer and had his full supply of "turkey and champagne" was heard to say: "Oh, this is only intended to scare us. It's only a bluff." A bystander replied, "Well, my friend, before two years roll round, this thing will be serious enough to suit you or anybody else."

As the procession moved through the boulevards and avenues, which were lined with aristocratic palaces on either side, the men in line would cheer. At one fashionable club house of the high-toned on the corner of Washington Park and Dearborn Avenue, the demonstrators groaned, hissed, and hooted at the old and young sprigs of aristocracy who filled the windows and were beholding their future executioners. Passing down Lasalle Avenue, when ex-minister [Elihu B.] Washburn's mansion was reached, the procession made a striking demonstration. Washburn was United States minister to France at the time of revolt of the workingmen of Paris in 1871. On his return to America he traveled the country over delivering a lecture on "The Reign of the Paris Commune," which he described as a brutal mob of cutthroats, thieves, and vagabonds. The working men of Chicago remembered this, and one man left the procession and standing upon the sidewalk, pointing up into Washburn's palace cried, "Three cheers for the Paris Commune!" The whole procession joined the cry, the band struck up "The Marseillaise," and the vast throng of men joined in singing it. The high-toned loafers and robbers residing thereabouts came out upon their stoops to learn what was the matter, which they were not long in divining. A break was made to enter Washburn's mansion and sack it, but cooler heads kept the men quiet. This high-toned flunkey can begin to change the text of his lecture now, and make it read "The American Commune."

"Is this a Democratic demonstration?" said a bystander as the procession was moving down one of the avenues. "No," said one standing near him, "it is the Socialists." "Well, what good can this do then?" A lady standing nearby said, "Well, sir, what shall they do? Would you have them crawl into their hovels and die of hunger and want? Who would know of their condition did they keep quiet?" "Well," he replied, "there is something in that."

About every paper in Chicago was represented by a reporter, but either they or their editors misstated the facts.

The *Inter-Ocean* and *Herald* showed a great deal of fairness in the reports, but the *Tribune*, *Times*, and *News* all willfully misrepresented the whole affair. People must read the labor papers if they would know what the working people are really doing.

In connection with the above demonstration the *Chicago Tribune* gives the following account of the first regiment. The workingmen of Chicago can see from it what uses the military are to be put. It says:

The First Infantry spent something over two hours of the morning in drilling the “street riot” tactics recently prepared by one of the New York National Guard officers, and, taking into consideration the fact that it was the first drill of the kind the regiment has had, the various formations were well executed. In the drill the men were moved through the streets in a flanked column, that is, in the shape of a hollow square, one company or division at the head of the line stretching from curb to curb, with a column of fours on each side of the street, inside the curb, and a division from curb to curb bringing up the rear. From this formation they were changed to a column of divisions, and as street intersections were reached the first division would part in the middle, swing to the right and left, and, standing at a “charge bayonets,” serve as a protection for the flanks of the other divisions as they passed through. These protecting companies, after the passing of the remainder of the command, fell in at the rear, and at the next street intersection the division brought to the head of the line by the previous movement brought to the head of the line by the previous movement acted as flank guard, and in turn took their places in the rear.

These various movements are intended to be used in forcing their way through and dispersing any mobs which may have taken possession of the streets, and are something entirely new to the National Guard. the various formations were executed as the regiment marched along Michigan Avenue, Monroe Street, and Market Street to Van Buren, where the column counter-marched to Monroe Street. At the corner of Clark Street the men were so deployed as to cover the streets in all four directions and then put through the movements of loading and firing. From that point to the Armory, where they were dismissed, they marched in columns of fours. As the street riot fighting is about the only kind that the Chicago regiments may expect to have to engage in, the officers are going to give a good deal more attention to this particular feature hereafter.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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