

Statement to the Press on the Shooting
of President William McKinley
(September 7, 1901)

I can not imagine anything so deplorable. I can not conceive the motive for an attack on a man who is so universally admired as is President McKinley.¹ Misery and poverty must have caused it. The deed was not that of a madman. The method he pursued shows that the act was coolly and deliberately planned. It is one of the periodical outbreaks of a festering society. One can not imagine the mental status of a man so mean, so cowardly, so brutal as to join in the throng that was pressing forward to greet the President and have the murder of the one whose hand he sought to grasp in his heart.

Under pretense of greeting him as an admirer, he shot the President to give to the world the definition of his own misery. It was because he represented the great American people as their chief executive, and he thought that by ending the President's life he would give solace to his own aching heart. It is just a chapter in life's story. The poor miner is borne to his cabin in the throes of death. His wife falls at his side with the same kind grief as that felt by Mrs. McKinley, one of the noblest and best women that ever lived. The miner dies and the world knows nothing of it. The sorrow does not go beyond the circle of his own household and friends. The world would feel McKinley's loss, yet the sorrow of his own family would not be more profound than that of the poor miners.

This is an echo of Lattimer and Homestead. Men are being driven into desperate straits and they cannot fail to make an outcry or to offend the higher realm of society. Ground to a merciless poverty there can not fail to be an uprising. That spirit of love for justice cannot be suppressed. The lower walks of life must and will cry out. When men who fought for a principle are shot down because they dare to assert their rights, the mutterings of those oppressed must have redress and it is just such deplorable outbreaks as this attack on the President that cowardly seekers after vengeance find solace in.

As long as the world lasts there will be this disgruntled, festering, degrading class of peace disturbers who believe justice can be obtained only by such acts as that of yesterday.

Vice President Roosevelt would not be assassinated. Strange to say, anarchy does not assert itself against a military man. It is always the man from the civic walks that is attacked. True, McKinley had a Civil War record, but that is forgotten since the Spanish-American War has been added to history. Grant went without bodyguards and was not molested. He was worshipped as a military hero. Roosevelt could do the same without being molested.²

As long as this lasts, however, there will be mutterings from those who are oppressed or think they are oppressed and such murderous attacks as the one on President McKinley will be made by demons who can find revenge only in blood.

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¹ On Sept. 6, 1901, President William McKinley was shot twice in the abdomen at close range with a .32 caliber revolver by Leon Czolgosz, a Michigan-born Polish-American anarchist who formerly worked as a steelworker. He died eight days later from an infection. The 28 year old Czolgosz was executed by electric chair on October 29 of that same year.

² Theodore Roosevelt was shot in the chest in Milwaukee in 1912, surviving the attempt upon his life.