

Student Handout 11-Statement by Emma Goldman at the Federal hearing in re deportation

At the very outset of this hearing I wish to register my protest against these star chamber proceedings, whose very spirit is nothing less than a revival of the ancient days of the Spanish Inquisition or the more recently defunct Third Degree system of Czarist Russia.

This star chamber hearing is, furthermore, a denial of the insistent claim on the part of the Government that in this country we have free speech and a free press, and that every offender against the law--even the lowliest of men--is entitled to his day in open court, and to be heard and judged by a jury of his peers.

If the present proceedings are for the purpose of proving some alleged offense committed by me, some evil or anti-social act, then I protest against the secrecy and third degree methods of this so-called "trial." But if I am not charged with any specific offense or act, if--as I have reason to believe--this is purely an inquiry into my social and political opinions, then I protest still more vigorously against these proceedings, as utterly tyrannical and diametrically opposed to the fundamental guarantees of a true democracy.

Every human being is entitled to hold any opinion that appeals to her or him without making herself or himself liable to persecution. Ever since I have been in this country--and I have lived here practically all my life--it has been dinned into my ears that under the institutions of this alleged Democracy one is entirely free to think and feel as he pleases. What becomes of this sacred guarantee of freedom of thought and conscience when persons are being persecuted and driven out for the very motives and purposes for which the pioneers who built up this country laid down their lives?

And what is the object of this star chamber proceeding, that is admittedly based on the so-called Anti-Anarchist law? Is not the only purpose of this law, and of the deportations en masse, to suppress every symptom of popular discontent now manifesting itself through this country, as well as in all the European lands? It requires no great prophetic gift to foresee that this new Governmental policy of deportation is but the first step towards the introduction into this country of the old Russian system of exile for the high treason of entertaining new ideas of social life and industrial reconstruction. Today so-called aliens are deported, tomorrow native Americans will be banished. Already some patrioteers are suggesting that native American sons to whom Democracy is not a sham but a sacred ideal should be exiled. To be sure, America does not yet possess a suitable place like Siberia to which her exiled sons might be sent, but since she has begun to acquire colonial possessions, in contradiction of the principles she stood for over a century, it will not be difficult to find an American Siberia once the precedent of banishment is established.

The Anti-Anarchist law confuses the most varied social philosophies and isms in order to cover with the same blanket, so to speak, every element of social protest, so that under the guise of this single law, striking steel workers, railroad men, or any other class of workers, may be corralled wholesale and the most active of the strikers hurried out of the country, in order to serve the interests of our industrial kings.

Collective bargaining for the workers is now an admitted right, recognized by the highest officials of the land and accepted by the most reactionary elements. Yet when the steel workers of this country, after a quarter of a century of desperate struggle for the right to bargain collectively, have mustered enough spirit and cohesion to enter into a struggle with the steel barons for that fundamental right, the entire machinery of government, State and Federal, is put in operation to crush that spirit and to undermine the chance of establishing humane conditions in the industry where conditions have been worse than those that existed under the most brutal feudalism. The workers in the steel industry have expressed no particular social philosophy. They are certainly not on strike to "overthrow the government by a force or violence," yet the Anti-Anarchist law is used as a means to reach out for these simple, hard-driven and hard-pressed human beings, who have endangered life and limb to build up this devouring monster--the Steel Trust. A reign of terror has been established in the strike region. American Cossacks, known as the State Constabulary, ride over men, women and children; deputies of the Department of Justice break into the strikers' homes, violating the sacred Anglo-Saxon tradition that a man's home is his castle and may not be

entered except by due warrant of law; and to add the finishing touch to this picture of American "freedom," the Immigration authorities, the men of your department, take the strikers off secretly and order them deported by such proceedings as I am being subjected to today, without having committed even the slightest offense against American institutions, save the one that is the greatest crime today--the right of the workers to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness--a right that was made in America, and not imported by these hated aliens.

A commission, appointed by your department, finds that eighty per cent of the wealth in this country is produced by these aliens themselves or the sons of these aliens. In return for this, they are hounded and persecuted as criminals and enemies.

Under the mask of the same Anti-Anarchist law every criticism of a corrupt administration, every attack on Governmental abuse, every manifestation of sympathy with the struggle of another country in the pangs of a new birth--in short, every free expression of untrammelled thought may be suppressed utterly, without even the semblance of an unprejudiced hearing or a fair trial. It is for these reasons, chiefly, that I strenuously protest against this despotic law and its star chamber methods of procedure. I protest against the whole spirit underlying it--the spirit of an irresponsible hysteria, the result of the terrible war and of the evil tendencies of bigotry and persecution and violence which are the epilogue of five years of bloodshed.

Under these circumstances it becomes evident that the real purpose of all of these repressive measures--chief among them the Anti-Anarchist law--is to support the capitalist status quo in the United States. Vain is the pretence that the safety of the country or the well-being of the American people demands these drastic Prussian methods. Nay, indeed, the people can only profit by a free discussion of the new ideas now germinating in the minds of thinking men and women in society. The free expression of the hopes and aspirations of a people is the greatest and only safety in a sane society. In truth, it is such free expression and discussion alone that can point the most beneficial path for human progress and development. But the object of deportations and of the Anti-Anarchist law, as of all similar repressive measures, is the very opposite. It is to stifle the voice of the people, to muzzle every aspiration of labor. That is the real and terrible menace of the star chamber proceedings and of the tendency of exiling and banishing everyone who does not fit into the scheme of things our industrial lords are so eager to perpetuate.

With all the power and intensity of my being I protest against the conspiracy of imperialist capitalism against the life and the liberty of the American people.

Emma Goldman
New York, October 27, 1919