

**“JUSTICE AND THE SQUARE DEAL:” THE POLITICAL ALLIANCE OF  
MOTHER JONES AND JOHN W. KERN**

**U.S. History**

**USH.2.4** - Summarize the impact industrialization and immigration had on social movements of the era, including the contributions of specific individuals and groups.

**USH.3.2** - Explain the origins, goals, achievements, and limitations of the Progressive Movement in addressing political, economic, and social reform.

**USH.3.4** - Explain the importance of social and cultural movements within the Progressive Era, including significant individuals/groups such as Booker T. Washington, Ida B. Wells, W.E.B. DuBois, NAACP, muckrakers, and Upton Sinclair, and including movements such as the Harlem Renaissance, Women’s Suffrage, labor movements, and socialist movement.

**Indiana Studies**

**IS.1.9** - Explain key ideas, movements, and inventions and summarize their impact on rural and urban communities throughout Indiana.

**IS.1.10** - Describe the growth of unions and the labor movement and evaluate various approaches and methods used by different labor leaders and organizations.

**IS.1.35** - Locate and analyze primary sources and secondary sources related to an event or issue of the past. Discover possible limitations in various kinds of historical evidence and differing secondary opinions.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Student Directions:** Listen to the THH Episode called "Justice and the Square Deal: The Political Alliance of Mother Jones and John W. Kern." Answer the following questions in the box underneath the question. [Here](#) is a link to the transcript if you prefer to read the content or to follow along while listening.

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**Quick Facts**

1. What was the life of a coal miner like? Provide an example from the podcast of a miner's experience.

2. Why did the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) form?

3. Why was Mother Jones arrested? What did Senator Kern do after Jones was imprisoned?



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**Dig Deeper**

1. Describe the relationship between Mother Jones and Senator John Kern? How did their working relationship affect the labor movement in Indiana?

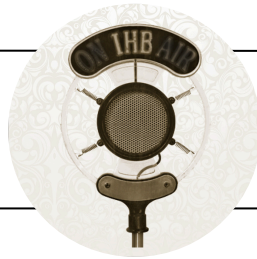
Blank area for student response to question 1.

2. How does the work of Mother Jones and Senator Kern contribute to the Progressive Movement?

Blank area for student response to question 2.

3. The podcast notes that Mother Jones' diary often contained inaccuracies. How does the podcast host say he verified Mother Jones' claims?

Blank area for student response to question 3.



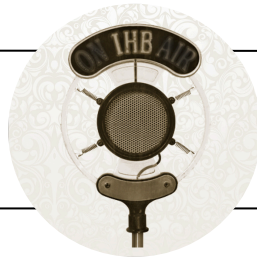
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Want to get even more use out of the podcast? These quick exercises can get your students engaged with the topic in different ways.

**Exercise 1:** Read the text on the Mary Harris “Mother” Jones state historical marker. Then, write your own marker text (50-100 words) on the life and legacy of Senator Kern. Be sure to include information on his work as a senator and contributions to the labor movement.

**Exercise 2:** Read the included excerpt from Mother Jones’ diary. If you were a historian, what details would you find the most important or interesting? Why?

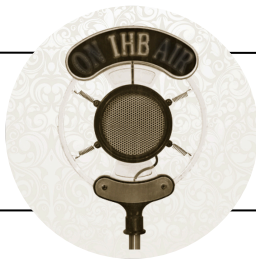
**Exercise 3:** Have students form small groups and respond to the following prompt: “Imagine you are interviewing a former coal miner from Indiana. What questions would you ask them about their experience?”



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Visit the Mary Harris “Mother” Jones marker page [here](#) for more information on the marker and annotated text.





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Mary Harris Jones, “Chapter 2,” *Autobiography of Mother Jones* (Chicago, IL: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1925), p. 17-23, accessed via [Internet Archive](#).

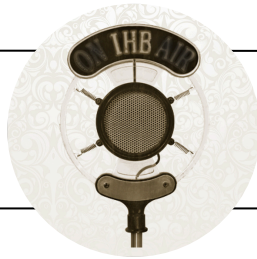
Chapter II  
The Haymarket Tragedy

From 1880 on, I became wholly engrossed in the labor movement. In all the great industrial centers the working class was in rebellion. The enormous immigration from Europe crowded the slums, forced down wages and threatened to destroy the standard of living fought for by American working men. Throughout the country there was business depression and much unemployment. In the cities there was hunger and rags and despair.

Foreign agitators who had suffered under European despots preached various schemes of economic salvation to the workers. The workers asked only for bread and a shortening of the long hours of toil. The agitators gave them visions. The police gave them clubs.

Particularly the city of Chicago was the scene of strike after strike, followed by boycotts and riots. The years preceding 1886 had witnessed strikes of the lake seaman, of dock laborers and street railway workers. These strikes had been brutally suppressed by policemen’s clubs and by hired gunmen. The grievance on the part of the workers was given no heed. John Bonfield, inspector of police, was particularly cruel in the suppression of meetings where men peacefully assembled to discuss matters of wages and of hours. Employers were defiant and open in the expression of their fears and hatreds. The Chicago Tribune, the organ of the employers, suggested ironically that the farmers of Illinois treat the tramps that poured out of the great industrial centers as they did other pests, by putting strychnine in the food.

The workers started an agitation for an eight-hour day. The trades unions and the Knights of Labor endorsed the movement but because many of the leaders of the agitation were foreigners, the movement itself was regarded as “foreign” and as “un-American.” Then the anarchist of Chicago, a very small group, espoused the cause of the eight-hour day. From then on the people of Chicago seemed incapable of discussing a purely economic question without getting excited about anarchism.



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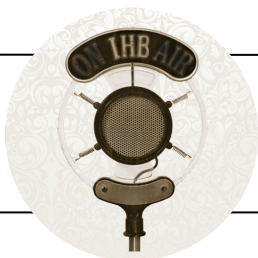
The employers used the cry of anarchist to kill the movement. A person who believed in an eight-hour working day was, they said, an enemy to his country, a traitor, an anarchist. The foundations of government were being gnawed away by anarchist rats. Feeling was bitter. The city was divided into two angry camps. The working people on one side- hungry, cold, jobless, fighting gunmen and police clubs with bare hands. On the other side the employers, knowing neither hunger nor cold, supported by the newspapers, by the police, by all the power of the great state itself.

The anarchists took advantage of the widespread discontent to preach their doctrines. Orators used to address huge crowds on the windy, barren shore of Lake Michigan. Although I never endorsed the philosophy of anarchist, I often attended the meetings on the lake shore, listening to what these teachers of the new order had to say to the workers.

Meanwhile the employers were meeting. They met in the mansion of George M. Pullman on Prairie Avenue or in the residence of Wirt Dexter, an able corporation lawyer. They discussed means of killing the eight-hour movement which was to be ushered in by a general strike. They discussed methods of dispersing the meetings of the anarchists.

A bitterly cold winter set in. Long unemployment resulted in terrible suffering. Bread lines increased. Soup kitchens could not handle the applicants. Thousands knew actual misery.

On Christmas day, hundreds of poverty stricken people in rags and tatters, in thin clothes, in wretched shoes paraded on fashionable Prairie Avenue before the mansions of the rich, before their employers, carrying the black flag. I thought the parade an insane move on the part of the anarchists, as it only served to make feeling more bitter. As a matter of fact, it had no educational value whatever and only served to increase the employers’ fear, to make the police more savage, and the public less sympathetic to the read distress of the workers.



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The first of May, which was to usher in the eight-hour day uprising, came. The newspapers had done everything to alarm the people. All over the city there were strikes and walkouts. Employers quaked in their boots. They saw revolution. The workers in the McCormick Harvester works gathered outside the factory. Those inside who did not join the strikers were called scabs. Bricks were thrown. Windows were broken. The scabs were threatened. Someone turned in a riot call.

The police without warning charged down upon the workers, shooting into their midst, clubbing right and left. Many were trampled under horses’ feet. Numbers were shot dead. Skulls were broken. Young men and young girls were clubbed to death.

The Pinkerton agency formed armed bands of ex-convicts and hoodlums and hired them to capitalists at eight dollars a day, to picket the factories and incite trouble.

One the evening of May 4th, the anarchists held a meeting in the shabby, dirty district known to later history as Haymarket Square. All about were railway tracks, dingy saloons and the dirty tenements of the poor. A half a block away was the Desplaines Street Police Station presided over by John Bonfield, a man without tact or discretion or sympathy, a most brutal believer in suppression as the method to settle industrial unrest.

Carter Harrison, the mayor of Chicago, attended the meeting of the anarchists and moved in and about the crowds in the square. After leaving, he went to the Chief of Police and instructed him to send no mounted police to the meeting, as it was being peacefully conducted and the presence of mounted police would only add fuel to fires already burning red in the workers’ hearts. But orders perhaps came from other quarters, for disregarding the report of the mayor, the chief of police sent mounted policemen in large numbers to the meeting.

One of the anarchist speakers was addressing the crowd. A bomb was dropped from a window overlooking the square. A number of the police were killed in the explosion that followed.





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The city went insane and the newspapers did everything to keep it like a madhouse. The workers’ cry for justice was drowned in the shriek for revenge. Bombs were “found” every five minutes. Men went armed and gun stores kept open nights. Hundreds were arrested. Only those who had agitated for an eight-hour day, however, were brought to trial and a few months later hanged. But the man, Schnaubelt, who actually threw the bomb was never brought into the case, nor was his part in the terrible drama ever officially made clear.

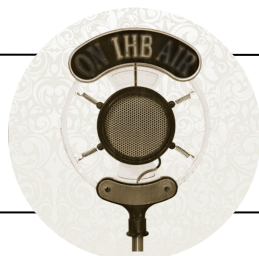
The leaders in the eight hour day movement were hanged Friday, November the 11th. That day Chicago’s rich had chills and fever. Ropes stretched in all directions from the jail. Police men were stationed along the ropes armed with riot rifles. Special patrols watched all approaches to the jail. The roofs about the grim stone building were black with police. The newspapers fed the public imagination with stories of uprisings and jail deliveries.

But there were no uprisings, no jail deliveries, except that of Louis Lingg, the only real preacher of violence among all the condemned men. He outwitted the gallows by biting a percussion cap and blowing off his head.

The Sunday following the executions, the funerals were held. Thousands of workers marched behind the black hearses, not because they were anarchists but they felt that these men, whatever their theories, were martyrs to the workers’ struggle. The procession wound through miles and miles of street densely packed with silent people.

In the cemetery of Waldheim, the dead were buried. But with them was not buried their cause. The struggle for the eight hour day, for more human conditions and relations between man and man lived on, and still lives on.

Seven years later, Governor Altgeld, after reading all the evidence in the case, pardoned the three anarchists who had escaped the gallows and were serving life sentences in jail. He said the verdict was unjustifiable, as had William Dean Howells and William Morris at the time of its execution. Governor Altgeld committed political suicide by his brave action but he is remembered by all those who love truth and those who have the courage to confess it.



## “JUSTICE AND THE SQUARE DEAL:” THE POLITICAL ALLIANCE OF MOTHER JONES AND JOHN W. KERN

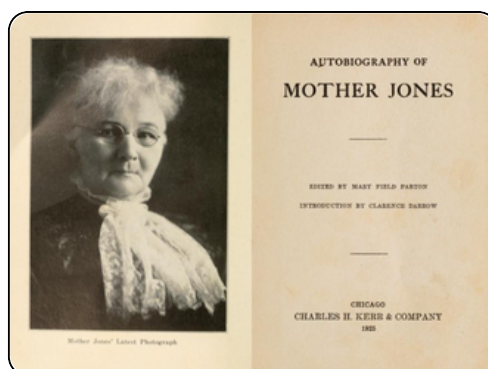
Learn more about Mother Jones and the labor movement in Indiana with these IHB historian-reviewed primary and secondary sources.

### Primary Sources



#### Hoosier State Chronicles

Hoosier State Chronicles is a free, digital repository for many of Indiana’s historic newspapers. It includes many articles reporting on both Mother Jones and Senator Kern.



#### The Autobiography of Mother Jones

A digitized copy of the *Autobiography of Mother Jones*.

### Secondary Sources



#### Untold Indiana Blog

From IHB’s blog Untold Indiana, this piece explores the professional relationship between Mother Jones and Indiana Senator John W. Kern.



#### Library of Congress Research Guide: Mother Jones

This short biographical essay and research guide on Mother Jones comes from the Library of Congress. The page includes links to several print and digital resources.