

20 January 1916

Mother Jones: In Chicago, some time ago when I was there, a man came to me and he said—but first and foremost, a bunch of little boys came and they said, “Mother, they are arresting the little boys that have no homes and they are taking them into court and taking their fingerprints and putting them in the Rogues’ Gallery. Will you come with us and see if you can stop it?” I said, “Yes, I will,” and we went to call on the Mayor, but the Mayor would not see us. He belonged to the temperance brigade, and we did not; I guess that is the reason. We went from there to Judge Olson. I had trained the little boys to make their speech to the judge, and they talked, and I want to say to you here, if those boys grow up to be men, they will be a tremendous asset to this nation in the days to come. I sat there listening to these little fellows as they talked to the judge. The judge got carried away with them, and he said, “Well, boys, I am going to stop that. I am interested in you.” We went away, and the boys came back and said, “Mother, will you come some day and talk for us at our club?” and I said, “Yes, I will, on Saturday,” but on Saturday I walked about six miles with about seven thousand girls, showing up the parasites, showing how they get the life blood out of these girls that had to work from 5:20 in the morning until 7:30 at night, making \$1.80, and when they complain, the boss tells them, “If you don’t like it, get to hell or out on the sidewalk and make a living.” That is the reply of the boss.

I was worn out; I had to speak to about three thousand people after I got back to the hall, and so I did not go on Saturday night, but I went on Sunday, and I talked to those boys. Before I left Chicago, Sunday, a man came to me and said, “Mother Jones, I want to tell you the history of a little boy.” I said, “All right.” He said, “His mother died when he was a baby; he was put in an orphan asylum; from there he was sent to the Reform School; from the Reform School he was sent to a farmer. He went into the house ten minutes before noon one day to get a piece of bread,” because these farmers eat their breakfast early, like you fellows do, “and the woman undertook to beat him. He ran to open the door and she took the broom and beat the little fellow away and locked the door. He went under the table, and this woman began beating him.” No doubt the poor woman was worked to death. “After she got through beating him the boy ran out and got a shotgun and shot her. He was not thirteen years old. He was put in the penitentiary for life, no friends to defend him.”

Now, the laws of Illinois prohibit the incarceration of a boy of that age for life in the penitentiary. Notwithstanding that, there was no one in the State of Illinois that took up the battle of this homeless child. Society made a criminal out of him. Now, I am going to Chicago. A party told me, “If you will take the matter into court, I will pay the expenses of a lawyer.” I told Mr. White, and he said, “Mother, you go and you do that. Any assistance you need you can call on this organization and

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I will give it to you,” and he says, “I will go further, Mother; I will give that boy a home until he grows to manhood and educate him.”

Now, boys, I am going to Chicago to take that matter up with attorneys. I am going down to the prison. I am going to see that boy. I am going to get the records of the court. I am going to the Governor, and if the Governor won't do business, I am going to get Mr. Green, Mr. Hayes, Mr. McDonald and Mr. Germer — because they live in Illinois — to go and see that Governor, and if they can't bring him to time, I am going to take it into court and fight it to a finish. That is why I am going away tonight, and I would have gone away last night but you were snarling at each other here.

Now, I want to tell you something before I go. There is a corporation up here in Washington. They wanted to extend their telephone lines, and when the men were digging the holes for their poles the farmer who owned the land came down and said to them, “What are you doing?” They said, “Digging holes for the telephone poles.” He said, “What the hell is the matter with you? This ground is mine!” They said, “That don't make any difference, the telephone company can plant their poles in any ground they want to.” He said, “You get out of here.” They said, “Oh, no.” He walked up to the house and got a shotgun, and he said again, “You get out of here,” and over the fence they went, and up to Washington, and the old fellow put his gun up. A couple of days later they came again, and they were going to dig the holes again, and the fellow came down with the shotgun and said, “Didn't I run you away from here once?” They said, “Yes, you did, but you can't do it now.” He said, “What's the reason?” They said, “Because we have got an order of the court.” He said, “Well, read the order of the court,” and so the telephone representatives read the order of the court, and the old fellow went in and put his shotgun up. He went out the back door and went down to the barn and opened it up. There was a thing in the barn, a pretty ferocious thing, and he unchained it. These fellows were laughing to themselves about how they had licked the old farmer — how the telephone company had licked the farmer with the wonderful court order. Just then the old fellow says, “Now, sic 'em Bull,” and Bull went after them. He shook his head at them and they went over the fence. The fellow came out on his front porch and sat down and began smoking, and these fellows came up and said, “Say, Mr. Farmer, we have got to plant these poles. Won't you call your bull off?” The farmer said, “Why don't your read the order of the court to him?”

Then I will tell you another story. Teddy Roosevelt was out West after we had our strike in 1904. Well, Teddy went out to Colorado hunting wolves, but he could not get as many as he wanted. He heard that a ranchman out there had a splendid dog for hunting wolves, and he sent some of his lap dogs up there to get this wolf dog. The farmer said he would