

The Pinkertons are to be investigated by Judiciary Committees.  
Senator Palmer of Illinois on July 7 speaks in debate on them and  
the Homestead Riot. Page 209

"I understand that the Carnegie Company have determined that there shall be changes in their methods; that there shall be a different rate of compensation paid hereafter for certain kinds of labor, and that the contracts shall end at another time of the year, and that they make those conditions peremptory and absolute - the reduction of wages and the difference in the termination of the period of the contracts. It is also true that they have, in the exercise of what they claim, to be their clear right, attempted to bring a large military force to their establishment - a military force which has a known and recognized existence in this country. The army raised and commanded by the Pinkertons is as distinctly known in this country as is the regular army of the United States. ~~It is not a new thing. I am astonished to find that it excites surprise now.~~ For years that force has existed. Its number is not always the same. The commander in chief of this army, like the barons of the Middle Ages, has a force to be increased at pleasure for the service of those who would pay him or them, and they have been employed in many places, in many of the States of the Union. They have been employed in New York, and have shed the blood of citizens of that State. They have been employed in Illinois, and have shed the blood of citizens of Illinois. At other points in the United States they have been employed.

"This company claim not only the right to regulate their own business in their own way, but they claim the right to fortify their position, and the right to introduce this armed force within their fortified lines. They claim the right to a free passage from their armed boats on the Monongahela river into their fortifications; and hence this struggle, this battle; because battles are not necessarily conflicts between armed men organized by proper authority, and there was a battle between the men who supposed they had a right and this armed force of mercenaries raised and organized by the owners of this establishment.

"Mr. President, in making this statement I confess I have given no information to the Senate. We know what the facts are. It is claimed on one hand that the citizens fired on the mercenaries, and it is claimed on the other hand that the mercenaries fired first upon the citizens. It is not very material

## Pinkertons (Continued)

to my mind, who fired the first shot. These are men who were taken there for the purpose of battle - a contingent purpose, I confess, but for the purpose of shedding the blood of these people if they stood in their pathway. Their boats, I understand, were lined so as to be impervious to the pistols and muskets that were supposed to be in the hands of these people.

"But even when that statement is made I have done but little toward reaching a solution of this question. What I desire from any committee of the Senate will be not to tell us the story of this outrage, nor is it material whether the blame for the present condition is cast upon the Carnegie Company or not. It is simply because they are but representatives of new conditions of society. It might have happened at any one of a hundred places in the United States where large numbers of men are employed in the service of these enormous manufacturing establishments. It may happen anywhere. It may occur in Illinois, or in New York, or in Pennsylvania, or in Ohio. Anywhere it may happen, because in the nature of things these interests oppose each other up to the extent that I shall describe.

"I speak of the Carnegie Company merely because it happens for the time being to be an actor in these things. It is claimed for them and by them that they have an absolute right to the management of their own property; that they are not bound to listen to the suggestions or the wishes of any third person; that the men who have toiled with them and for them for years have no voice whatever, have no interest in the establishment, have no right, and only speak by the permission of those who employ them. That is the broad statement of property rights in the Carnegie Company.

"The men who resist claim that they have some rights, because if it is true as a matter of law, and if it is to be regarded as true in a political sense, that these 4,500 men were simply trespassers there, then, of course, it must be very difficult to condemn the Carnegie Company, except as to the manner in which they assert their rights.

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"I will not discuss that question. Something more, however, must be claimed for these men. I maintain - and I ask the attention of the Committee on Education and Labor, if that committee shall be instructed to inquire into this subject - that these citizens were right. I maintain, according to the law of the land, not as the law is generally understood, but according to the principles of the law which must hereafter be applied to the

## Pinkertons ( Continued)

solution of these troubles, that those men had the right to be there. That makes it necessary for me to assert that these men had a right to employment there; they had earned the right to live there, and these large manufacturing establishments - and there is no other road out of this question - must hereafter be understood to be public establishments in the modified sense - which I will explain in a moment, in which the public is deeply interested; and the owners of these properties must hereafter be regarded as holding their property subject to the correlative rights of those without whose services the property would be utterly valueless. That concession which I make only concedes to them a right to a reasonable profit on the capital invested in their enterprises.

"I maintain, furthermore, that these laborers, having been in that service, having been engaged there, having spent their lives in this peculiar line of service, have the right to insist upon the permanency of their employment; and they have the right to insist, too, upon a reasonable compensation for their services.

"We talk about the civil-service law as applicable to Government employment. I assert that there is a law wider and broader than that, which gives to these men who have been bred in these special pursuits, as, for example, in the service of railroads or of these vast manufacturing establishments, a right to demand employment - a right which can only be defeated by misconduct on their part.

"Within my lifetime I have seen marvelous changes. There was a time when individualism was the universal rule, and men lived alone almost, because they could support themselves; but matters have changed. Today the world is practically divided between the employers and the employees. I do not take into account those neglected agricultural districts, those farm laborers, for whom nobody seems to care, for, in all the discussions of tariff policy we have, nobody ever speaks of the toiler upon the farm. We speak of organized labor and skilled labor, but when we come to talk about the white or the black men who toil upon the farm from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, and speak of the influence of legislation upon these men, we do not regard them. If we pray, for them, we pray for them very much as Brougham said the Queen was prayed for - for the desolate and the oppressed; if we legislate, they are not regarded. But this organized labor is a power in the state. You must regard it; you must adjust it.

"How can you adjust it? You can not do it by asserting, what I admit to be true, that every man has a right to the control of his own property in his own way; if he does not like to go to work for the Carnegies, he may go to work for somebody else. You can not settle it in that way. You can not settle it by saying that Mr. Carnegie has a right to employ whomsoever he pleases. Those are old truisms which have no application in this changed condition, when organized capital furnished us all that we have; it furnishes all our food; it furnishes all our clothing; it furnishes our physicians; I believe it is now furnishing our lawyers; and it is said that it has furnished us our legislators sometimes, although that is a slander which I am not disposed to indorse. That being the case, you have got to find some road out. You can not admit the absolute right of capital; you can not admit the absolute right of labor; you have got to adjust their rights upon some basis. What is it? That the manufacturing establishment is a public institution, as the railroads are held to be - public because they work for the public, public because they employ the public, public because men in their service become unfit for other services, and public because there are thousands dependent upon them for food and nurture.

"Thus we have recognized the right of the capitalist to the control of his property, subject to his right to a reasonable reward for his investment; and we claim for the laborer the right to permanent employment during good behavior, though he is certainly compelled to submit to the changes of business. Where the profits are small, the parties must divide the losses; where the profits are large the profits may be divided. That is the exact condition; that is the law today, as I maintain, because the law is the perfection of reason, and we have seen the law built up step by step.

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You can not ask these laborers to become slaves, because if it is true, as claimed by some, that capitalists have a right to hold over the heads of their employees the rod of dismissal at their pleasure, American freedom is gone, and the vote will be cast by the master who holds the bread of the voter. You must give to the voter, if you mean that he shall be independent, a fixity of employment, so that he may defy the employer, and say to him: 'My tenure depends not on my vote, but my tenure depends upon my good behavior, upon my fidelity, my honesty, my industry, and not upon my vote.'

"If some solution is not found in that direction, this army of employees will be controlled by the employers, and there will be established an aristocracy more terrible than exists in any free country, and this nobility of wealth will become our governors."