

## Mr. Cant Claims he did not Support the Infamous Struck Jury Bill.

To the Editor of the Labor World:

Since my nomination for the office of Judge of the District Court, certain reports have been invented and circulated concerning my connection with the Struck Jury Bill at the last session of the State Legislature, of which I was a member. I assume that the people whom I served may be interested in knowing the truth, and I feel sure they will believe me when I tell them what the truth is in this matter.

First—It is claimed that I introduced, or originated this bill.

The statement is untrue. The bill was introduced in the Senate, and I never heard of it until after it had passed that body and had been sent to the House of Representatives, of which I was a member. It passed the Senate with only four dissenting votes, and every Democrat and Populist, except one, who voted upon the bill, voted in its favor.

Second—It is claimed the bill was passed in the interest of certain parties residing in Duluth, and that what I did was done at their behest.

This statement is likewise untrue. No one from this vicinity, or connected with those here, ever mentioned the bill to me, so far as I recall, and certainly none ever importuned me to support or vote for it.

Third—It is claimed that I was one of the ardent supporters of the bill.

This is directly opposed to the truth. No man was ever asked by me to support or vote for that bill. What I did in reference to the bill was done against it. The only opposition there was to it in the House of Representatives originated with me. In the judiciary committee of the House, where I first learned of its existence, I opposed and spoke against it.

At that time a bill was pending in the House to legalize a franchise which years before had been granted by the village of West Duluth to the West Duluth Light and Water company. The franchise was unjust, and the bill to legalize it was infamous. Its passage was reported worth \$100,000 to the company. The bill had passed the senate and was being vigorously pushed by the most subtle corporate and political influence in this state. Well-known St. Paul parties controlled the company, and the bill was in their interest. They, with a large following in the house and a strong lobby, were pressing the bill forward. Our people in Duluth, through numerous delegations demanded its defeat and our delegation worked faithfully and successfully to that end. To secure for us the support of the Minneapolis delegation of fifteen members, one of their number demanded in return that I support the struck jury bill. Up to that time the latter bill had attracted no attention whatever. Practically no one had said anything against it but myself. I declined to support the bill, but of two evils

I chose the least and finally offered as a compromise to vote for it in return for their support, reserving the right to otherwise continue my opposition if further inquiry made it desirable to do so. This and this only, was the occasion of my afterwards voting for the bill.

During that session of the legislature Mr. William C. Hayes of Minneapolis, a member of the labor organization known as the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, was one of those having in charge the interests of organized labor. He was most efficient in his service and was daily on the floor of the house, but was not a member. I at once notified him of the bill, and offered to assist him in such manner as he might desire in case he should conclude to oppose it. I have lately received a letter from Mr. Hays, bearing upon this question, a part of which reads as follows:

"I know of my own knowledge this report concerning your attitude toward the Struck Jury Bill to be wholly untrue. When the so-called Struck Jury Bill first came to the House from the Senate, you called my attention particularly to its provisions, and advised me of the possible abuse to which such a law might be put in the hands of a bad sheriff, though its provisions, if administered by other hands, might be wholesome. You frankly told me at the time, and I thoroughly understood, that owing to unavoidable combinations which were necessary to secure the passage or defeat of certain measures of great importance to your constituents, you would be obliged to vote for this bill, but that you had already spoken against it in committee, and was not obliged to, and would not otherwise give it support, which the managers of the bill well knew; and you did not further support the bill. In fact, to my knowledge, you secured for us several votes against the bill, and in many ways offset your own vote by assistance rendered us in the matter.

In connection with the foregoing, and in justice to you, I deem it my duty, without hesitation or qualification, to say that throughout said session you were one of the staunchest members in the support of legitimate and reasonable measures favoring the interests of labor. You were one of our firm friends, upon whom we always relied to favor what was just and right.

Trusting this will be satisfactory, and will quiet all false rumors respecting your attitude as above, I am with great respect,

Yours truly,  
WM. C. HAYES."

Such is my record upon this bill. The truth in reference thereto is, and always has been, easily ascertainable. Everyone who knows anything about the matter knows the foregoing to be true. I will assume that for the most part statements heretofore made contrary to the truth have been given currency without malice, by those who did not know the facts.

Respectfully,  
WM. A. CANT.

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