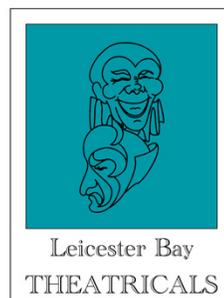


# JIMMY HIGGINS

**Line By Byline**

A Life In The Labor Movement

A one man play  
by  
Harlan Baker



Newport, Maine

© 2018 by Harlan Baker  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

CAUTION:

Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that

**JIMMY HIGGINS: Line by Byline**

being fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States Of America, the British Empire, including the Dominion Of Canada, and the other countries of the Copyright Union, is subject to royalty. Anyone presenting the play without the express written permission of the Copyright owners and/or their authorized agent will be liable to the penalties provided by law.

**Script and music copies must be purchased from the Publisher and Royalty must be paid to the publisher for each and every performance before an audience whether or not admission is charged. A performance license must first be obtained from the publisher prior to any performance(s).**

Federal Copyright Law -- 17 U.S.C. section 504 -- allows for a recovery of a minimum of \$250 and a maximum of \$50,000 for each infringement, plus attorney fees.

The professional and amateur rights to the performance of this play along with the lecturing, recitation, and public reading rights, are administered exclusively through LEICESTER BAY THEATRICALS without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be made. For all other rights inquiries may be made to the authors through LEICESTER BAY THEATRICALS Any adaptation or arrangement of this work without the author's written permission is an infringement of copyright. **Unauthorized duplication by any means is also an infringement.**

**FOR PUBLIC PERFORMANCE RIGHTS YOU MUST APPLY TO THE PUBLISHER OR YOU ARE BREAKING THE LAW!**

The possession of this PERUSAL SCRIPT whether bought or rented, does not constitute permission to perform the work herein contained, in public or in private, for gain or charity. Proper prior application must be made and license granted before a performance may be given. Copies of this PERUSAL SCRIPT and all other rehearsal materials may be rented from:

LEICESTER BAY THEATRICALS  
P.O. Box 536 Newport, ME 04953-0536  
[www.leicesterbaytheatricals.com](http://www.leicesterbaytheatricals.com)  
Printed in the United States Of America

**THIS NOTICE MUST APPEAR IN ALL PROGRAMS, ON ALL POSTERS AND PUBLICITY MATERIALS AND INTERNET ADVERTISING/WEBPAGES FOR THE PLAY:**

*“Jimmy Higgins: Line By Byline is presented through special arrangement with Leicester Bay Theatricals. All authorized materials are also supplied by LBT, [www.leicesterbaytheatricals.com](http://www.leicesterbaytheatricals.com)”*

NOTE: Your contract with Leicester Bay Theatricals limits you to making copies of this document for persons directly connected with your production. Do not distribute outside of your cast and crew. Following your performance run you must destroy all photocopies, preferably by shredding them. If we sent you the document in printed format, you must return that document to us. If we provided you with an electronic PDF file, simply trash that on your computer so that it cannot be recovered. The electronic document may only be on ONE computer -- it may NOT be duplicated. This is also a part of your contract with Leicester Bay Theatricals.

COVER ART: At The Theatre Project-photo by Heather Perry

**JIMMY HIGGINS** premiered at the St. Lawrence Arts Center in Portland, Maine on April 28, 2008. Christopher Price directed the performance. It has since toured throughout New England.

**JIMMY HIGGINS**.....Harlan Baker

**PRODUCTION HISTORY:**

St. Lawrence Arts Center in Portland -- 2008  
Theatre Project, Brunswick, Maine --2008  
Acorn Studio Theater, Westbrook, Maine --2008  
University of New England, Biddeford, Maine--2008  
Zero Station Gallery, Portland, Maine—2008  
Holderness School, Holderness, New Hampshire—2009  
University of Southern Maine, Portland, Maine --2009  
Old Port Playhouse, Portland, Maine-2010  
Labor Temple, Madison, Wisconsin --2011  
Lucid Stage, Portland, Maine--2011  
Johnson Hall, Gardiner, Maine -- 2011  
PortFringe , Portland, Maine-- 2012  
Old Labor Hall, Barre, Vermont—2015  
Urban Farm Fermentory, Portland Maine-2017  
Storm Warnings Repertory Theatre, Kennebunk, Maine—2018

**SETTING:**

The play is set in 1960 in Jimmy Higgins’s apartment and in flashback to various times and places in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

- Scene 1 “What’s this article for?” -- 1960
- Scene 2 “I was born in Sandusky Ohio” -- 1900-1917
- Scene 3 “Congress Declares War -- 1917-1918
- Scene 4 Eugene Debs speaks -- 1918
- Scene 5 Revolution -- 1919
- Scene 6 I cast my first vote -- 1924
- Scene 7 Down South -- 1936
- Scene 8 The Battle of the Overpass -- 1937
- Scene 9 “Do you have enough for your article?” -- 1960

**SONGS:**

**The Banks of the Wabash** (*By Paul Dresser-1897*) Music and Lyrics in the back of the script.  
**The People’s Flag** (*Words: Jim Connell, Lyrics in the script written in 1889 to the tune of O, Tannenbaum*)  
**Ain’t We Got Fun?** (*1921 -- Lyrics by Gus Kahn & Raymond Egan, Music by Richard Whiting*) Music and Lyrics in the back of the script  
**Pie In The Sky** (*The music was composed in 1868 and is in the public domain. The lyrics used in the script for Pie In The Sky are set to the tune of “In The Sweet Bye and Bye’ and were composed by Joe Hill in 1911. [Now also in the Public Domain]*  
*Joe Hill was executed by a Utah firing squad in 1915 on a charge of murder. Many people believe he was railroaded.*)  
**On The Picket Line** (*sung to the tune of Polly-Wolly-Doodle*) Lyrics in the back of the script

## **AUTHOR BIO:**

**Harlan Baker** is a graduate of Emerson College. He worked on the staff of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America AFL-CIO (Now UniteHere). He served in the Maine legislature from 1979-1988 representing part of Portland.

He is an actor and director and has appeared with numerous theatres throughout New England, including the Portland Stage Company, Theater at Monmouth, Mt. Holyoke Summer Theater, New Century Theater and the Stage at Spring Point.

His short plays, "Gran Via", "Tung Sing", and "A Whale of a Tale", have staged by several Portland area theatre companies.

He has been teaching speech and theater for the past twenty years at the University of Southern Maine, and taught speech and theater at the University of New England from 1987 to 2004 concurrently with his work at USM. He is currently an adjunct lecturer in the Theatre department at the University of Southern Maine.

**JIMMY HIGGINS: Line By Byline** a one-man show by Harlan Baker. 1m. 85 minutes. *(For professional, amateur or educational theatre production)* *Jimmy Higgins: Line By Byline* is about an old radical who tells his story to a young man. Jimmy grows up in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in middle America. The play follows his involvement in various labor and socialist struggles from the campaign to free Tom Mooney, the presidential campaign of Eugene Debs, the May Day rallies of 1919, the campaign of Sen. Robert La Follette Sr. on the Progressive Party Ticket to his becoming a reporter on labor struggles in Alabama and Michigan. He witnesses the Battle of the Overpass and Henry Ford's violent attempt to intimidate labor leader Walter Ruether. This is a tour-de-force production for a single actor. While many of the characters have a basis in actual history, Jimmy Higgins, himself, is a fictional character tying together the events of the early 20th Century. **ORDER #3324**

## **AUTHOR FOREWORD:**

### **Who is Jimmy Higgins?**

In the first scene of this play Jimmy Higgins says to the eager young reporter, "I'm not that Jimmy Higgins. The Jimmy Higgins you are thinking of is a myth. A legend like Paul Bunyan."

Jimmy Higgins (or as it is sometimes spelled, Jimmie Higgins) is a legend. He first appeared as a cartoon character created by Ben Hanford, who was the Socialist Party candidate for vice president in 1904 and 1908. Higgins was the rank and file socialist who always set up the chairs for the meetings, passed out the leaflets and cleaned up afterwards to little or no fanfare.

In 1919, Upton Sinclair published *Jimmie Higgins*. The New York Times derisively reviewed it as being sensational because of its accusation of the use of torture by the United States Army against dissenters during the First World War. The character I have written about while sharing the same name is not the same person.

I first heard of Jimmy Higgins in 1972. The Socialist Party had just held a factious convention that led to another of the many splits among the left. Michael Harrington then considered the leading Democratic Socialist in the United States and his followers decided to form a new organization, The Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee. A newsletter would be published—the Newsletter of the democratic left—and according to Harrington, would feature a back page entitled "Jimmy Higgins Reports", a series of short newsy items about local socialist activity around the country. The column featured a whimsical cartoon character, usually sweeping up after a meeting or sitting in a chair surrounded by leaflets left on the floor of the meeting hall he would have to clean up.

The character in this play is fictitious. He is the product of my imagination as are the rest of his family and friends. There was no Sandusky Standard newspaper, but the times and events he lived through are real.

I have had a small connection to some of the real people who lived through those events and are referred to or portrayed in this play. I once spent a day with H.L. Mitchell, the founder of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union when he was lecturing in Maine. He was eager to pass on the history of the union to a younger generation of social activists. I actually did meet Victor Reuther of the United Auto Workers at a dinner.

I have been lucky to know, if very briefly, some of the trade union and socialist activists of the 30's, 40's, and 50's. I knew Julius Bernstein of the Jewish Labor Committee, who once chided me for misspelling the word 'sponsor' on a leaflet; Earl Bourdon, who used his hearing aid to his advantage when he had a difference of opinion with me. I remember Bill Kemsley, who helped rebuild the German trade unions after the Second World War, and John Cort, who was active in the Catholic Worker movement. There is a special place in my memory for Carl Shier of the United Auto Workers, who in the age of e-mail continued to snail mail people all over the United States his monthly "care packet" of photocopied articles on labor and politics.

I am also grateful for the assistance and advice I have received in the writing of this script from John Kerr, Eva Holmes, Stephanie Brouwer, Dolores Fredrickson, Abigail Swardlick, Eileen Eagan, Liz McMahon, Acorn Productions, and the St. Lawrence Arts Center. This play would have never been performed without their help.

#### **REVIEWS:**

*"In the time it takes to pour two shots of whiskey into a tall glass, Harlan Baker - teacher, actor and former legislator - becomes 'Jimmy Higgins', a rank and file union and socialist activist who also happens to be an ink-in-the-veins journalist."*

- James McCarthy, Brunswick Times Record

*"What follows is a lot like novelist John dos Passos's famous U.S.A. trilogy, in that Jimmy experiences both the actual political events and fictionalized personal ones."*

- Megan Grumling, The Portland Phoenix

*"We all know how the history of the working class has been distorted, hidden and forgotten. Baker's mission is to bring back some of that history, bring it to life, and tell the untold stories, perhaps even to a new generation."*

- Ron Blascoe, Union Labor News-Wisconsin

## ACT ONE

*The stage is bare except for a table and two chairs. On the table is a bottle of scotch, a case containing a pair of glasses, a bible, reporter's notebook and a composition book. LIGHTS come up to reveal a man, JIMMY, standing stage right smoking a cigarette. He notices that there is an audience and walks up on the stage and looks directly at the audience.*

**JIMMY:** Come in. You're on time. Have seat.

*(Takes out a pack of Lucky Strikes and offers a cigarette which is obviously refused.)*

Mind if I smoke? If it bothers you, I think I can wait...Something to drink? A beer? No.

So, what's this article about? Whatever became of the radicals of the 1930s? Whatever became of Jimmy Higgins? Oh – so you've heard of Jimmy Higgins, how he was involved in every campaign and was always ready to pitch in?

Is this part of a dissertation for your doctorate... Oh it's for the Sun Times? Your student newspaper!!

Mind if I have a drink?

*(Pours a drink of scotch.)*

You don't understand. I'm not that Jimmy Higgins. The Jimmy Higgins you're thinking of is a myth; a legend like Paul Bunyan. I wasn't much of a radical.

Say, did you catch the debate on TV last night between Nixon and Kennedy? Who do you think won the debate? No, tell me which one do you like? Well, I prefer Kennedy. Walter Reuther's backing Kennedy and I put a lot of stock in what Reuther has to say ...I met Reuther once.....oh your father thinks he's a trouble maker. I met his brother, Victor, too at a dinner a few years back. He kept looking at me kind of funny till I remembered he had a glass eye as a result of an assassination attempt against him. A shotgun blast nearly blew off his jaw. Do you know what he said to the doctor, "Doctor, take my arm take my leg, but leave me my tongue. I have a living to make."

"Sell a man a fish, he eats for a day, teach a man how to fish, you ruin a wonderful business opportunity."

You recognize that? That's Marx. Karl Marx. Have you read Marx? Neither have I. But Terrance Farrell used to quote Marx at me all the time. Well, I think we were friends. Sometimes it was hard to tell with that guy. He understood all that stuff—loved to argue with you—tough guy to argue with. If he were still alive you would have gotten a good interview out of him.

Oh, your deadline's tomorrow...Ok I understand deadlines. What do you want to know?

I was born Jan. 13<sup>th</sup> 1900 in Sandusky, Ohio. It was a Saturday. My mother had to quit her job teaching in order to marry my father but she kept to her schedule and delivered all of her babies on Saturday.

I hate it when people call me Jimmy. I was baptized James Michael O'Roark Higgins. My mother told me

**PERUSAL SCRIPT-- JIMMY HIGGINS: LINE BY BYLINE** by Harlan Baker

that I began to cry as soon as the priest performing the ceremony said, 'Holy Ghost.' Even in Latin I knew I would be an apostate Catholic for the rest of my life...

I was the third of four children. My sister, Nora, was the oldest, then came my brother Stephen. My brother, Kevin, was born two years later. I never got to know him. He died of scarlet fever before he was a year old.

When my father was a young man he studied to be a priest. One day he came home from the seminary, put everything away, took down the crucifix that was hanging in the front hallway of his home, and never said anything about what happened, and never talked about God after that.

My father was editor of a paper called, *The Sandusky Standard*. You know *The New York Times* motto, "All the news that's fit to print." Well, ours was, "Setting a higher standard." My father was a populist and supported William Jennings Bryan in '96.

To keep the peace in the family, my father would walk my mother, Stephen, Nora, and me to Sunday mass, leave us at the door, and walk to his office to write his editorials. We attended parochial school but, after the ninth grade it was agreed that we should go to the public high school.

Nora was the brains of the family- She went to college, where according to our Aunt Syd, she fell under the influence of radical professors who filled her head with ideas like free love, birth control, and the absurd notion--according to my aunt--that women had the right to vote. Nora was only interested in the latter, at least that is what she told me.

Stephen was a good athlete and once signed to play with Milt Baker's minor league baseball team in Chicago.

Mrs. Connolly, the head of the local woman's auxiliary of the Knights of Columbus, used to refer to us as "Lace Curtain" Irish, although my father would reply, "Yes, but our laces are badly frayed around the edges."

Oh, I was the errand boy around the house. I remember one day my mother said to me,

"Jimmy would you run down to Gruber's, I need two pounds of hamburger. Then pick up some bread, eggs, flour, and butter. Then run over to The Standard and ask your father what he would like for diner and find out which alderman he is inviting for dinner tonight."

"Yes, Mom." I had no idea what an alderman was.

"Here's another 9 cents pickup an extra loaf of bread."

"Write it down so you won't forget."

"I won't forget."

I arrived at Gruber's.

Otto Gruber had this big handlebar mustache that he would twirl when he talked to me.

"Jimmy, what would you like today?"

“I’d like ...”

“Your mother sent you for hamburger, yes?”

“How did you know?”

“You mother orders hamburger every Wednesday.. I always write it down in my book.” He then pulled out a brand new composition book from his shelf and handed it to me.

“This is for you. Write down what your mother says to you that way you won’t forget.”

“I’m not allowed to accept gifts from strangers.”

“So who is a stranger...I’ve been selling your mother hamburger ever since she married your father. Here take the book.”

*(JIMMY grabs a book. It is one of the few props in the play.)*

There was an inscription written in the book...It was in German. All I knew was it was written to someone named Dagmar.

“I should pay you for it.”

“Du bisht ein eine sallig knabe. Very vell—when you get an allowance you can pay me.”

Instead of giving me an allowance my father put me to work selling The Standard on the street corners of Sandusky.

*(He shouts out the news to sell the papers. In this scene JIMMY plays all of the roles.)*

“June 25<sup>th</sup> 1911, 146 workers perish in Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire. Many fall to their deaths...Paper, Mister?”

“1912 – 20,000 workers walk off the job in the Lawrence Textile Mills...paper, Mister?”

“Hey Kid”

“Paper, Mister?”

“That strike is led by the Wobblies.”

“Paper, Mister?”

“Hey Kid. Do you know what IWW stands for?”

“Paper?”

“It stands for I won’t work...get it!”

“I don’t understand.”

“You don’t! Then go and ask your old man...go on ask him.”

And the man walked off without buying a paper.

**PERUSAL SCRIPT-- JIMMY HIGGINS: LINE BY BYLINE** by *Harlan Baker*

At the end of the day I returned to the office of *The Standard* with the papers I didn't sell and told my father about the man.

"What malarkey," said my father. "The IWW stands for Industrial Workers of the World. And the people in the Lawrence Textile Mills are anything but lazy. They work 54 hours a week and many of them are younger than you. One day they opened their pay envelopes and found that their wages had been cut. So they walked out. The IWW is leading them. They're called "Wobblies" but that is a pejorative word.

"What?"

"The bosses mean it as an insult."

And that was the first political discussion I had with my father.

More stories followed...

"Police turn fire hoses of striking workers in the dead of winter...paper?"

*(Voice of angry man)* "They got what they deserved!"

"Police and militia detain and arrest woman and children of striking workers at railroad station...paper?"

*(Voice of Mrs. Zenobia Siddons)* "Foreign born agitators. They should be thrown in jail and their leaders deported."

Mrs. Zenobia Siddons, one of Sandusky's leading citizens—head of the local DAR and tireless fighter against woman's suffrage. Yeah, you heard me I said 'against.' Every afternoon she would take her two pet dachshunds for a walk on Columbus Ave. I would try to play with them but she would pull them away from me.

"Those people should go back where they came from."

Just at that moment my father happened along. He tipped his hat to Mrs. Siddons

"Good afternoon Mrs. Siddons. Out for a walk with your dogs I see."

"Don't you have anything to write about then those people, Mr. Higgins?"

"Those people,' Mrs. Siddons. I suppose your people came over on the Mayflower?"

"Yes, I'm quite proud of that."

"Well, Mrs. Siddons, my ancestors came over on a British man of war. They were Irishmen impressed into His Majesty's Navy. When they had the chance they jumped ship and threw in their lot with George Washington along with the Germans, Dutch and the other foreign trouble makers who fought for the Revolution. They became Americans, Mrs. Siddons. As far as I am concerned anyone who wants to be an American can be an American. Thank you, Mrs. Siddons, you've given me a great idea for an editorial. You must come around more often I need the inspiration."

"Always on your soap box. Always on your soap box."

**PERUSAL SCRIPT-- JIMMY HIGGINS: LINE BY BYLINE** by *Harlan Baker*

“Mrs. Siddons, anytime you would like to write a letter to the editor in opposition to the Standard’s point of view I’ll be happy to print it. Let’s see you spell your first name Z-E-N-O-P-H-O-B-I-A, correct?”

And she walked off in a huff dragging her dachshunds behind her.

“Dad you don’t like that woman?”

“It is really spelled with an X. No. I don’t dislike her. But she is a bigot. I can understand bigotry in someone who is ignorant, who hasn’t had a proper education. But that woman has been brought up with the comforts money can buy. She has no excuse.”

I suppose many of us have had to deal with bigots and bullies in our lives. My bully was Brian Gallagher. I liked his sister Deidre—but for some reason Brian didn’t like me. Maybe it was because he was shanty Irish. I would encounter him with his buddies afternoons when I would sell the paper. He never went anywhere without being accompanied by at least two other guys. He and his buddies would always trip me so I would fall scattering the papers all over the ground. I stayed up nights trying to figure out a strategy for confronting him but each time I did he never followed the plans I had carefully worked out in my mind.

One afternoon, when I was thinking about how to deal with Brian, I was pushed from behind and fell to the ground. When I looked up there was Brian Gallagher, smirking.

“Well now. What are you going to do about it?”

This time I decided to confront Brian and his bodyguards. I walked up to them clenched my fists and began swinging my arms wildly like a human windmill.

My father was working late at his office when I came in with the few papers I had left.

“What happened to you?” he asked examining the bruise under my eye and the cut on my chin.

“Brian Gallagher!”

“Did you lead with your chin?”

My father took me home and approached my brother, Stephen.

“Stephen, you are going to teach your younger brother how to defend himself.”

Stephen and I went into the back yard.

“Alright, now let’s see how you stand.”

*(JIMMY strikes a stylized prizefighter pose.)*

“No, no...who do you think you are, Gentleman Jim Corbett? Brian Gallagher might be big, but he’s slow and he fights with his feet. Here stand like this and keep your guard up. No you’re leaving yourself wide open. Keep your guard up. Keep your guard up.”

After more than a half an hour Stephen threw up his hands.

“Alright...here’s how you defend yourself. You pick up a stick, a rock, a brick and you hit him with it.”

**PERUSAL SCRIPT-- JIMMY HIGGINS: LINE BY BYLINE** by *Harlan Baker*

“How the fighting lesson going?” yelled my father from the house.

“Oh fine dad just fine. He’ll be a regular ‘Gentleman Jim Corbett’ when I am through with him.”

The next day I went out to sell the papers. But I never saw Brian Gallagher that day, or any other day for the next month.

Then one day in April I saw Brian. He was all alone and he didn’t look at me. He just quickened his step and walked right on by me. Funny I could have sworn he had a black eye.

Later that afternoon, Stephen showed up.

“Have you seen Brian?”

“Yes. But he just walked right on by me.”

“I suspect he’ll walk right on by you from now on. Hey give me one of them papers.”

*(JIMMY mimes reading the paper.)*

“Holy Hannah. Titanic sinks on her maiden voyage 1, 312 passengers and crew lost at sea.”

There were other headlines that year.

“Theodore Roosevelt shot by would-be assassin! Bullet hits speech and glasses in his breast pocket.”

“Boston Red Sox defeat New York Giants to win World Series.”

“Woodrow Wilson elected president in landslide victory.”

“Congress passes Federal Trade Commission Act.”

When I was older my father gave me a job as a type setter.

I worked with Kurt Mueller—His parents were German and he spoke both German and English.

*(JIMMY is setting type. He speaks one letter at a time as if he is setting type. JIMMY hums the tune of **On The Banks of the Wabash.**)*

“Kurt, what’s that you’re humming?”

“Banks of the Wabash,” he said.

“There’s an e in declares, right?”

“Yes, why?”

“I’m just checking,” I said, “I wanted to make sure.”

“Yeah...well you should check everything. It would be very embarrassing for a newspaper to misspell a headline because of a typographical error. Remember “Setting a higher standard. Read me the headline.”

“C-o-n-g-r-e-s-s-D-e-c-l-a-r-e-s-W-a-r-O-n-G-e-r-m-a-n-y”

**PERUSAL SCRIPT-- JIMMY HIGGINS: LINE BY BYLINE** by *Harlan Baker*

*(There is a moment for this to sink in.)*

A week later Kurt Mueller enlisted in the United States Army.

On the way home that day I passed by Gruber's. Two American flags were hung over the entrance to his shop and the sign in the window read "Liberty Steak 5 cents pound."

I saw Mrs. Siddons who did her part for the war effort by not walking her dachshunds in public. That's not fair. She volunteered for the Red Cross

A week later my brother Stephen enlisted in the navy. When I asked him why he joined the navy he said, "to see the world, Jimmy."

"But I thought you were going to play baseball."

"I can always play baseball in Ohio...."

"...He saw Italy on the deck of a sub-chaser in the middle of the Adriatic Sea."

The War to make the World safe for Democracy was taken seriously by my sister.

One summer afternoon she hosted a meeting in our home of the Erie County Equal Suffrage League. The purpose of the meeting was to plan a door to door canvass of Sandusky urging the Ohio legislature to grant woman the right to vote.

There were over a dozen women assembled in our parlor and it was a hot day. Nora asked me if I could help her by serving lemonade.

At first I protested, till I saw a tall young blonde woman sitting near the window. She must have been in her early 20's and I thought what she would see in a 17 year kid still in high school. But I could dream. So, I offered to help serve lemonade.

I approached the young woman, pitcher in hand. "Would you care for a glass of lemonade?"

She lifted her head up to me and said, "Yes, thank you."

I was almost knocked off my feet and in over my head. Just then I overheard an older woman turn to her friend and whisper,

"I didn't know they were well off enough to afford servants"

I stopped pouring "Oh I'm not a servant. I am the brother of the woman who has organized this meeting."

There was a long moment of silence. A long moment. I opened my mouth once more.

"Ladies, behind every good woman there's a man."

Then I beat a hasty retreat into the kitchen and stayed there till the meeting was adjourned.

"Nora, don't ever ask me to do anything like that again." I never found out who the blonde woman was.

One afternoon in the spring of 1918 my sister Nora came home and brought a young man to the house. His

name was Terrance Farrell and he lived in Cleveland.

He was lanky sort and wore a cap instead of a hat. He wore round glasses as the result of being near sighted. I thought she could do much better. But I had to be polite. After introducing myself, I couldn't think of anything to say. Then I remember Stephen once saying if all else fails talk about baseball.

"So...you're from Cleveland" I said.

"Yes."

"What do you think of the Cleveland Indians?"

"I'm a Cincinnati Reds fan...although I would enjoy the sport much more if the players weren't exploited for the profits of the owners and gamblers who sometimes bet against their own team."

I thought to myself, *this guy is a trouble maker.*

"Sports should be free to anyone who wants to play and not controlled by a handful of people who make their profits off of someone else's' labor."

You can see why the conversation dried up.

I tried again. "My brother plays baseball. He's in the navy now. We got a letter from him last week. He's in Italy. He hasn't seen any action yet..."

"How do you stand on the war?"

"I think German militarism must be stopped."

"All militarism must be stopped" he replied. "This is not a war for democracy, it is a war for capitalism. Most of the young men who join the army can't even read or write and most of them don't even have a grammar school education. They are the cannon fodder for the industrialist Americans, British, and Germans who make their money off this war."

"Would anyone like a glass of lemonade?" My mother made a timely arrival.

Terrance became a frequent visitor and would engage in long political discussions.

Which were more like lectures, since I had nothing to answer him with. So he decided that I wasn't getting a proper education in the public schools and gave me a book. The first of many.

"Here, you might enjoy this," he said.

I examined the book's cover, "Looking Backward by Edward Bellemy. What's it about?"

"It's about the way the world could be."

So, I read it...and I read the one after that, The Jungle by Upton Sinclair...

But, it was the imprisonment of union activist Tom Mooney on charges of causing an explosion that killed ten people during the San Francisco Preparedness Day Parade that brought me to my first political meeting.

**PERUSAL SCRIPT-- JIMMY HIGGINS: LINE BY BYLINE** by *Harlan Baker*

Terrance was organizing a meeting of the local Tom Mooney Defense Committee.

He came to see my father.

“Mr. Higgins,” he said. “I’ve come to speak to you about something very important to me.”

“You want to ask for my daughter’s hand in marriage.”

“No, something important.”

“My daughter’s not important?”

“No. That is, yes... but this is important. We’re having a meeting of the Tom Mooney Defense Committee and I was wondering if you could print up the leaflets for us without charging us since we don’t have a lot of money.”

“What’s Nora have to say about this?”

“Nothing But...Mr. Higgins could you help?”

“Jimmy...”

“Yes, dad.”

“Set the type for this leaflet.”

“Yes, dad...”

“And make sure you proof the copy...”

“Yes, Dad.”

Later that afternoon... I handed Terrance a stack of leaflets ‘hot off the press’. He took one from the top and began to scrutinize it...then he stopped adjusted his glasses... looked at the leaflet and said, “There’s an ‘i’ in auspices.”

“Of course there’s an ‘i’...meeting held under the auspices of the Tom Mooney Defense Committee.”

“But you put it after the ‘c’.”

“Auspices. I said auspices, not auspeces.”

“You’ll have to do these over again.”

“But there is no time.”

“I can’t use this, it’s misspelled.”

“So.”

“You’ll have to do it over.”

“NO.”

Yes!

“Oh for Pete’s sake, Terrance, do you think Tom Mooney is going to care if I misspelled ‘auspices.’ For Pete’s sake, all the guy wants is to get out of jail.”

“Will you boys please keep it down, I’m trying to write,” said my father.

I went to his desk and noticed that he was writing an obituary.

“Don’t you have someone who writes the obituaries,” I asked.

“Yes”, replied my father. “But this is for Kurt Mueller, you remember him, our typesetter? I received news he was killed in action at Cantigny during the German counterattack.”

*(JIMMY steps down stage.)*

“Terrance,” I said. “I’ll do the leaflets over.”

*(JIMMY walks back to his chair as he does he sings a few bars of “On Banks of the Wabash.”)*

OH, THE MOONLIGHT’S FAIR TONIGHT ALONG THE WABASH  
FROM THE FIELDS THERE COMES THE BREATH OF NEWMOWN HAY.  
THROUGH THE SYCAMORES THE CANDLE LIGHTS ARE GLEAMING,  
ON THE BANKS OF THE WABASH, FAR AWAY.

*He sits in the chair and pours himself a shot of scotch and downs it. He then looks at the imaginary student who is interviewing him.)*

The Wabash River runs through Terra Haute, Indiana, and the home of Eugene Victor Debs. Debs was president of the American Railway Union when it went out on strike against the Pullman Company in 1894. The Federal government sent in troops to break the strike and Debs went to jail.

He emerged from jail a committed Socialist and became the party’s standard bearer running for President six times between 1900 and 1920.

Terrance took me to the Ohio Socialist Party convention in Canton. That weekend I helped set up the chairs, registered delegates, and passed out handbills to the crowd.

*(JIMMY rises from the chair and walks center stage and faces the audience.)*

June 16, 1918. Canton Ohio. It was a Sunday and Debs was scheduled to deliver a speech in Nisamilla Park that afternoon. There were thousands of people assembled in the park just to hear Debs speak. I got up close to the speaker’s platform.

I saw a delegation of men crossing over the street not far from the county jail. One man stood out among them. He was tall be-spectacled and balding. It was Debs.

Debs began his speech by telling the crowd that he had just visited with three imprisoned comrades in the county jail. They were in the jail because of their opposition to America’s participation in the war.

Debs referred to the “Junkers”—the Prussian military clique that ruled Germany.

*(When he is commenting on the speech he steps down from the platform and faces the audience. The following are excerpts from Deb’s speech.)*

**“I hate, I loathe, I despise Junkers and junkerdom. I have no earthly use for the Junkers of Germany, and not one particle more use for the Junkers in the United States.**

**They tell us that we live in a great free republic; that our institutions are democratic; that we are a free and self-governing people. This is too much, even for a joke. But it is not a subject for levity; it is an exceedingly serious matter. “**

There was a man standing next to me taking notes.

“Are you a reporter?”

“Yeah I’m a reporter. Don’t bother me kid.”

The man wrote in shorthand. So I took out my notebook and began to write down as much as I could of the speech.

**“To whom do the Wall Street Junkers in our country marry their daughters? After they have wrung their countless millions from your sweat, your agony, and your life’s blood, in a time of war as in a time of peace, they invest these untold millions in the purchase of titles of broken-down aristocrats, such as princes, dukes, counts and other parasites and no-accounts. Would they be satisfied to wed their daughters to honest workingmen? To real democrats? Oh, no! They scour the markets of Europe for vampires who are titled and nothing else. And they swap their millions for the titles, so that matrimony with them becomes literally a matter of money. “**

**“These are the gentry who are today wrapped up in the American flag, who shout their claim from the housetops that they are the only patriots, and who have their magnifying glasses in hand, scanning the country for evidence of disloyalty, eager to apply the brand of treason to the men who dare to even whisper their opposition to Junker rule in the United States. No wonder Sam Johnson declared that, ‘patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel.’ He must have had this Wall Street gentry in mind, or at least their prototypes, for in every age it has been the tyrant, the oppressor, and the exploiter who has wrapped himself in the cloak of patriotism, or religion, or both, to deceive and overawe the people.”**

The man standing next to me wrote at a furious pace. It was all I could do to keep up and catch a few words. Debs talked about the imprisonment of Tom Mooney and Kate Richards O’Hare for her opposition to the war. He talked about the academic persecution of Scott Nearing for daring to teach sound economics at Princeton. And he talked about...

**“The Man of Galilee, the Carpenter, the workingman who became the revolutionary agitator of his day.”**

I must have missed that one in Sunday school.

**“If war is right, let it be declared by the people. You who have your lives to lose, you certainly above**

**all others have the right to decide the momentous issue of war or peace.”**

After a while I gave up trying to write everything down and just listed to the rest of the speech.

**“Do not worry over the charge of treason to your masters, but be concerned about the treason that involves yourselves. Be true to yourself and you cannot be a traitor to any good cause on earth.”**

**“Yes, in good time we are going to sweep into power in this nation and throughout the world. We are going to destroy all enslaving and degrading capitalist institutions and re-create them as free and humanizing institutions. The world is daily changing before our eyes. The sun of capitalism is setting; the sun of socialism is rising. It is our duty to build the new nation and the free republic. We need industrial and social builders. We Socialists are the builders of the beautiful world that is to be. We are all pledged to do our part. We are inviting—aye challenging—you this afternoon in the name of your own manhood and womanhood, to join us and do your part.”**

**“In due time the hour will strike and this great cause triumphant—the greatest in history—will proclaim the emancipation of the working class and the brotherhood of all mankind.”**

There was thunderous and sustained applause.

Terrance called me over to meet Debs.

“Gene, this is Jimmy Higgins. He did a lot to help set up the convention this weekend.”

Debs grasped my hand.

“Well, we are going to need a lot more Jimmy Higgins’s to build our movement.”

That did it. That won me over. I joined the YPSL. That’s the Young Peoples Socialist League not that city in Michigan.

*(If the audience laughs JIMMY says.)*

Good, you got the joke.

*(If they don’t, he says.)*

It’s a joke, son.

You know who that guy taking the notes was? He wasn’t a reporter. He was a stenographer hired by the government to write down every word Debs said. And that was used to convict Debs of Treason under the Espionage Act.

Debs was tried in Cleveland and found guilty.

On the day of his sentencing it was raining. Terrance and I stood outside the packed courthouse. After the judge pronounced sentence Debs rose to speak. Here was a sixty-three-year-old man facing ten years in the federal penitentiary for the crime of speaking his conscience. Debs faced the judge and said...

**“While there is a lower class, I am in it; and while there is a criminal element, I am of it; and while there is a soul in prison, I am not free.”**

**PERUSAL SCRIPT-- JIMMY HIGGINS: LINE BY BYLINE** by Harlan Baker

*(JIMMY crosses to his chair, sits and downs another shot of scotch. As he is doing this he is singing a few bars from "The People's Flag.")*

THE PEOPLE'S FLAG IS DEEPEST RED,  
IT SHROUDED OFT OUR MARTYRED DEAD.  
AND ERE THEIR LIMBS LIE STIFF AND COLD,  
THEIR HEARTS' BLOOD DYED TO EVERY FOLD.

*Chorus:*

THEN RAISE THE SCARLET STANDARD HIGH;  
BENEATH ITS FOLDS WE'LL LIVE AND DIE.  
THOUGH COWARDS FLINCH AND TRAITORS SNEER,  
WE'LL KEEP THE RED FLAG FLYING HERE.

That's not a Christmas song; it's the song of revolution.

There was a time I thought there would be a revolution. I'm not talking about Russia or Germany, but right here in the United States: 1919.

After the war there were a lot of returning soldiers and no jobs. My brother, Stephen, was still in the Navy.

Then there were the strikes: coal, steel, even the Boston police went out on strike. Calvin Coolidge brought in scabs to break the strike, and then paid the scabs more money to permanently replace the strikers.

Then there were the parades and rallies.

*(Leaning in towards audience)* You see this scar over my left eye?

Terrance and I went to Cleveland to attend a May Day rally, organized by the Socialist candidate for mayor, Charles Ruthenberg. I learned some shorthand and would write about the rally for *The Standard*. Terrance was no longer seeing my sister since she moved to New York to take a teaching job. But he had found some other love in his life.

There were thousands of people assembled in four groups that would march into the public square for the rally. Everywhere I looked I saw red banners, banners for the IWW, the American Federation of Labor, "Freedom for Debs," "Freedom for Mooney," "Work for the Unemployed through a Six Hour Day," "A Dollar an Hour Minimum Wage."

Terrence left me, saying he'd be right back. After a half an hour I was getting impatient for his return, when I saw a young woman wearing a red rosette in her lapel approaching me.

"Looking for someone?" she asked.

"I'm just waiting for a friend," I replied.

"You're not wearing anything red."

"Was I supposed to?"

She unpinned her rosette and pinned it onto my lapel.

“That’s presumptuous,” I said.

“If you are going to march in the May Day parade you have to wear something red.”

Then she took a piece of red ribbon from her handbag.

“Will you tie this around my arm?”

I did as she asked. She smiled at me, grabbed me by the hand and led me over to a man holding up one end of a banner that read, “Freedom for Debs.” I took the other end of the banner with one hand while still holding onto her hand with my other hand. I didn’t want to let go. I could tell she wanted to however so I released her hand. I watched her till she disappeared amongst the crowd.

“Bonjorno companio!” The guy on the other end of the banner only spoke Italian. “Lavoratori del mondo unifacte! Liberta per Debs! Liberta per Mooney!” I tried to speak to him. But in trying to make him understand me I started to speak English with an Italian accent. The parade started and I had to move along, searching the crowd for Terrance.

Remember, there were four separate columns of marchers. With everyone wearing something red or holding a red pennant. It was like four rivers of red emptying into the public square.

At the head of our column there was an American flag and a Red flag. A soldier in uniform carried the Red flag. As we approached the square, a truck pulled up and some soldiers got out of the truck. One of them looked like an Army Captain.

“Lower that Red flag!” barked the officer.

The soldier carrying the Red flag refused.

“That’s an order, soldier!”

Well, somebody must have shoved somebody cause the next thing I knew there was a scuffle between the soldier with the flag and the men from the truck with others joining in.

Just then a preacher stepped out from the crowd. He had a bible in his hand and he was shaking it at me. Then he raised it and tried to bring it down on my head. I grabbed his wrist and shook the bible out of his hand. The bible fell to the pavement and I bent over to pick it up with the intention of returning it to its rightful owner. But in bending down I inadvertently lowered my end of the banner into the face of the preacher who became even more enraged. When I opened the bible I noticed some words written on the page.

“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so unto them: for this is the law and the prophets.”

The minister was swept back into the crowd before I could return the bible. Calm was restored for a few minutes. We continued the march.

When we got to the public square I was close to the speaker’s platform. Ruthenberg was on the platform and

**PERUSAL SCRIPT-- JIMMY HIGGINS: LINE BY BYLINE** by *Harlan Baker*

was being introduced as the next speaker when suddenly a column of mounted policemen charged the crowd swinging their clubs to “good effect.” That’s how the New York Times reported it. “To good effect.”

I dropped my end of the banner as fighting broke out between the marchers and police. There were also men in the crowd not part of our demonstration, who had gathered in the square, fighting alongside the police.

As the fighting spread beyond the square I saw several army tanks and trucks with armed soldiers. I looked for Terrance but he was nowhere to be found.

I turned around and saw the Italian man lying on the pavement. His head was bloody from a policeman's club “used to good effect.” He lifted his head up.

“Hanno corso contro la folla. Ho pensato che ho sentito sparatoria.” Then he fell back onto the pavement.

Then a mounted policeman charged towards me and I ran out of the square. Store windows were being smashed and I heard several gunshots. A man had just shot someone he thought was trying to break into one of the stores.

I figured I’d find Terrance at the Socialist Party headquarters. But, when I got there all I saw was a crowd of men throwing bricks into the windows of the headquarters while the police just stood by and watched.

I saw a woman, the same woman who had earlier in the day pinned her rosette onto my lapel.

“Stop them. Stop them. They’re drunks,” she yelled at the police.

“Move along, sister. There’s nothing we can do,” was the police reply.

“Just a moment,” I said. “These men are destroying private property.”

“Oh, so you believe in private property do you?” was the policeman’s reply.

Just then another window was smashed and I felt something hit my forehead. I put my hand up top my head above my left eye and it was wet. At first I thought it was sweat. But when I looked at my hand it was covered in blood. The woman sat me down on the curbstone.

*(JIMMY moves downstage and sits on the edge of the stage.)*

“It’s not a big cut,” she said. “But it bleeds a lot.”

She went into he headquarters to look for a cloth, which she found and dipped it into some water.

“There was a piece of glass. I was able to get it out. But I can’t stop the bleeding. We’ll have to get you to a doctor.”

“Leave me alone I’m fine.” I tried to get up.

“You’re not fine. You can’t even see where you are going.”

I could hear the sound of conversation. But I couldn’t see anything out of my left eye.

“Doctor Davies,” I heard her say, “I need your help. This man, I can’t stop the bleeding.”

The doctor examined my head.

“Looks like you’ll need a stitch. Get me my bag, will you Rose?”

So, her name is Rose, I thought.

“This will hurt a bit.”

The doctor put one stitch in my wound without an anesthetic, while I held onto Rose’s hand.

“You’re lucky”, he said. “Any closer and you might have lost that eye.”

After making sure the wound was clean, he left to attend others with wounds far worse than mine.

Terrance finally showed up. One of his glasses was smashed out and the frame was crooked. I have never forgotten that sight. Years later when I saw the Russian film “Potemkin,” you know the scene where the Cossack swings his sword at the bespectacled student, I always thought of Terrance.

“Cossacks,” yelled a man in Russian. “They are no better than Cossacks.”

“Terrance, what happened?”

“I don’t want to talk about it.”

“But...”

“Did you hear me? I said I don’t want to talk about it. Where were you when the fighting started?”

“Well, where were you?” I replied.

Rose interrupted “He tried to get the police to stop those men from smashing the windows of the party headquarters.”

“I see you’ve met my fiancée,” said Terrance.

“Yes. We’ve met, but haven’t been formally introduced. You’re Terrance’s fiancée.”

My heart dropped into my stomach and my knees felt like I was about to give a speech in elocution class.

“I’m sorry we had to meet under such circumstances....Miss....Miss”

“Rose....Rose Krasnow.” She extended her hand. But before I could take it Terrance cut in.

“We’re not going back with you to Sandusky. Can you get back on your own?”

“Yeah.” I fished around in my pocket for some train fare. My notebook was wedged inside the bible I had picked up. In the scuffle I had lost the Red Rosette. But I picked up a discarded armband.

Both of them left me to go to the county jail to help bail out those who had been arrested by the police.

There were two dead, over 200 people wounded and 140 arrests,” most of them foreign born,” according to the New York Times. Ruthenberg was arrested and charged with attempted murder. He was released on a \$1000 bond.

**PERUSAL SCRIPT-- JIMMY HIGGINS: LINE BY BYLINE** by Harlan Baker

Scores of red banners lit up the sky as an angry mob set them ablaze in the public square.

The next day I caught the train to Sandusky. I was worried that my mother would make a fuss over my head wound and scold me for getting my clothes dirty.

When I came into the house, I saw she was crying.

“It’s not that bad,” I said, “It only required one stitch.”

She looked at me as if I were speaking a different language.

“Oh Jimmy, you don’t know do you?”

There was a telegram opened on the table. I picked it up and read it.

*“The navy department regret to inform you that your son, Stephen Michael Higgins has died of influenza...”*

“Where’s Dad?”

“He’s at the newspaper office.”

“Does he know?”

“Yes.”

“And he went to the newspaper office?”

I ran out of the house and down the street until I came to the office of The Standard. I walked in my father’s office. He was putting the finishing touches on the next edition. He was crying. I have never seen him cry before. And I don’t ever remember seeing him cry since then. He looked up at me.

“Well, I’m glad you are safely back from Cleveland.”

“Dad, I know about Stephen.”

“Did you get your story?”

“Yes, Dad. Why don’t you go home. I think I can finish up.”

“Then we’ll run it.” He rose and put on his jacket and hat. He walked to the door, but before he opened it he turned to me and said, “But proof your copy before you set the type.”

*(JIMMY steps forward and addresses the audience.)*

I can’t go on. I need a cigarette. I’m going out for about ten minutes. Why don’t you take a break, too. And when you return I’ll tell you the rest of the story.

*(The LIGHTS fade. End of Act One.)*

**23 more pages in Act Two**