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The Haymarket riot took place in Haymarket square in Chicago on 4th May 1886. The confrontation took place between the police and protesters belonging to the workers' union, who were demanding better working conditions - mainly an eight hour workday. This incident became an international symbol of the rights of workers and since 1889 has been associated with international Labor Day. The incident brought the conditions of workers to the fore and was a turning point in the area of labor reform inspiring labor leaders to carry on the struggle for greater economic security and better working conditions.

### The Haymarket Riot

The Haymarket riot or Haymarket massacre was a struggle for workers' rights and has become a symbol of the rights of workers internationally. The incident highlighted the increasing confrontations that were taking place between the workers and the industrialists. The workers having formed unions were agitating for greater power and economic security as well as better working conditions in the workplaces. Since 1889 it has been associated with international Labor Day celebrated on May 1 every year.

The riot took place on May 4, a day after police intervention between strikers who wanted to return to work and those who tried to prevent them, during a strike at McCormick Harvesting Machine Company in Chicago. The strike was part of a workers campaign for 8 hour working days. The labor leaders called a meeting at Haymarket square to protest the police action and the governor was present as an observer. After most of the demonstrators had dispersed peacefully, a bomb was thrown by an unidentified person and the violence that followed a peaceful meeting, led to several deaths. The riot created an

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atmosphere of distrust and frenzy against immigrant workers and labor leaders. Amidst allegations and counter allegations eight people were convicted of murder, although nothing was ever proved against any of them. Of the eight known as the Chicago Eight, four were hanged on November 11 1887 while one committed suicide. When the remaining three sent a mercy petition to the then governor of Illinois, a few years later, it was found that the judge and jury had been biased and evidence fabricated against the defendants. They were therefore pardoned to the dismay of industrialists and the press. The pardon was a shot in the arm for those in favor of labor reform. Mary Harris Jones who worked as an organizer for the Knights of Labor passionately declared “ I long to see the day when Labor will have the destiny of the nation in her own hands and she will stand as a united force and show the world what the workers can do.”(Jones, n. d.) The incident was a turning point in the area of labor reform and brought the rights of workers to the fore. New labor unions were formed and the Haymarket massacre has been a source of inspiration to labor leaders the world over.

#### Abstract

The concentration of wealth in the hands of the few puts them in a unique position to come up with bold and original ideas to redistribute wealth more equally. However, none of these high worth individuals or their political partners are willing to risk their own wealth or power in any endeavor to bring about a more equal society. At World Economic Forums, there is talk about lack of education and paucity of skills in today's youth, yet none of those who lament are encouraged to do something about it. Besides raising minimum wages that do not threaten either the politician or the businessman, there is very little talk about the unemployment that is at the <https://assignbuster.com/read-the-sources-and-summarize-them/>

heart of the misery of today's youth, or innovative ways to enhance their skills sets in order to enhance their employability.

### Plutocracy versus Progressivism

Everybody agrees that the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few at the cost of the many is not right. However, as the measures to right this wrong are in the hands of just those whose wealth is ever increasing, nothing is done about it beyond idle talk about the dangers posed by a divide that is ever widening. Although business leaders recognize that the ever increasing pace of digital innovation will probably worsen the inequality between the haves and the have-nots; yet they do not have an answer to the raging unemployment or the lack of skills in a large section of the world's population.

At the World Economic Forum held in Davos in January, there were discussions about the future of mankind, medical discoveries and scientific breakthroughs that will increase man's life-span. However, on the subject of wealth redistribution, there was a curious paucity of ideas. Businessmen and politicians were quick to lament the lack of education and employment skills in today's youth, yet none were prepared to come out with bold initiatives to raise the level of workers' skills or bring about efficiency in raising tax revenues or broadening capital ownership.

Most politicians were stuck at offering sops such as raising minimum wages that would appease their voters and yet not anger businessmen who know that a modest raise in minimum wages cannot hurt them. Neither the politicians nor the businessmen were however talking about the tax exemptions given to the wealthy. Although all plutocrats will agree in private that the loopholes in tax codes the world over are beneficial to them, and <https://assignbuster.com/read-the-sources-and-summarize-them/>

getting rid of them would be increase efficiency and ensure more progress; naturally none will actually do anything about it. One would however, expect that these people who benefit so much from not just unequal wealth but also tax exemptions that allow them privileges denied to the common man, would partner politicians in developing new ways of spreading education and upgrading worker skills. These are problems that can be overcome with a little initiative from both governments and businessmen, but the million dollar question is who will accept the challenge to change the way things stand?

#### References

Jones, Mary Harris (n. d.)

Illinois Labor History Society

“ The Story of The Haymarket Affair by William J. Adelman”

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