

# Police Brutality

Emma Goldman

November 1906

Liberty by the grace of the police and the might of the club was again brought home to us in the most brutal and unspeakable manner. A club of young boys and girls, peaceably assembled Saturday night, October 27<sup>th</sup>, to listen to a discourse as to whether or not Leon Czolgosz was an Anarchist. At the close of the meeting three of the speakers—Julius Edelson, M. Moscow, and M. Rubinstein—were arrested and placed under \$1,000 bail each. Tuesday, October 30<sup>th</sup>, a meeting was called to protest against the arrest of these boys and the suppression of free speech. Mr. Bolton Hall, H. Kelly, Max Baginski and myself were announced to speak. The meeting proceeded in absolute order, with Julius Edelson, who had meanwhile been released on bail through Mr. Bolton Hall, as the first speaker. He had spoken barely twenty minutes when several detectives jumped on the platform and placed him under arrest, while twenty-five police officers began to club the audience out of the hall. A young girl of eighteen, Pauline Slotnikoff, was pulled off a chair and brutally dragged across the floor of the hall, tearing her clothing and bruising her outrageously. Another girl, fourteen years of age, Rebecca Edelson, was roughly handled and put under arrest, because she failed to leave the hall as quickly as ordered. The same was done to three other women—Annie Pastor, Rose Rogin, and Lena Smitt— for no other reason except that they were unable to reach the bottom of the stairs fast enough to suit the officers. I was about to leave when one of the officers struck me in the back, and put me under arrest.

Fortunately, Mr. Bolton Hall and H. Kelly could not be present at the meeting; they, too, might have been clubbed out of the hall.

Six women and four men were packed like sardines into a patrol-wagon and hustled off to the station house, where we were kept in vile air and subjected to vulgar and brutal annoyance by the police until the following morning; then we were brought before a magistrate and put under \$1,000 bail each for assault. Fancy girls of fourteen and eighteen, of delicate physique, assaulting twenty-five two-hundred-and-fifty-pounders!

If we as a nation were not such unspeakable hypocrites, we should long since have placed a club instead of a torch in the hand of the Goddess of Liberty—the police mace is not merely the symbol, but the very essence of our “liberty and order.”

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