History

Mother Mary Jones was Irish- born American who started her career as a school teacher and later became representative of the laborer. She was born in 1844 and her family moved from Ireland to Canada when she was a child for escaping the potato famine. Her family gave her vocational education and she took her first job as a school teacher in Tennessee. She married to George Jones who was an iron molder. The union paid for the funeral of her husband as she couldn't afford that. She was given the title of Mother in 1897 due to her efforts and contributions to the labor class.

In Chicago, she worked as a dressmaker for some rich woman that made her realize the differences between them and the labor class. She believed that the drastic changes in her life are the outcome of industrialization. Her views revealed that industrialization had benefited the rich only. She became involved in the secret organizations ‘Knights of Labor' that was operating for the welfare of the workers. Her concerns were to promote equality and fairness in American society. Howard Zinn explains the story of social activist Mother Mary Jones. She stood for the rights of the working class and claimed that they are forced to work for low wages. She claimed, “there can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life”[[1]](#footnote-1). He pointed out the gap between the labor and the employers and criticized the unfair role of the powerful. According to her, it was unfair to deprive the working class of the necessities including food, clothing, and shelter. Mother Jones was engaged in different welfare projects and worked for the betterment of the poor[[2]](#footnote-2).

She drew contrasting differences between the working class and the employing class. The working class is getting little wages that are inadequate for fulfilling their food or basic requirements. She stresses the need for political and industrial reforms. The needs of the workers are have been neglected for many years. The benefits enjoyed by the owners are the outcomes of laborer efforts and hard work. It is thus unfair to keep them deprived of the necessities of life. Jones is known more for her labor activism apparent in her speeches and agendas. In 1873 she helped the coal miners of Pennsylvania and railroad workers in 1877. In 1877 she encountered a serious strike in Pittsburgh when she stood for the railroad workers and their families. In the strike, she along with her supporters refused wage cuts and demanded better rights for the labor. By 1880s she had created many social groups and engaged in many strikes. In 1894 she organized a speech for Eugene Debs, owner of the Railway Union.

Due to her interests in speaking for the labor class, she managed to establish a social democratic party in 1898. In 1902 she organized many strikes that caused arrests and brutal killings of many workers. In her speeches and campaigns, she criticized the manipulative role of the industrial owners who used the labor for their own advantage. The emphasis of Jones was more on providing fundamental rights of living to the working class. She also stated that without a massive level of changes in the political and socio-economic aspects it is impossible to improve the living conditions of the workers.

References

Zinn, H. 1980. *A People's History of the United States.* Harper Perennial Modern Classics.

Stanford. 2019. *THE AMERICAN YAWP.* Stanford University Press Edition.

1. Zinn, H. 1980. *A People's History of the United States.* Harper Perennial Modern Classics. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Stanford. 2019. *THE AMERICAN YAWP.* Stanford University Press Edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)