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Isabella Holmes Beecher Hooker (1822-1907), who spoke in favor of Susan Anthony and against the actions of Justice Ward Hunt in Anthony's trial, was the first child of Rev. Lyman Beecher and his second wife, Harriet Porter. Isabella was the sister of Henry Ward Beecher and a half-sister to Harriet Beecher Stowe (the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*).

How did people react to the heavy-handed tactics of Justice Ward Hunt, sitting in his first criminal trial? Did anyone discuss what happened? Did anyone think it strange a sitting Supreme Court Justice acted as Susan's judge?

To answer those questions, we need primary evidence created by people who were around at the time.

Isabella Beecher Hooker was one of those people. Reading her March 30, 1883 [speech](#) today, one can still feel her emotion more than 110 years later.

...[A] Judge of the Supreme Court of the United States declares from the bench that the citizen's right to vote comes from the state alone...Judge Hunt accepted this conclusion and declared that this is the constitutional law of the United States as interpreted by him in his capacity of Judge of the Supreme Court of the United States...

So we confirm that Ward Hunt was indeed a sitting Justice of the Supreme Court when he acted as trial judge in the case of *The United States vs. Susan B. Anthony*.

What about the due process violations in the trial? Any comment on those actions?

...Not content with misinterpreting the law of the United States...he denied to Miss Anthony the right of trial by jury - that is, he decided the case himself, and caused the clerk of the court to record the verdict of guilty without reference to the jury, who were impaneled for the case, who had been sitting all through the trial to hear the case, and who alone were legally competent to bring in a verdict upon it.

And when Miss Anthony's counsel asked leave to address the jury he was denied; and when he asked that the jury might be polled...he was again denied, and Judge Hunt then instructed the clerk to take the verdict, and the clerk said, in the usual form: "Gentlemen of the jury, hearken to the verdict as the court hath recorded it. You say you find the defendant guilty of the offense charged. So say you all."

Of course, the jury had not reached the verdict, the judge did.

No response was made by the jury, either by word or sign. They had not consulted together in their seats or otherwise. None of them had spoken a word. Nor had they been asked whether they had, or had not, agreed upon a verdict.

No juror spoke a word during the trial from the time they were impaneled to the time of their discharge.

What did the jury actually do?

...So soon as the judge refused to poll the jury he said, "Gentlemen of the jury, you are discharged," and the jurors left the box.

What, if anything, did the jurors say afterward? Did they think the proceedings were a little strange?

...One of them declared by a bystander that guilty was not his verdict, neither was it the verdict of the other eleven. "Could I have spoken," said he, "I should have answered not guilty, and the men in that jury box would have sustained me."

Why didn't the jury exercise their responsibility, as they had been sworn to do?

...[T]hey did not understand their rights in this respect, and were naturally in awe of a Judge of the Supreme Court of the United States, and the judge must have known that they would be thus awed, or he would not have dared thus to transgress the ordinary rules of law.

If the same thing had happened to a foreign-born man whose right to vote had been denied, and he had gone through a similar trial, what then? How would the press have responded?

...[H]ad he been thus denied a verdict from the jury, the press would have rung out the injustice all over the land.

She [Isabella Beecher] makes a pretty good point here.

If one cherished right is trampled on, how easy is it to trample on other rights?

Judge Hunt began with denying to women their citizen's right to vote, and by an easy step passed on to denying that right regarded most sacred of all, the right of trial by jury.

She makes an excellent point here as well. Once the fundamental rights are trampled on, it becomes much easier to attack everything else.

What are we to make of such a trial? Was it, indeed, a travesty of justice or should Susan Anthony have expected the result she received?

Whatever the answer is to that question (and people have debated it for years), women did not get the right to vote for another half century.

[See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

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