Frank P. Sibley, November 7, 1915: Letter to Governor Spry

Frank P. Sibley, a reporter for the newspaper The Boston Globe*, wrote this letter to Governor Spry after attending three days of Joe Hill support rallies in Boston. [Changed slightly for easier reading.]*

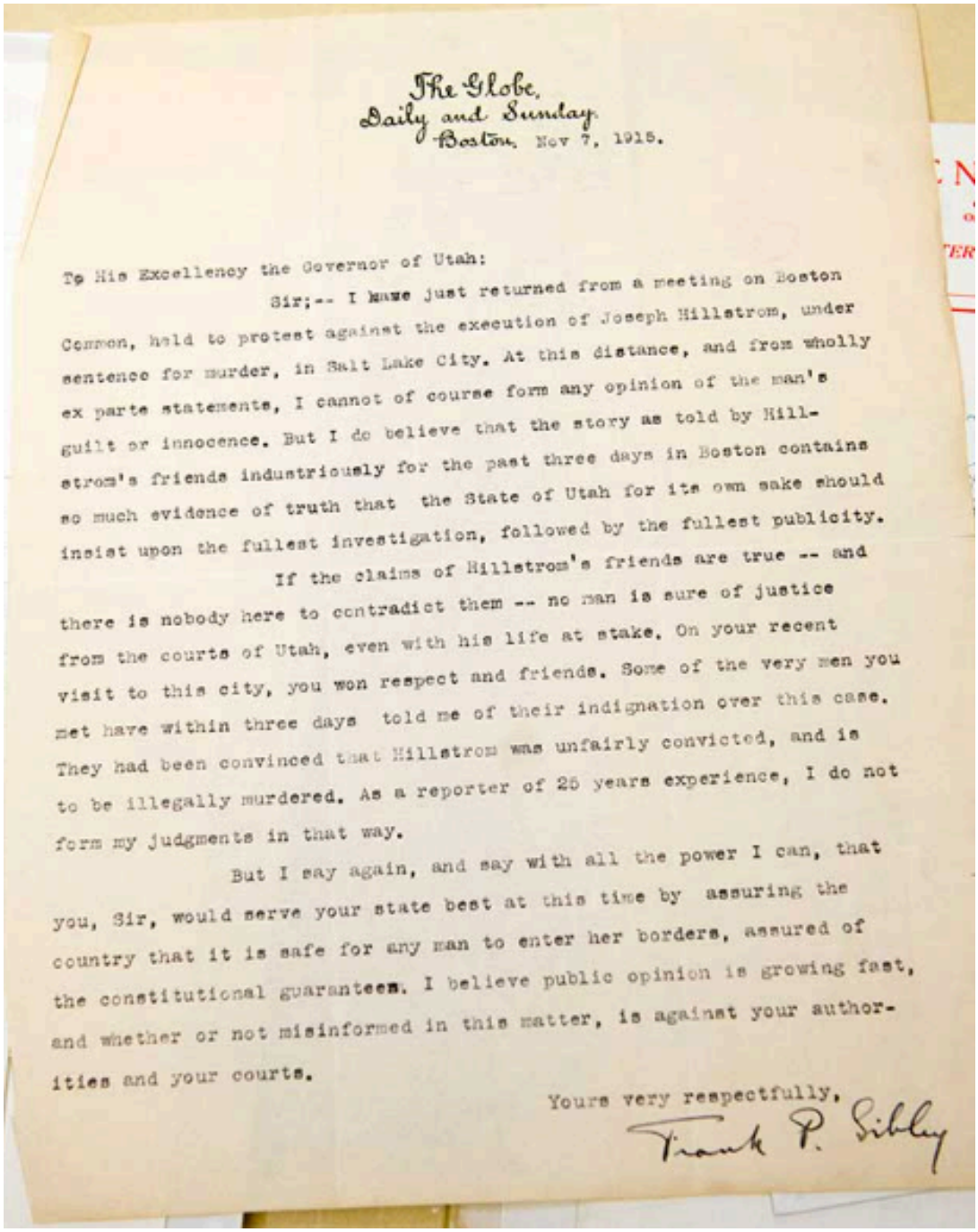
To His Excellency the Governor of Utah:

Sir; I have just returned from a meeting held to protest against the execution of Joseph Hillstrom. From so far away, I cannot form any opinion of the man's guilt or innocence. But I do believe that the story told by Hillstrom's friends for the past three days in Boston contains so much evidence of truth that the State of Utah, for its own sake, should insist upon the fullest investigation and the fullest publicity.

If the claims of Hillstrom's friends are true (and there is nobody here to contradict them) no man is sure of fairness from the courts of Utah, even with his life at stake. On your recent visit to this city, you won respect and friends. Some of the very men you met are upset over this case. They had been convinced that Hillstrom was unfairly convicted and is to be illegally murdered. As a reporter of 25 years experience, I do not form my judgments in that way.

But I say again, with all the power I can, that you, sir, would serve your state best at this time by assuring the country that it is safe for any man to enter Utah expecting to have their rights protected. I believe public opinion is growing fast. Whether or not it is misinformed, it is against your authorities and your courts.

Yours very respectfully,
Frank P. Sibley



The Globe,
Daily and Sunday
Boston, Nov 7, 1915.

To His Excellency the Governor of Utah:

Sir;-- I have just returned from a meeting on Boston Common, held to protest against the execution of Joseph Hillstrom, under sentence for murder, in Salt Lake City. At this distance, and from wholly ex parte statements, I cannot of course form any opinion of the man's guilt or innocence. But I do believe that the story as told by Hillstrom's friends industriously for the past three days in Boston contains so much evidence of truth that the State of Utah for its own sake should insist upon the fullest investigation, followed by the fullest publicity.

If the claims of Hillstrom's friends are true -- and there is nobody here to contradict them -- no man is sure of justice from the courts of Utah, even with his life at stake. On your recent visit to this city, you won respect and friends. Some of the very men you met have within three days told me of their indignation over this case. They had been convinced that Hillstrom was unfairly convicted, and is to be illegally murdered. As a reporter of 25 years experience, I do not form my judgments in that way.

But I say again, and say with all the power I can, that you, Sir, would serve your state best at this time by assuring the country that it is safe for any man to enter her borders, assured of the constitutional guarantees. I believe public opinion is growing fast, and whether or not misinformed in this matter, is against your authorities and your courts.

Yours very respectfully,
Frank P. Sibley

Photo by Jeremy Harmon, Salt Lake Tribune
Link: https://local.sltrib.com/charts/joehill/letters/letters.html.