

WHO Killed Pat Corcoran—and Why?

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JAMES P. CANNON *Speaks on*

'The Assassination of Pat Corcoran, and the Minneapolis Labor Movement'

Who Killed Pat Corcoran, and Why? Who Wants to Shield the Assassins? The Frame-up and Murder Record of the Stālinists from Moscow to Minneapolis.

At the Seventh Street Halls, 19 South 7th Street, Minneapolis, Monday, 8 p. m.,

Chairman: Vincent Dunne **December 6th** Admission: 15c

Auspices: Socialist Party of Minneapolis

(In his talk, Comrade Cannon will develop the material contained in this leaflet.)

By James P. Cannon
Minneapolis — The atrocious murder of Pat Corcoran, Secretary-Treasurer of the powerful Teamsters' Joint Council, has once again brought the turbulent labor movement of Minneapolis into the center of national attention. Once again the keenest interest and concern of progressive labor circles from coast to coast have been aroused in this stormy outpost of labor in the Northwest, the pace-setter for the country. The forces of organized labor cried out with one voice for the apprehension of Corcoran's assassins. At the same time the dark forces of reaction, and their dubious agents and stooges, couldn't wait for the body of the martyr to be lowered into the grave before they began to sing in chorus, with a suspicious unanimity and enthusiasm—as though the song had been rehearsed and the parts assigned beforehand—for a police investigation of the trade union movement of Minneapolis.

For everything there is a reason. Here, on the ground in Minneapolis, the facts and the reasons are clear for all to see. Who killed Pat Corcoran, and why? And who wants to cover up the crime and shield the criminals, and why? The search for the truth in reply to these questions can proceed intelligently only on the basis of the main facts standing in the background of the murder. These can be established approximately as follows:

1. **ADVANCE OF THE UNIONS:** Minneapolis, once the open-shop colony of the Citizens' Alliance, is today the best organized city in the entire country. One must go to San Francisco for a near-comparison.

The famous slogan of the 1934 strike, "Make Minneapolis a Union Town," has been realized in action.

And these unions are not fly-by-night paper organizations. The Minneapolis unions are real unions, tested in struggle, militant in their methods and capable of enforcing their demands. The "teamsters" who drive trucks and other automotive vehicles in this great distribution center of the Northwest are the dominating and inspiring force in the movement. From a membership of a few hundred men, four years ago, the driving trades in Minneapolis now embrace twelve thousand organized men. The same leadership directs a total of twenty-five thousand men in a joint council extending out into all the arteries of commerce over five North Central states tributary to the Twin Cities.

Wages: the great truck strike of July 1934 was settled on the basis of 42½ cents per hour minimum and 52½ cents maximum. Today the standard scale for drivers in the Twin Cities is 70 cents per hour, with time and one-half for overtime, and paid vacations!

These figures—of membership and wages—tell the real story. The Minneapolis brand of unionism — call it "Trotskyism" or what you will—with its ruthless militancy and its unceasing pressure for more wages and better conditions, HAS COST THE ONCE-ARROGANT BOSSES TENS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS SINCE 1934 AND DRIVEN THE ONCE ALL-POWERFUL CITIZENS ALLIANCE UNDERGROUND! No wonder they holler blue murder and denounce the Minneapolis union system as a 'racket'! But in truth cleaner, more demo-

cratic and more scrupulously honest unions do not exist anywhere. That is no small part of the secret of their power and of the unchallenged authority of the leadership.

2. **PAT CORCORAN:** The martyred labor leader was a representative of the old school of trade unionism who like not a few others, adapted himself to the spirit and methods of the great organizing campaigns inaugurated in 1934, and played a significant part in their further development. In the bitter inter-union struggle which followed the revocation of the charter of Local 574 in the summer of 1935, and lasting for one year, Corcoran, then head of the milk drivers, stood on the side of the A. F. of L. group and was bitterly and justly assailed by leaders of Local 574 for his part in that reactionary jurisdictional war. But it was Corcoran who initiated the peace negotiations which led to the truce, then to the reinstatement of the "outlaw" union, and to the union of forces which led to the great organizing campaign of the past year and a half. A Farmer-Laborite in politics, a Catholic and a man with a background of traditional, conservative unionism, Pat Corcoran nevertheless made a real peace with the terrible "Dunne brothers" and other leaders of Local 574 (now Local 544), found a common line with them in union policy and in building up the unions and making the bosses pay more wages. All hands testify to the admirable personal harmony and effective practical collaboration in the new set-up after the peace. How else account for the great gains, the expansion of union organization to St. Paul, Duluth and all points in the North Central Dis-

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trict, the solid strength of the expanding unions, the firm unity, discipline and morale?

Pat, a stalwart figure, a distinctive human personality and a militant unionist, won the confidence and esteem of the rank and file. He was elected Secretary-Treasurer of the Teamsters Joint Council of Minneapolis, and Chairman of the North Central District Drivers Council. Denounced habitually by the Stalinist wrecking crew as a "Trotskyite," he made no denials or apologies. When he was assassinated in the line of duty, ten thousand workers turned out to his funeral, stopping all trucks for the occasion. That silent testimony of the rank and file is a powerful answer to the slanderers of Corcoran, to the blackguards who defame his memory.

3. ATTITUDE OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT: The labor movement of Minneapolis does not follow the national pattern. The bona-fide labor movement here consists of a powerful group of A. F. L. unions, revitalized by the organizing campaigns of the recent years and generally progressive in their policies. The C. I. O. movement here—so-called—outside the textile and clothing unions, consists for the most part of Stalinist paper organizations and split-offs from progressive A. F. of L. unions—split-offs criminally engineered by these buzzards of the labor movement. The C. I. O. as a national movement speaks in the name of millions of organized workers, but in Minneapolis it is only the Charlie McCarthy of the Communist party, the stooge for its crooked maneuvers and the scapegoat for its crimes.

The A. F. of L. unions, that is, the bona-fide labor movement as far as this section of the country is concerned, reacted militantly to the assassination of Corcoran. A flood of statements, letters and telegrams poured into the office of the Teamsters Joint Council and all struck the same note: sympathy and solidarity with the drivers' unions, denunciation of the murder as a blow inspired by labor's enemies, esteem for the martyr. The honorary pall bearers at the funeral were a virtual roster of the officials of the trade union movement. The rank and file turned out ten thousand strong to honor the memory of the assassinated leader. Grief and rage and the militant will to carry on—these were and remain the sentiments of the Minneapolis labor movement as a whole, and of all that is honest, genuine and decent in it.

4. THE BOSSES AND THEIR PRESS: Who killed Pat Corcoran and why? Well, at any rate, you can say the bosses didn't shed any

tears about the killing. They—or rather, their dirty tools—killed Henry Ness and John Belor in the 1934 strike and another union man's blood wouldn't make their record any blacker. Beaten by the drivers in every test of strength since 1934, obliged to witness—and pay for—the consistent spread of unionism to other industries, discredited before the public and obliged to resort to various disguises and subterfuges—on the order of the Communist Party "innocent clubs"—the black gang of the Citizens Alliance sought to utilize the killing of Corcoran to cast discredit on the trade union movement. They began to moan and sigh about "racketeers" and "gangsters". If they displayed not the slightest interest in the apprehension of the murderers, they were ready to join a movement to start an "investigation" of the trade unions, out of which might come—who knows?—a "purge" of the movement and, perhaps, also a neat frame-up of its most authentic leaders.

Here, like a troupe of actors getting the cue, the agency of the G.P.U., the American contingent of the international frame-up and murder machine, otherwise known as the Communist party, and sometimes in Minneapolis as the "C.I.O.," took a hand in the game.

5. ENTER THE G.P.U.: Who killed Pat Corcoran and why? Well, you can say one thing without fear of going wrong. The G.P.U. gang was ready—too ready!—to point the accusing finger at the unions represented by Corcoran and to his co-workers in the leadership. They didn't need any evidence and they didn't wait for any investigation. As for evidence they have a ready formula employed with such proficiency in Russia, Spain, Czechoslovakia, China and other places: frame it up! As for investigation, they have already finished it beforehand and have the verdict ready.

Nevertheless, Minneapolis is not Moscow. One must proceed more cautiously and deviously here. The adopted formula is: first smear the unions, slander and discredit the leaders, malign the dead man's memory and then—who knows?—something can be cooked up in the way of a legal frame-up.

The Minneapolis "C.I.O."—no relation to the national C.I.O.—bobs up with a statement batted out in the Communist party office to the effect that labor "gangsterism" is behind the assassination. The daily press and the press associations grab that up—it is right down their alley and turns attention and suspicion away from the forces which killed Henry Ness and John

Belor. The Daily Worker manufactures "news" about the rising popular indignation against "gangsterism" which is "linked," of course, to the omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent "Dunne brothers"—the Stalinist name for militancy, courage and incorruptibility in the Minneapolis labor movement.

The G.P.U. agency are past masters at the art of frame-up and other dark and bloody devices, and I don't for one minute wish to underrate their resources in this respect. At first glance it may appear that they have a good set-up here. They have the natural interest of the bosses to divert suspicion from themselves and deal another blow at their hated enemies—the leaders of the teamsters' unions. They have "church, social and civic organizations," to say nothing of "leading persons of the community" and "public spirited persons" in general, to whom they are now appealing in public statements and circulars and who can always be relied upon when an opportunity presents itself to stooge for the bosses and stab labor in the back. The Stalinists have money in unlimited amounts, vast agencies for slanderous publicity, and a retinue of conscienceless scoundrels ready for any infamy. They have what is known here as the "C.I.O."

But with all that, in my opinion, they haven't got enough in Minneapolis. Their intended victims are too closely integrated in the labor movement here. It is too clear that the frame-up gang, in striking at the hated Trotskyites, the "Dunne brothers", are trying to smear and discredit the great trade union movement they represent. The labor movement of Minneapolis is on guard against the frame-up gang. The elementary class interest of the national labor movement—C.I.O. as well as A. F. of L.—is against them. The truth, the evidence, the circumstances, the motivation for the murder of Pat Corcoran are all against them. But, above all, against them stands the record of the Stalinists, on an international scale, a bloody and terrible record of frame-up, of murder, of character-assassination, of corruption—which has revolted the conscience of the world and warned enlightened workers everywhere to be on guard.

The labor movement of Minneapolis is on guard. The frame-up gang has to operate in the full light of publicity here. The attempt to stage a Minneapolis version of the Moscow trials has already become, instead, a trial of the Stalinist frame-up gang, and will result in their exposure and their conviction before the public opinion of the working class!