

Secret Agents at Work **(March 6, 1909)**

In every age since there has been a ruling class spies and secret agents have been employed to prevent successful revolt of the class in subjection. By this means the secret plans of subjects have been betrayed, their leaders arrested, and their attempts frustrated.

In Russia the tsar relies mainly upon the efficiency of his spying system which spreads over the vast domain like a tarantula. In Mexico Díaz the dictator has his secret agents in every party and every organization to keep him informed of every move that is made and every whisper that is uttered in reference to his administration.

Similarly, in the United States the capitalist class has its spies in every party and every union of the working class. Some of the most enthusiastic supporters of radical measures and consequently least suspected are secret agents in the service of the capitalist class.

It was by such vicious means that the early organization of the coal miners in the anthracite regions of Pennsylvania was destroyed and the leaders hanged as "Molly Maguires." The truth about that base betrayal and the tragedy which followed has yet to be written. All that has so far been written has been by the capitalist class through the prostituted scribes in its service.

The Western Federation of Miners has had a corporation spy in every local union, as was shown in the trial of Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone, and is not yet free from their baleful and pernicious influence. All other labor unions have secret agents of the capitalist class enrolled as members, whose business it is to have the unions run in the interest of their masters.

Two articles pregnant with the most damning facts in reference to the spying system have recently appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*, entitled "The Long Arm of the Secret Police,"¹ from which we quote briefly as follows:

The secret agent finds another line of employment in the espionage to which trade unions and similar associations of employees are submitted by the great employers of labor. Many of the great railways and manufacturing concerns of the country maintain regularly-organized secret intelligence systems, by means of which they are kept constantly informed

of all that goes on in their shops and at the meetings of the unions to which their employees belong. These agents are instructed to have themselves elected to office and appointed on important committees in the unions, the employers thus being able to obtain advance notice of strikes, boycotts, or proposals of arbitration. It is by means of these same agents that the employers are enabled to direct the thoughts of their employees into the "right channels," which means, when translated, opposition to socialism, the evils of certain forms of trade unionism, and the like.²

This statement is absolutely correct. There is food in it for every socialist and every union man. We have here the reason why so many unions are "conservative" and why so many cheap skates³ and ward-heeling politicians function as labor leaders. It is well for every union and every party of the working class to be on the alert for these deadly vipers.

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¹ E. Alexander Powell, "The Long Arm of the Secret Police," *Saturday Evening Post*, vol. 181, no. 28 (Jan. 9, 1909), pp. 3-4, 21-24; no. 29 (Jan. 16, 1909), pp. 19-20.

² Powell, "The Long Arm of the Secret Police," *op. cit.*, no. 29, p. 20.

³ According to the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, a skate is a "mean, contemptible, or dishonest person." The slang expression "cheap skate," which originated in the 1890s, has evolved into a common synonym for "miserly" in contemporary usage.