

The Ruthenberg Trial—The Great Silence

By JOHN PEPPER

The Ruthenberg trial is the second act in the drama of the prosecution of the Communists by the Government. The first act was the trial of William Z. Foster.

There is a remarkable contrast between the two acts of this drama. For weeks the Foster trial filled the columns of all capitalist newspapers. The entire capitalist press of the United States changed into a tool of Communist propaganda. And now on the contrary,—about the Ruthenberg trial—there is a great silence.

Not a single reporter sits in the courtroom. The Sunday papers now carry no photographs. What is the cause for this contrast?

The Ruthenberg trial is more "sensational" than the Foster trial. In the trial of Foster, the COMMUNIST IDEA was the defendant. But in the trial of Ruthenberg, the defendant is the COMMUNIST PARTY itself with all its "secrets", "mysteries" and "undergrounds".

The Ruthenberg trial is actually a Sunday pie for Sunday papers. The capitalist press had the opportunity in this trial to tell longer stories about "the red danger".

In spite of all this—the great silence. No word appears in the capitalist newspapers about the Ruthenberg trial.

What is the reason? Nothing else than the Government, the Capitalists, and the capitalist wholesaler of public opinion—the kept press—are panic stricken by the tremendous power of the COMMUNIST IDEA as it appeared in the Foster trial.

The masses were too greatly interested in the Foster trial. The New York World carried a letter from a reader (in this case the editor was a bad censor). The writer explains that he is no Communist but that he is proud that Foster is a citizen of the United States. With many such Fosters in America, then America would indeed be the "home of the brave and the free". The letter shows that even the average indifferent newspaper readers were influenced by the COMMUNIST IDEA. Therefore, the great silence. Therefore, the Ruthenberg trial is being kept in quarantine.

Not only the capitalists are panic stricken but also all the labor fakirs. The publicity of the trial made the Communists too popular. They must be killed with silence. Matthew Woll, the Vice-President of the American Federation of Labor, says it openly:

"To retry Foster is to make something out of nothing. Had the jury acquitted him, he and his few associates would have set up the cry of 'persecution'; had the jury convicted, he would have been heralded the world over as 'martyr' to the cause of conscience and freedom of speech. In having disagreed the jury leaves him nowhere.

"To ignore Foster now is to destroy the great monster that has been made out of a mere tissue of capitalized propaganda. To disregard him is to inflict the greatest punishment that can be given him. He and his kind feed on notoriety. He and his kind die for want of it."

With hot iron Foster branded on the forehead of the Gompers Clique "\$25,000 a year labor leaders". The Foster trial magnified these branded letters so that every worker could see—therefore the great silence—about the Ruthenberg trial.

But not only the "kept press" kept silent. Not only the big labor papers thru obscurity would kill Ruthenberg and his case but the petty labor fakirs join the ranks of the dumb.

The New York Call, the official organ of the petty Tammany Hall of the Morris Hillquits and Victor Bergers "ignores" Ruthenberg and his trial.

In St. Joseph, Ruthenberg is fighting for the most elementary rights of the working class and the New York Call is silent.

Because he is a pioneer in the proletarian struggle, an army of spies is

being marshalled against Ruthenberg and the New York Call is silent.

In St. Joseph, Ruthenberg, a leader of the working class is being prosecuted, and the New York Call is silent.

The trial of Ruthenberg is the trial of the entire working class. We are not alone in saying this. Eugene V. Debs wrote in his article in the last issue of the "Liberator":

"The duty of the American working class and indeed of all American people who love liberty, and abhor despotism is as clear as the issue itself in the Michigan situation.

"If we have intelligence enough to understand the vital issue at stake, and courage enough to do our duty, we will back up our Comrades on trial in Michigan to the very last. We are on trial with them and in defending them against this atrocious attack we are simply defending ourselves and our families and firesides.

"Let us all go to the rescue with loyal hearts, willing hands, and open purses, standing solidly behind our persecuted Comrades in the true spirit of solidarity."

The whole working class is on trial in St. Joseph with Ruthenberg and the New York Call is silent.

The Socialist Party and the New York Call have thru this criminal silence reached the climax of their treachery to the working class and to the cause of the revolution.

We challenge the Socialist Party before the whole working class. Ruthenberg, the Communist, the leader of the Workers Party, is fighting in St. Joseph for freedom of speech, for the revolutionary idea, and at the same time is fighting for "the families and firesides of all the workers". The New York Call wants to kill with silence the revolutionary idea but at the same time it is killing the most elementary interest of the laboring masses and neglecting to defend "the families and firesides" of the oppressed and exploited workers.

The New York Call has with its silence about the Ruthenberg case finally arrived in the ranks of the "kept press", in the class of the New York Times and Herald. Thru its reports about the Butchkavitch case the New York Call proved that it prints everything against the proletarian revolution which the New York Times and Herald print. Thru ignoring the Ruthenberg trial, the New York Call shows that it silences everything about the proletarian revolution which the New York Times and Herald silence.

We believe that honest Socialists cannot longer remain silent about the great silence of the New York Call. It is the duty of Eugene V. Debs openly to protest. It is the duty of Upton Sinclair to write a new chapter to his book the "Brass Check", on the prostitution of the New York Call. It is the duty of Socialist workers to flood with letters of protest the offices of the New York Call and the Socialist Party.

We Communists, however, have no fear for Ruthenberg. In St. Joseph he is fighting for the workers as bravely as he has lived his entire life for the cause of the workers. The Republican, Democratic, and Socialist, "kept press" can boycott him but he has won his place in the minds and hearts of the workers.

The Great Silence will kill only the dumb.