
Michigan Trial Shows Fidelity to Truest Interests of Workers, Arouses Bitter Enmity of Capitalism.

by Rose Pastor Stokes

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The Atmosphere.

Asked what was her notion of a "Red," Mr. Olson, the only woman on the jury in the trial of William Z. Foster, replied "An ignorant foreigner."

Multiply Mrs. Olson's psychology by all but a handful of the people in Berrien County, and you have the atmosphere in which Foster is being tried. At the opening day of the trial [March 12, 1923] and for several days thereafter, the courtroom, too, represented an audience predominantly prejudiced and hostile to the "terrible Reds." As the week drew to a close, however, the court crowd changed. The room is now packed with people, half of whom are sympathetic and interested workers, and half "Main Street," with a fringe of petty retainers of capitalism.

The Snoopers.

Not only prejudice, but espionage is the very air we breathe. One day there is a small sprinkling of "Dicks," and the next day there are many. [Charles J.] Scully of the [New York] "Bomb Squad" arrives; [Jacob] Spolansky, [Maurice] Wolff, and many lesser spies are here. They eat at the Lake View Hotel across the street from the Whitcomb, where counsel for the defense and the defendants are stopping; but though they eat over there, they do their spying over here — as also in the courtroom. If a friendly handshake or a word is passed between a sympathizer and one of us, there is an ever watchful spy-eye to detect the reprehensible act.

Lincoln Steffens, on his way to the coast, stops over here for a few hours to see old friends, and to say

a friendly word to Foster... There is burning curiosity... Eagerness to know the truth about Steffens... Maybe he's a hard-boiled member of the CP of A! ... Too bad his meeting with the Communists here in St. Joe's can't be used against him... It's a meeting, ain't it?... Torquemada is indeed eager, and the faggots burn... You almost hear the crackle behind a screen of jest and laughter. (I realize now the greatness of a certain short poem dealing with this theme in a recent number of *The Liberator*.) Well, Lincoln Steffens leaves in the morning and is soon forgot by them in the press of trial interest...

In the courtroom a sympathizer gives us a dollar for a "sub" to *The Worker*, and another dollar for the Defense. We take the money, and put his name and address in a notebook. This simple proceeding is observed. An attempt is made to follow him as he leaves the room. Receiving friendly warning, he gets away in time (we hope) to escape being followed home. He doesn't appear in court again.

Another sympathizer, a sturdy American railroad engineer, equal physically and mentally superior to most of the sturdy material in the camp of the "white" forces, is searched one morning upon his arrival at the courthouse. He had been talking to Communists in the courtroom, but they find nothing on him — neither bombs, dynamite, or seditious literature. He comes in with a smile each day, following the trial closely, careless of any adventure the gentlemen may force upon him.

The Jury — The Stools.

Many things new and strange the jurors might

learn from Frank Walsh, daily, hourly. We hope, somehow, that they ARE learning. But none with a political notion was allowed to stay on the jury, more especially if he betrayed an INFORMED AND SYMPATHETIC INTEREST IN THE LABOR STRUGGLE. However, up to the present writing the prosecution has failed to create any favorable impression with their detective and stool-pigeon witnesses. This afternoon Morrow, the spy who got himself elected to the Bridgman Convention from Philadelphia, was put on the stand — the fifth witness to “testify” for the Prosecution. None of these “operatives” covered themselves with glory. Spolansky was not believed. Hardly a question he answered was credited. And he left, beside, a most unpleasant personal impression. It was being guessed about in the courtroom that he’d been taken into the privacy of the Prosecutors’ chambers and raked over the coals for the poor service he rendered them.

Morrow’s neatest bit of business, so far, was the motion picture stunt in which the hero conveniently drops the very most important document on the spot where the villain can pick it up unobserved by the gathering crowds. “Ha, now at last I have you in my power!”

Identify over 70 men and women alleged to have attended the Convention. Well, from a legal point of view, that is, to prove in court that they individually and severally were there is no easy matter. Ah, but it is! Easiest thing in the world: (Watch the movies and learn a lesson.) Enter “Duffy alias Wagenknecht” — according to Morrow the spy. Duffy has the full list of names of all the delegates, fraternal delegates, international representatives, guests, guards, and who-all. This document, so essential to the Prosecution if it can get spread on the record in proper fashion, is sticking precariously out of Duffy’s shallowest pocket. It slips. It falls. Not a soul is in the crowded place save Duffy who has dropped the document and Morrow, who deftly removes it from the ground and deposits it in his extraordinary memory.

The scene shifts: A courtroom. The Prosecutor asks the witness, “I show you exhibit Number ____, can you identify it?”

“Yes,” says Morrow the spy, “I can. It is the very

paper Duffy alias Wagenknecht let fall when no one was looking.”

“Did you pick it up?”

“I did.”

“Can you identify all these 76 names as persons who were unlawfully assembling at the Red Convention on the Wild and Woolly Dunes of that popular summer resort at Bridgman?”

“I can,” says Morrow. “I remember every one of them except two who weren’t there, and those two are Cook [Jim Cannon] and Raphael [Alex Bittelman].” And he names names: Christian names, surnames, and party names, until you are certain that the “Stool” has studied daily and nightly since the raids, and not unaided, to acquire his extraordinary knowledge. Even those who weren’t there he has named. “You see what a memory I have,” he seems to say. Thus 76 men get “identified” at one whack... This is how he is permitted to “legally” identify the list of names read. This is how the names get spread on the record. It is enough.

Where’s the necessity for all this lying? We Communists are here to stand on our principles, and insist on our determination to preach them and teach them to the workers of America. To organize them and lead them in the struggle against capitalism, economical and political.

By our courage and our clarity, by our fidelity to the truest interests of the working class, we have aroused the bitter enmity of capitalism. Now, capitalist interests, it appears, are backing the attempt to prosecute and imprison us.

But we mean to fight till we win. Foster shall not go to prison. The working class will not let him. Ruthenberg shall not go to prison. We’ll spend our last ounce of energy to win in the struggle against the sinister forces behind these prosecutions.

Workers, wake up! And wake your fellow workers! Do your share. We’ll do ours. On with the struggle. Every class-conscious worker you help to make is a big gun fired into the camp of the enemy. Class-consciousness, solidarity, revolutionary fervor and integrity, organization and discipline — no power on earth can withstand a combination of these forces. The future belongs to the working class.

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