

Tom Mooney's Appeal Should Be Answered By U.S. Working Class

Foster Urges All Toilers to Rally Behind the Campaign for the Release of All Class War Prisoners Now Lodged in American Jails

By William Z. Foster

Sixty-four years ago on March 18, 1871 the workers of Paris established the first workers' government in the world's history. It was short lived. It lasted only 77 days. It was destroyed by one of the cruelest bloodbaths seen in France, a country whose rulers had shown the world repeated examples of ferocity and terror.

Following the massacres in the streets of Paris, where workers were stood up against the nearest wall and mowed down with fire and artillery, a military tribunal sat in judgment upon the survivors and meted out sentences paralleled only by the savagery demonstrated on the streets of Paris during the bloody week of May, 1871.

Hundreds were sentenced to death. The more "merciful sentences" consisted of life imprisonment, life long exile in the penal colonies of France on the west coast of Africa and on islands south of Australia.

The workers of the world, rallied by Karl Marx, came to the defense of the comrades in France. Marx personally supervised the organization of an extensive relief and defense apparatus, which continued to protest against the sentences and demand the freedom of the heroic Communards until the reactionary French government of the Third Republic, in 1880 and 1881, was forced to grant complete amnesty to all those imprisoned and exiled.

It was during this same period that the American labor movement was beginning to consolidate its organized strength. The battles were sharply fought and sent many victims to jail. The bosses began to develop a favorite weapon — one which they continue to wield to the present day — railroading militant labor leaders to jail by every means at their command.

And amnesties, particularly of political prisoners, are unknown in this country. Thousands of murderers, hold-up men, political grafters have been released in the United States, but brave union fighters courageous pioneers of the American labor movement remain behind the bars for life. Outstanding among these are: J. B. McNamara, the oldest political prisoner in the world in point of time served—who has spent twenty-four years in San Quentin, Matt Schmidt, who has served twenty-one years and Tom Mooney with eighteen years of cruel imprisonment behind him.

The vindictive authorities, tools of Hearst and other big capitalist interests, are determined to keep them in jail until they die.

Among the many lessons of the Paris Commune, is the lesson of

ceaseless activity to win back the imprisoned fighters for active service in the labor movement. In commemorating the Paris Commune in this year of sharpening terror, directed particularly at the growing movement for trade union organization, we must not forget our imprisoned labor heroes, not only in our own country but all over the capitalist world—heroes like Thaelmann, Rakosi, the Rueggs, Pena.

Tom Mooney is directing the last legal battle possible before the California courts. The U. S. Supreme Court has passed the buck back to the courts that have succeeded in keeping Mooney jailed for 18 years. He has appealed to the working class for funds to make this battle possible. Only the support of great masses of workers all over the country, and particularly of the organized labor movement can help this veteran trade union fighter win his freedom. J. B. McNamara, whose quiet courage, unwavering loyalty and confidence in the workers, has been a constant source of admiration and inspiration to me, has said: "We'll stay in jail until the workers come and take us out," has placed the responsibility upon us.

We must rally our forces to win the release of our imprisoned comrades. We must answer Mooney's call for material support, by helping him raise the necessary fighting fund of \$10,000.

The International Labor Defense, which during the last ten years has carried on the gigantic task of organizing the defense and relief apparatus in behalf of Sacco and Vanzetti, Gastonia strikers, the Scottsboro boys and Angelo Herndon, is calling on all the friends of labor to answer Mooney's call. The task of freeing our imprisoned fighters rests with the working class.