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# W.J. Burns Named Director of Federal Secret Service:

**Will Head All US Detective Agencies Under Reorganization  
— Flynn Has Not Yet Resigned — Successor Was  
First Sleuth to Carve Career From Class Struggle**

Unsigned report in the *New York Call*, v. 14, no. 231 (Aug. 19, 1921), pp. 1, 3.

WASHINGTON, August 18 [1921].— William J. Burns has been appointed Director of the Bureau of Investigation of the Department of Justice, it was announced today by Attorney General Daugherty.

Mr. Burns succeeds William J. Flynn, who has not resigned as yet, though he has been notified of the appointment of his successor.

The appointment of Mr. Burns comes after a battle between him and Mr. Flynn as to who should have the job, which will ultimately mean the command of the entire Federal detective force, including the prohibition agencies. Under the new head, according to the reorganization plans of the administration, the various detective agencies of the government will be consolidated.

Mr. Burns, who is about 50, has known Mr. Daugherty for 30 years. His father was police commissioner of Columbus, Ohio, where he and Mr. Daugherty grew up together. In making the announcement, Mr. Daugherty said:

“I have known Mr. Burns personally for 30 years and have watched him develop in his specialty. He is familiar with all of the departments of the government, is an intelligent and courageous man, and at this time especially is considered to be as high class a man as could be secured to assume the important duties assigned him. The Bureau will be reorganized as expeditiously as pos-

sible and brought to the highest point of efficiency.

“Mr. Burns has severed his connection with the Burns Detective Agency and will come to Washington and devote his entire time to the service. It is the policy of this department, well understood by Mr. Burns and highly recommended by him, that the Department of Justice establish the most cordial relation with police officials and law enforcement officers throughout the entire country, and, in fact, throughout the entire world, to the end that there may be cooperation and that life, property, and the rights of the people may be preserved and protected.

“No partiality will be shown in cooperating with police or other law enforcement officers, public or private, but the best plan that can be conceived will be adopted and carried out to see that the law is enforced and the best order possible prevail throughout the country as far as the government and the Department of Justice are concerned.

“The President and I have known Mr. Burns for many years and know his dependability and efficiency.”

Mr. Burns joined the Secret Service in 1889, and was promoted to the Washington office 5 years later. He will be succeeded as President of the Burns Detective Agency by his son, Raymond J. Burns. Another son, William Sherman Burns,

becomes Secretary and Treasurer.

### **Exploited the Class Struggle.**

William J. Burns, whose appointment has been announced by Attorney General Daugherty as Chief of the Bureau of Investigation of the Department of Justice to succeed William J. Flynn, was the first detective to realize that there was a career in the class struggle.

Not only did Detective Burns carve out a career for himself in the field of industrial espionage, but he built up the system by which industrial espionage is today carried on throughout the industrial sections of the United States.

A competent all-around sleuth, it was through his conduct of labor cases in the interests of big employing interests that Burns rose to fame and affluence. Following a successful career in the United States Secret Service, he turned his attention to labor cases, making his great coup by obtaining the conviction of the McNamara brothers following the dynamiting of the Los Angeles Times building in 1911. Recently he has been engaged in the service of J.P. Morgan & Co. safeguarding the lives, homes, and financial interests of the money kings.

The new head of the Secret Service obtained his education in criminology in Columbus, O., where his father was police commissioner. He became known locally for his success in solving crimes and in 1885 won wide notice by his aid in solving the tally sheet forgeries which had stirred up the entire state.

### **Rivaled US Secret Service.**

Four years later he entered the United States Secret Service and in time became an expert, making a record for himself in the solution of all manner of attempts to defraud the government. In 1903 he carried on an investigation of land frauds for the Department of the Interior. He left the

government service 3 years later to take up the graft investigation in San Francisco, and to identify himself more actively with employing interests in the fight against labor.

One of Burns' great exploits was the investigation of the methods used by Bridge and Structural Iron Workers in combatting the Iron Erectors' League in 1905-10. Terroristic tactics were used on both sides, but the leaders of the iron workers were the only persons convicted.

An early rival of the Burns organization was the Pinkerton Detective Agency, which preceded it in the business of spying on labor organizations for the employers. The Pinkerton agency had achieved fame in the Molly Maguire case, which occurred during the beginnings of organized labor in the coal regions. Burns, however, had a virtual monopoly and he created an organization which rivaled in extent the United States Secret Service, in which he had earlier made for himself a signal reputation.

The Burns and Pinkerton agencies have since been followed by scores of espionage organizations which keep in touch with the labor movement and give information to the employers, particularly during strikes and lockouts. A revelation of the extent of this system that has grown up in industry was revealed by Sidney Howard in a series of articles printed last winter in *The New Republic* and widely noticed in the labor press.

The outstanding case in Burns' career was the conviction of James and John McNamara, President and Secretary-Treasurer, respectively, of the Bridge and Structural Iron Workers' Union, for the dynamiting of the Los Angeles Times plant in 1911, a crime which resulted in 26 deaths. Harrison Gray Otis, a notorious foe of organized labor, was head of the *Times*. Organized labor throughout the country had risen actively to the defense of the McNamaras, and their conviction was a blow from which the labor movement has hardly yet recovered.

Burns had operatives planted for several years

among the iron workers. It was Burns, too, who was instrumental in having the leaders of the iron workers kidnapped from their headquarters in Indianapolis and taken to California, where they were tried. The fact that burns was able to obtain a record of the conversation between the McNamaras and their attorney, Clarence Darrow, by means of the dictagraph — an innovation in spying which he was one of the first to use extensively — resulted in admission of guilt by the defendants. One of the McNamara brothers was recently released from San Quentin prison and is now starting life anew in the Middle West.

Burns was also retained to discover evidence in the Leo Frank case in Atlanta, and for many years was retained by the Hamburg-American Line to trace thieves.

In recent years the Burns agency has almost exclusively associated with the big financial interests, particularly with J.P. Morgan & Co. during the war he worked for them as part of the vast system of operatives that was necessary to protect the financiers from counterplots by agents of the Imperial German government. Attempts on the life of John Pierpont Morgan, the elder, indicated how serious was the menace to these men who engaged in financing the great powers before the United States actively entered the conflict.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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