
Foster's Own Story

Kidnapping and Deportation Act of Revenge for Striking Rockefeller Steel Plant 100%.

by William Z. Foster

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William Z. Foster, secretary of the Trade Union Educational League, is back in Chicago ready for the first national convention of that organization, to be held August 26-27 [1922].

The Worker has just received his statement of his kidnapping and forcible expulsion from Colorado, the climax of his tour of almost 9,000 miles speaking on behalf of the Trade Union Educational League.

During the course of his trip he made many meetings for railroad strikers all along the line, and his presentation of the case for amalgamation of the 16 railroad unions was received with tremendous enthusiasm everywhere.

Foster was billed to deliver a lecture August 6 on "The Crisis in the American Labor Movement" in the Painters' Hall, Denver, Colo., but before he had a chance to do so he was whisked away, deported out of the state by a party of Ranger gunmen under the command of Adjutant-General Pat Hamrock, well known tool of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Co.

The kidnappers suddenly dropped in upon foster at his hotel about two hours before the meeting was scheduled to begin. Foster then tells the story himself as follows:

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Without useless formality they took me in charge and insisted upon my leaving at once with them for an unknown destination.

There were three Rangers, all heavily armed. I demanded that they produce warrant for my arrest, but they declared such was unnecessary.

I demurred strongly at being taken into custody, but they told me shortly that unless I went along peaceably they would take me willy-nilly. So, discretion being the better part of valor, I went.

Gathering up my belongings the three Rangers, or state police, loaded me into an automobile and we sped away forthwith to Brighton, twenty miles north of Denver.

There I was put in the hoose-gow and kept over night, along with a choice collection of thugs and hoodlums.

In the morning my Ranger guard appeared again, the three of them, with instructions to deport me. They gave me back my baggage, minus the contents of one hand bag — consisting of manuscript and reference books — which they said Adjutant-General Hamrock had confiscated in the name of the State of Colorado.

Protests on my part were in vain, likewise all attempts to communicate with my friends in Denver. I was told that I was under "investigation" and being held "incommunicado."

Hurrying north by automobile some 50 miles to Greeley, I was jailed there again and "mugged" at the express orders of the sheriff.

As usual objections availed me nothing. I was told that if I did not sit peaceably to have my picture taken they would show me how they accomplish the job with rebellious prisoners.

Hence I achieved another honor hitherto lacking, namely, of having my picture in the rogues' gallery. The sheriff informed me that the picture and measurements were being taken for the use of the

Army Intelligence Bureau.

From Greeley the three Rangers took me by automobile some 50 miles further north to Cheyenne. There they tried to locate the sheriff, but it turned out that he had gone down the road about twelve miles to meet us at the state line, and the fish had let us go by him unhailed.

He must be some detective not to be able to recognize a carload of murderous state police.

'Bouting ship, we made for the state line and picked up the Cheyenne sheriff there.

The Rangers then turned me over to his tender mercies, after telling me that he was going to put me on an Eastbound Union Pacific train.

In passing, it may be noted that the Rangers, in addition to the dozen or two other laws broken by them in my deportation, also held me prisoner for two hours or more, covering a distance of some 30 miles in Wyoming, a purely illegal proceeding.

The Cheyenne sheriff, who had a machine driven by a scab-mechanic chauffeur from the Union Pacific shops, took me north to Cheyenne, but instead of depositing me in the jail or on a train, as I had expected, he set off along the road going in a north-easterly direction.

We travelled all afternoon, some five hours or more, making another 100 miles in addition to the 125 miles that I had been driven earlier in the day.

Finally, we came to a standstill, and he told me to get out and walk, informing me that the town of Torrington was one mile ahead.

Then he headed back to Cheyenne, warning me never to come back to the Union Pacific — which he frankly recognized as his master.

Starting along the road, I soon picked up a ride to Torrington — which I found was six miles off instead of one — a town on a spur of the Burlington railroad far north of Cheyenne.

Fortunately, a train was leaving in half an hour for Omaha, where I arrived the next night ten minutes late for my meeting there.

In the great steel campaign of 1919, we organized and struck the big Rockefeller steel company plants at Pueblo, Colo., 100 percent.

This double kidnapping of myself, first through the state of Colorado and then through Wyoming, was an act of revenge, therefore.

But Hamrock won't get away with it entirely unscathed. The active workers in the Colorado movement are going to push this case.

Though few, no doubt, are childish enough to expect justice to be done in the situation,

yet at least, all may look for the crooked authorities of Colorado and Wyoming to be compelled to break a few more laws in their efforts to cover up their illegality in this kidnapping affair.

It will be one more occasion to show the class character of present day society.



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