
Rand School Begins 15th Year as Workers' Educational Center

by Marion Lucas Bird

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The Rand School of Social Science, which for the past 2 years has undergone ruthless persecution and prosecution at the hands of the Lusk Committee of the New York State Legislature and the United States Department of Justice, will enter its 15th year with the opening of the regular fall term on November 8 [1920].

The American Socialist Society was incorporated in 1901. During the first 5 years of its existence it arranged a number of lecture courses and classes for the systematic study of economics and Socialism and matured plans for the present school of social science, whose establishment had been contemplated from the start.

The Rand School was established in 1906. For its first 6 years it was housed at 112 East 19th Street, but in 1912, as no renewal of the lease for the premises could be procured, the school was moved to a similar building at 140 East 19th Street, which it occupied until the fall of 1917. It then obtained quarters at the People's House, at 7 East 15th Street, which had just been acquired by the Society of the Commonwealth Center.

The building which the Rand School now occupies affords the facilities of many convenient small classrooms, a gymnasium and club room for the student body, a reference library and reading room, open to the public without charge, a number of offices for the officials of the school, a large auditorium, and a bookstore, whose profits accrue to the income of the school.

In the first year — that is, from 1906 to 1907 — the number of persons enrolled for one or more courses in the Rand School was about 250. In the 11th

year — that is, 1916-17 — the number of students registered was about 1,500. During the first year that the school occupied the People's House over 4,000 students were enrolled, and in 1918-19 the number exceeded 5,000, with fully 100,000 attendances each, exclusive of unregistered admissions at popular lectures. These figures do not include the members of extension classes and correspondence classes.

The establishment of the school was made possible financially through a deed of trust executed by the late Mrs. Carrie Rand, a veteran of the Abolitionist movement, who left a considerable sum in the hands of the trustees, with provision that a fixed portion of the income therefrom should be paid semi-annually to the Rand School, until her grandsons should respectively attain a stated age and should withdraw their shares of the capital. This revenue, which is now considerably diminished, will entirely cease within a few more years. The profits from the bookstore help materially toward maintaining the school, and something is also derived from occasional balls, concerts, and other benefits. The fees for tuition fall short of meeting the expense incurred in conducting the teaching work of the school. The deficit is met yearly by contributions from individuals and organizations interested in the work of the school.

The Rand School is the property of the American Socialist Society, a membership association incorporated under the laws of the state of New York. It annually elects a board of directors of 9 members, which board elects the officers of the society and appoints the chief officers of the school. The chief officers of the school today are Algernon Lee, educational director, and Mrs. Bertha H. Mailly, executive secre-

tary.

The purpose of the school is twofold: (1) To offer to the general public facilities for the study of Socialism and allied subjects; (2) To offer to Socialists such instruction and training as may make them more efficient workers in and for the Socialist and labor movement. With the growth of the Socialist Party in numbers and influence, the actual field of the school's work has continually broadened and its activities have been specialized and extended to a great variety of subjects. In all branches a consistent effort is made to avoid dogmatic teaching. The professors of the school try rather to cultivate habits of study and independent thinking.

For this reason the school has availed itself of the services of many lecturers and instructors who are not Socialists and whose opinions on many subjects differ widely from those held by the persons who direct the school's work.

The majority of the students at the school are wage workers, laborers, mechanics, factory operatives, and office employees. There is also a considerable number of professional workers, schoolteachers, housewives, and other students who cannot so easily be classified. The greater part of the students are either avowed Socialists or sympathetic to Socialism before they come to the school. A large proportion of the students are members of trade unions.

In 1918 and 1919 the school conducted summer sessions, attended chiefly by students from out of town. Previously the school had given only the full-time training course, beginning in November and ending in May, which was established in 1911. In 1918 provision was also made for wage workers living in New York City who cannot give up their regular employment for 6 months by the establishment of a course covering the same ground as the full-time training course, but extending over 2 years, instead of 1.

The first of the concerted attacks made upon the school during the past 2 years was made on the night of November 25, 1918, when a mob, composed of young men in uniform, broke the windows of the People's House. This mob, it was reported, was led by a Canadian who had never worn an American uniform, but who had attained notice, not as a soldier, but as a dealer in strikebreakers. The mob would have gained entrance to the building had it not been dis-

persed by police reserves who had come from Madison Square Garden, where they had protected citizens who had been attending a Mooney protest meeting.

This mob was not composed of hoodlums, for it was afterward freely stated that they had been marshalled and instructed at the headquarters of a pseudo-patriotic society supported by corporations. They had been inspired and protected by the special pleaders of "big business." Two other minor attacks, at least one of which was said to have been inspired by a man who had been stripped of his captaincy and shuffled out of the army "for the good of the service," came to naught because the promoters of the mobs could not succeed in gathering a sufficient number of soldiers who could be misled as to the actual purposes and activities of the school.

Then came the riots of May Day [1919]. Stirred, as before, by sensational stories in the capitalist press, instructed and drilled by labor haters, led by a man whose business was procuring strikebreakers, a mob of several hundred boys in uniform ran riot in the city for hours. None of them wore overseas stripes, none of them had smelled powder, none of them had come from cities. They stormed several rather gathering places, among which was the Rand School.

The doors were locked against them, but they began streaming up the fire escape to the library on the second floor. Those who entered before the police could disperse them were talked to by the persons on guard at the school. They gave up their violent intentions and left quietly. The fourth raid had failed of its purpose. The reactionaries did not cease their attacks on the school, however. They did come out into the open instead of fighting the school with underhanded methods, nevertheless. The next implement used was the labor-hating Republican Union League Club, in which club was born the anti-labor scheme which resulted in the appointment of the Lusk legislative committee.

Acting under search warrants, which attorneys say were clearly illegal, representatives of the Lusk Committee, accompanied by 10 members of the state constabulary and 55 former members of the American Protective League, which disbanded when it was repudiated by the Federal Department of Justice, descended upon the school June 21 [1919]. Many of them were armed.

Books, papers, and documents in the building, some of them the property of the school, and some of them property of organizations not mentioned in the search warrants, were carried away in spite of the warnings of the attorneys for the school, S. John Block and I.M. Sackin. Two days later, again in spite of the warning of the attorneys that the proceeding was unlawful, part of the raiders returned and drilled open the safe containing the books and papers belonging to the Society of the Commonwealth Center, Inc., which owns the People's House.

Then began the battle in the courts. Samuel Untermeyer, whose sympathies were stirred by the attacks on the school, although he is an anti-Socialist, joined the legal forces of the Rand School as an unpaid attorney, "acting in the public interest." Proceedings were begun to recover the property and to vacate the search warrants, under which the property was not only unlawfully seized, but, according to the attorneys, unlawfully used by the Lusk Committee for a "vicious and widespread propaganda against the school." Action to annul the charter of the American Socialist Society, which conducts the school, was begun in the name of the state by the Attorney General.

The Rand School won its first battle in the courts. The case collapsed with the admission of the Attorney General's office that it was not prepared. Deputy Attorney General [Samuel] Berger, representing the Attorney General's office, refused to go to trial. The court dismissed the action. The effort to crush the school through the annulment of the charter of the American Socialist Society also failed.

Three vicious bills were next introduced in the

State Legislature for the purpose of restricting and licensing private schools, but aimed directly at the Rand School of Social Science. These bills were passed by the Legislature, but were vetoed by Governor Smith. All attempts to destroy the activities of the school had failed, although much damage had been accomplished.

The 2 years of persecution brought the Rand School unequivocal endorsement from the national organization and numerous state organizations of the Socialist Party, from the Workmen's Circle, from the International Ladies' Garment Workers, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and other great progressive labor unions, as well as from local unions of many trades all over the country.

The school opens its fall term with many new courses and new instructors. The instructors and lecturers for the year include: Mary Austin, David P. Berenberg, Rose Berenberg, Otto S. Beyer, Jr., Richard Blechschmidt, Ethel Brown, Arthur W. Calhoun, Stuart Chase, August Claessens, Evans Clark, Katherine Cooper, Taraknath Das, Solon DeLeon, Herman Epstein, Robert Ferrari, Alexander Fichhandler, Benjamin Glassberg, Arthur Gleason, Alexander Goldenweiser, Benjamin C. Gruenberg, Jessie Wallace Hughan, Louis Jacobs, Joseph Jablonower, Dr. Morris H. Kahn, Harry W. Laidler, Dorothy LaSalle, Scott Nearing, Walter Nelles, Chandler Owen, Walter W. Pettit, Walter N. Polakov, A. Philip Randolph, Lucy Retting, Lillian Soskin Rogers, Carl Ruggles, Eugene Schoen, Max Schonberg, Joseph Slavitt, George Soule, Dr. Norman Thomas, William Thomas, Alexander Trachtenberg, Jacob Turchin, Louis Untermeyer, James P. Warbasse, Clement Wood, Eugene Wood, and others.

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