

# CALIFORNIA JUSTICE

**The savage sentences against the Sacramento prisoners must become a call to action for the entire trade union movement menaced by the anti-labor C. S. laws of 36 states.**

**By ANNA DAMON**

When the criminal syndicalism law was passed in California in 1919, the big growers, manufacturers and bankers in Hearst's home state must have breathed a sigh of relief. Here, they hoped, was an end of all their troubles. The provisions of the law were broad enough, vague enough, vicious enough to take care of any emergency that might arise—any strike, any concerted effort to organize trade unions, any political action of workers and farmers that might threaten the position of those in power.

They knew they could rely on the courts to make the best possible use of that law. California courts had plenty of experience in conducting frame-up trials, railroading workers to prison for long terms—for life. They had had the McNamara case, the case of Ford and Suhr, the Mooney-Billings case and hundreds upon hundreds of mass arrests of I.W.W. members, trade unionists, pacifists, during the World War.

In the fifteen years that followed, they have learned that it takes more than a law, more than savage sentences to crush the labor movement and the trade unions of California. Vigilante bands were organized. Murder, arson and terror swept the fruitful valleys, mountain sides and harbors of California in a determined effort to stamp out the trade unions. But every effort failed.

In 1934, immediately following the armed terror organized against the General Strike in support of the maritime workers strike, came the now famous Sacramento case. Eighteen young people were thrown into jail and charged with criminal syndicalism; fifteen men and three women, all of them active in the trade union movement, among the agricultural workers, among the marine workers, in various political parties, among the unemployed and in the I.L.D.

The outcome of that trial which lasted for months need only be mentioned here as a reminder. It was marked by brutal, undisguised, anti-labor prejudice. It ended in the conviction of eight of the defendants with indeterminate sentences of from one to fourteen years, and acquittal for the rest.

That was in April 1935. The defendants elected to go to jail, pending appeal and begin serving their terms. In recent weeks, California "justice", in the persons of the State Board of Prison Terms and Paroles handed down their final sentences. For the five men in San Quentin, the following: Pat Chambers, Jack Crane (who is now recuperating from a serious operation resulting from stomach trouble contracted in jail) and Martin Wilson—5 years; Albert Hougardy, three and a half years and Norman Mini, three years. For the

women in Tehachapi—Caroline Decker and Nora Conklin—5 years each. Lorine Norman, the third of the women convicted in the Sacramento Case is out on bond. Her release on bail was forced so that her child might be born outside prison walls.

The filing of an appeal was seriously delayed by clumsy prosecution manoeuvres to prevent the six who defended themselves in court from getting the record of the trial to prepare their appeal. Further obstacles were constantly placed in the path of I.L.D. attorney Gallagher who defended all the other original defendants except Norman Mini. These revolting and barbarous sentences were the finishing touches to the chicanery and lies and slander used by the State of California to deprive these young people of their liberty.

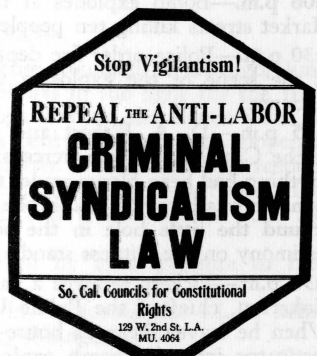
This is the picture of the Sacramento case in its legal aspect as it stands today. But the reaction to this last blow at California's labor movement presents quite a different picture.

Public opinion aroused to a determined desire for mass activity to wipe this law from the statute books of the state, received added impetus as a result of the sentences. Mass indignation is expressing itself in hundreds of workers organizations and particularly in the trade unions who recognize the C.S. law as a grave danger to their very existence.

At a recent conference for the repeal of the criminal syndicalism law held in Sacramento, delegates representing half a million people firmly resolved to aid in the defense of the Sacramento defendants as part and parcel of their fight to repeal the law. There were 109 delegates from 77 trade unions and three Central Labor Councils representing close to 100,000 workers in the most basic industries of the state; 67 delegates from 34 unemployed organizations; 53 delegates from 31 political organizations including the Democratic Party, the Epic League, Socialist Party and Communist Party; the rest of the 346 delegates were from fraternal organizations, local committees against the criminal syndicalism law and defense organizations, most prominent among

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Stickers printed in red, white and blue and displayed all over California.



# The Ice Box Trials

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made, the splendid spirit of the workers, the heroism of the women.

It had grown dark. The night sounds of the country side came in through the window and peace seemed to drift in on the fragrant odors of the fields and farms.

And then it came. A faint whine at first—growing swiftly into a roaring frenzy of speeding motors.

"Quick. Lights out. Into the cellar. They're coming."

Lamps were blown out. Doors locked. Papers hastily gathered. In less than three minutes the room was bare of everything but the few sticks of furniture and in the dank blackness of the cellar, all that could be heard was the steady, heavy breathing of seven people, and the ever growing roar of the vigilantes' cavalcade.

Right outside the house they came to an abrupt halt, brakes screeching, doors slamming, hoarse voices raised in harsh shouting.

"Come on out of there, you rats—"

"Get the hell out into the open you yellow—"

The cars were parked so that their flood lights were trained full on the little house. Angry banging on the doors, windows, walls, muttered curses filled the next few minutes. Heavy feet tramped across the little porch.

Baffled and snarling their disappointment and chagrin, the self-appointed guardians of "law and order" decided to wait. Why they didn't think of the cellar was just one of those miracles that happen sometimes.

With baited breath, the seven in the cellar waited. Minutes seemed like hours. Would they never leave?

At last they did. Slowly, regretfully, they piled into the cars. Doors were slammed, motors tuned up, and they were off. No one in the cellar dared to move until the menace had become a faint whine once more, down the highway.

Twenty minutes later peace and silence reigned once more and another day had ended for the I.L.D. organizer.

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them representatives of the International Labor Defense which is conducting the defense of the Sacramento victims.

To date the burden of defending the Sacramento prisoners, mobilizing moral and material support in their behalf, has fallen almost entirely on the shoulders of the I.L.D. and its supporters on the West Coast. Some, but not nearly sufficient, material aid was mustered in other sections of the country.

In view of the fact that the appeal in these cases must be taken to the higher courts of California in the very immediate future, the National Executive Committee of the International Labor Defense, has pledged itself to increase many fold the activities around the Sacramento case on a nation wide scale.

Criminal syndicalism laws exist on the statute books of 36 states at the present moment. Federal legislation along the same lines is pending in Congress in the form of the Kramer Bill. The fight to free the Sacramento prisoners is merely the spearhead of a nation wide offensive against this vicious anti-labor,

anti-trade union law and it should receive the support of every trade unionist, every friend of freedom in the country.

A large defense fund will be needed to carry out the appeal in the Sacramento cases. Hundreds of resolutions to Governor Merriam of California will be required to effectively back up the fight in California. The splendid work of our forces in California will receive added courage and enthusiasm for their campaign from unified, nation wide support in bringing added pressure on California's officials.

The International Labor Defense calls on all its friends and supporters to regard this campaign in its most basic aspects—a nation wide struggle in defense of trade unionism, in defense of our hard won rights to organize, strike and picket, in defense of civil liberties against the onslaught led by that arch foe of democracy today, William Randolph Hearst.

Five years in jail for organizing into trade unions. If that savage sentence is permitted to stand in California, it will become a threat to every trade union member in every state. The Sacramento prisoners must be freed.

## An Important Review

LABOR FACT BOOK III, Prepared by Labor Research Association. International Publishers, New York, \$1.00.

This is more than a 1936 edition of the two previous Labor Fact Books. It not only brings them up to date, it adds to them in such a way that the three volumes together make a library of invaluable information, without repetitions.

No speaker, writer, or person who wants to be sure of what he is talking about in regard to civil rights and the whole field of labor defense and relief can afford to do without this Fact Book. The long chapter on Civil Rights and Fascist Trends supplies an arsenal of direct factual information on this topic (including a review of major cases current during 1935). The remainder of the book gives the economic and political background of labor defense.

The LABOR DEFENDER recommends LABOR FACT BOOK III to all its readers as a "must" for their libraries.



A WINNER: K. B. Sparks of California who won a prize in the recently concluded LABOR DEFENDER Sub Drive. Congratulations and we hope you keep up the good work.