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The I. W. W. Trial

By LUDWIG LORE

Sixty-five minutes of "deliberation," and the jury brought in a verdict of "guilty" on all four counts against all of the 101 defendants in the courtroom. And at that, this polite pause of one hour and five minutes was nothing more than a matter of form. As soon as Judge Landis had finished his instructions to the jury, the foreman of the jury might have honestly declared: "Will it please the court. The jury agrees to a verdict of guilty on all counts!"

It is this that makes us so furious when we hear from the lips of Haywood and the leading attorney of the defense—not to mention sanctimonious clergymen and subsidized newspaper reporters—statements that are fairly sticky with sweetish sentimentality and sickening in their lying hypocrisy! "We have had a fair trial. The prosecution, the jury, the judge—everybody was fair to the extreme, to the utmost." And yet, the 101, everyone of them, were found guilty, everyone of them is staring a thirty years' prison sentence in the face! It must be said at the outset: These men did not have a fair trial because the possibility of a fair trial, of unquestioning and unbiassed judgment, was, from the very first, out of the question. Judge Landis, with all his sympathetic urbanity and informality, with the best intentions in the world, could not bring

impartiality into that court-room; the twelve men, good and true, may have striven honestly and sincerely to be fair to the defendants, but the air that they breathed, the surroundings in which they lived and had lived, the whole United States were charged with anti-I. W. W. poison. Years of systematic campaigning in the capitalist press, and the spectacular climax of sudden raids upon I. W. W. headquarters all over the country, could not fail to have their effect. That a jury could have come to an agreement in a case involving the fate of 101 men within one short hour shows how fully justified was the confidence placed in the anti-I. W. W. propaganda.

Since the war began the I. W. W. has been accused again and again of working with German money, that its strikes were financed out of German propaganda funds, that their bureaus and their officials, in short, their whole activity, had been supported by the Kaiser's gold. According to the generally accepted opinion, the I. W. W. was one of the central agencies established and still supported by Wilhelm von Hohenzollern for the purpose of hampering the war industries of the United States. Wherever an I. W. W. organization had differences with its particular group of employers, whenever they set out to violate the civil peace that the united efforts of the Gompers machine and Capitalism & Co. have fastened upon the American working-class, we heard it again: German money! The A. F. of L., with the warmest support of officialdom, went into the fight with undivided energy. For to these gentlemen it meant the defeat of an organization that was making itself rather unpleasantly felt as a dangerous competitor. The press took up the cry, and the stories of I. W. W. men who had received money from Germany became as commonplace as those of the corruptibility of the officials of the A. F. of L.—and with a great deal less justification.

Before the famous raid upon I. W. W. headquarters all over the country, public officials declared everywhere with the greatest assurance that the I. W. W. propaganda was being fed with German money. Then, after I. W. W. correspond-

ence, books, pamphlets and literature had been carried off by the wagonloads, the capitalist press was full of "statements from well-informed sources" that overwhelming proof of criminal relations between the I. W. W. national officials and the German government had been found. Strange, in the trial itself, even in the opening speech of the public prosecutor, not a word was said of the whole matter. Obviously, nothing had been found that could by any stretch of imagination justify the shameful suspicions that were so busily spread by the capitalist press and important government officials, who combine an unusual supply of natural stupidity with an extraordinary lack of understanding and knowledge. That there are people who are honestly opposed to the war passes their weak understanding. That there are human beings who know no nations, but only classes, is so inconceivable to their mental make-up, that they naturally look for more "tangible" and to them more comprehensible reasons. These bureaucratic souls cannot believe that there are people left in this wicked world who would be willing, in such critical times, to endanger themselves and their families without financial gain. There are those among them, too, who are not satisfied with the course that events are taking, who are by no means fully in accord with conditions as they are. But they prefer to be "sensible," to remain quietly under cover until the storm has passed over, until danger is past. In their opinion "daredevils" like these I. W. W. men and the equally unspeakable socialists "probably know why they should be willing to take such chances." It is this mental make-up of a cowardly bureaucracy that is more than anything else responsible that this wordy era of "democracy" is so rich in stupid persecution. Or is it possible that the whole dastardly campaign of press lies was nothing more than a conscious preparation of public opinion for the climax that came in the trial of the 101 men in Judge Landis' court in Chicago?

The verdict is a class verdict of the worst sort. The question to be decided by the jury was not the guilt or innocence of each one of the 101 men before the court, not whether any or all of them had been guilty of sabotage, of initiating strikes,

of hindering conscription. They were to prepare the way for the complete destruction of the I. W. W. It was necessary to use the favorable opportunity that presented itself to accomplish something that could not be half so easily done, once peace was declared. The Industrial Workers of the World are no longer only the organization of the migratory workers of the west. They have gained a firm foothold in the industrial centers of the middle and far west where they are a serious menace to the existence of the conservative A. F. of L. organization. Robert Bruere, who has made a thorough study of the theory and practice of the I. W. W., has written considerably on this phase of the question and shown the greatly increased importance of the organization in the economic life of the West and Far West. It is not the "outlaw" worker any longer, the migratory nomad, but the stationary laborer with a permanent home and family who constitutes a goodly part of the I. W. W. membership.

In other words, these outlaw organizations, whose members once sang proudly:

"Hallelujah! I'm a bum!
Hallelujah! Bum again!
Hallelujah! Give us a hand-out!
To revive us again!"

—is in the way of becoming the refuge of all class-conscious, selfrespecting American workingmen. The invasion of the I. W. W. into the fields of labor where once "respectable labor" of the A. F. of L. type held sway has begun. Something of this sort was brought out in the article written by Austin Lewis for the September-October, 1917, issue of *The Class-Struggle*, in which he said:

"A concrete example of its progress I found in the City of Portland, where the organization had long had a hard fight to maintain itself. To my astonishment I saw an entirely different condition of things than ever before in such a headquarters. There was a great hall capable of holding a thousand people comfortably. At one end of the hall was a rail and counter which separated the office from the hall, and in the office were

seven desks, each of which represented a separate industrial union—construction workers, agricultural workers, and so on. The office was well equipped with files and typewriters. Each desk was occupied by a secretary and the work was going on as smoothly and as efficiently as in any corporation office which I ever visited. It was very evident that a complete change had come over the spirit of the group. The organization which I was observing could hardly be identified with its migratory parent which so few years ago had had the same name. This organization now is composed of men who are actually functioning in industry. They are, as the phrase runs, "on the job," they are workmen, not out of work, but practically engaged in industrial labor. And in that fact lies the secret of the recent conflicts throughout the West. Vast masses are feeling the urge of the new idea. The rise in prices, the shutting down of immigration, the fact that for once the job is hunting the man, have put new energy into that portion of the working class which had formerly little hope and has aroused the aspiration that was formerly crushed under the load of unavoidable and hopeless misery. What was happening at Portland was merely typical. As one of the organizers in that city remarked to me, 'If you think this is anything you should see Seattle.'

The I. W. W. is no longer the organization of the unskilled worker only. It is gaining influence everywhere among the upper strata of the proletariat and in consequence is becoming more careful in its tactics and in its attitude. The organization that once prided itself on its refusal to enter into contracts with the capitalist class is today entering upon agreements with its employers, and has thus won adherents in circles that were unapproachable before. But at the same time the idea of the class struggle, the evangel of Socialism, the spirit of rebellion against class rule is penetrating further and further into the American working class, and is gaining a firm foothold everywhere. The Industrial Workers of the world have proven to be a splendid instrument of revolutionary education.

There was a time when the organized capitalist class of America fought the American Federation of Labor as its bitterest enemy, when the National Manufacturers Association and organized labor waged their great and memorable battles upon the field of American industry. Those days have gone forever. The capitalists of this country have realized that

their worst foe is the class-conscious working man, the man who fights his cause with a clear understanding of its aims and its significance. In the countries of Europe the employing class resorted to the organization of "yellow" unions, of so-called labor organizations that were completely under the influence and at the service of their masters. In this country the American Federation is saving them that trouble.

Its national representatives have become the willing tools of the ruling class and the staunchest supporters of its interests. The well-being of the capitalist class demands the extermination of the I. W. W. and of any organization that preaches and practices the doctrine of the uncompromising class struggle; self-preservation demands that the A. F. of L. combat this new and dangerous competitor to the finish. Mutual interests have cemented the spiritual community that already existed between them.

* * *

After an anxious week Judge Landis has made public his sentence. Fifteen of the defendants, including the General Secretary of the I. W. W., Wm. J. Haywood, were condemned to 20 years in jail, and a fine of \$20,000 each. Altogether the penalties inflicted aggregate to 800 years in the penitentiary and three and one half million dollars. The famed clemency and the reputed understanding of Judge Landis has proven too weak to withstand the insistent demands of the ruling class and of public opinion that stood intrenched behind it.

For that is the most tragic feature of this judicial travesty—that it undoubtedly does express the opinion of a large part of the working class population of this country. The sentence was received everywhere so as a matter of course, with such astonishing indifference, with such almost universal satisfaction that it were folly to close ones eyes to the fact that the working class of America with its three million organized men and women are still devoid of any conception of the significance of the aims and aspirations of the class conscious

labor movement, that the Socialist movement has failed in its purpose of revolutionizing the mental outlook of the working class.

This is not essentially the fault of the Socialist Party. No country in the world has so conservative and reactionary a labor movement or labor leaders that are so servile to the interests of the capitalist class, as ours. The intellectual middle class was the first to respond to our appeal, and has naturally given the movement its leaders. This made it still more difficult for our party to gain a hearing in the ranks of organized labor; class consciousness and class struggle are conceptions that have remained foreign to all but a small portion of the American proletariat.

Now that the war has shown so unmistakably the complete domination of Stand-pattism in the Labor Movement, the American Socialist movement must squarely face the situation. It must choose one of two ways—either once more to grapple with the task of organizing a class-conscious labor movement, or it will have to find ways and means of permeating the ranks of labor, organized and unorganized labor, with revolutionary socialism.