

THE CASE OF GEORGE PAPCUN

By WILLIAM F. DUNNE.

THE title of this article is misleading.

The case is not the case of George Papcun at all, but the case of the coal miners, the steel workers and their families against the Mellon-Morgan-Gary steel, coal and Wall Street government of Pennsylvania.

The title is misleading because even working class journalists find it hard to overcome the individualistic traditions of the United States sufficiently to speak always in terms of economic forces and political movements rather than in terms of individuals.

IN Pennsylvania the case of George Papcun has another name—a title which is part of the official records of the state government. It is:

"The People of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania versus George Papcun."

The worst thing I know about George Papcun is that he chews tobacco because he thinks it emphasizes his working class character.

The best thing I know about him is that he is an energetic and fearless young worker who has an intelligent hatred for capitalism and all its works.

He is intelligent enough to be a member of the Workers (Communist) Party of America.

THIS, and the fact that he tried and succeeded in organizing coal miners in western Pennsylvania in the face of opposition from the coal operators, the steel trust and certain miners' union officials who are altogether too friendly with the bosses, is the reason why his name and a long list of alleged violations of the anti-sedition law of Pennsylvania, are in the official records together with the evidence against him and the fact of his conviction on six counts of the original indictment.

Reading over the above sentences I find that it, too, is misleading. It is my opinion that had George Papcun continued the even tenor of his way as a tobacco-chewing but otherwise inactive member of the Workers (Com-

munist) Party, had he not tried to organize miners, had he not exposed some of the more flagrant violations of the very elastic code of Pennsylvania trade union ethics on the part of "labor leaders," he would have not been arrested, tried and convicted.

EVEN in Pennsylvania chewing tobacco is not considered a violation of the criminal syndicalism law.

But agitation and organization among the workers in heavy industry is.

Very decidedly so.

The steel trust is prosecuting George Papcun in the name of "the people of Pennsylvania." There is nothing surprising in this to anyone who has followed the history of government in America, but it serves to confuse the issue and that is what the United States Steel corporation desires.

Of course, "the people of Pennsylvania" have nothing against George Papcun. But their rulers have, so the rulers attempt to identify themselves with the interests of the miners and steel workers and prove that George Papcun is "an enemy of society" in Pennsylvania.

WHAT they have proved is that George Papcun is an enemy of the form of society which the steel trust and Wall Street organizes and dominates. The real job of the International Labor Defense is to show to the workers and other decent people in Pennsylvania that George Papcun ought to be kept out of jail to keep on fighting for the workers and against the steel trust, its \$5,000,000 election slush funds, its "company towns" and "company unions," its "company officials"—state, county and city—and its company agents in the labor movement.

THE list of witnesses and the evidence in this case furnish a striking study in steel trust stoolpigeonism. It shows that the steel trust and its kindred agencies, Mellonism, Vareism and Pinchotism, are debauching deliberately whole sections of the population of Pennsylvania, that few organizations remain free from their control, whether they be of a political, cultural or trade union character.

The record of the court proceedings



GEORGE PAPCUN

for one day alone is enough to show the truth of the above statement.

FIRST there appears one Corporal Willar, a member of the state constabulary, the familiar Pennsylvania "cossacks," fought by the trade union movement for years, but which the "friend of labor" and ardent prohibitionist, Governor Pinchot, has allowed to exist under his regime.

His, and other testimony, shows that the state police were watching closely the coal miners' strike in Republic, where Papcun was active.

At the time of Papcun's arrest, the cossack corporal gave him a list of questions to which Papcun was ordered to give written answers. Papcun refused, so the obliging corporal filled in the answers himself.

THEN comes William Nelson, an employe of the Hillman Coal Co., who lived in the Croatian Hall, the headquarters of the strike committee, for four months. Why an English speaking person should want to live for four months in a hall where conversations, as a general rule, are carried on in the Slav languages, is a mystery—unless he had instructions to do so from some one connected with the "company."

This American patriot, who lives in Croatian halls, testified that Papcun said, "we must get a new government," and that there was "a way of training these young men with rifles and ammunition."

This is damaging testimony in Pennsylvania. Everybody knows that the way to get a new government in Pennsylvania is to buy it.

NEXT is one Stanley Kitta, another union spy, who tried to show that Papcun was "against the union." The steel trust, of course, is never against the miners' union except when somebody tries to organize one.

Kitta is followed by Frank Terrace, who gives his occupation as "farmer," but who is known as Republic's most prominent bootlegger. He had been shown up as a company spy in a previous case when Thomas Ray, a militant old member of the U. M. W. of A., had been the victim of a frame-up.

Terrace, in his capacity of stoolpigeon, engineered his election as chairman of the strike committee, of which Papcun was a member. He was also one of a committee of three to confer with the district officials of the United Mine Workers as to the possibility of getting a charter in Republic.

IT is evident that with a stoolpigeon as chairman of the strike committee and union officials who had shown little, if any interest in organizing these miners, that the bosses did not have much to worry about except active and insistent George Papcun who was spilling all the beans by actually trying to do some organization work.

Terrace steps down after telling of some very spirited but sound advice given to the strikers by Papcun relative to the manner of handling deputy sheriffs who tried to stop legal picketing, and which Papcun may or may not have worded as stated, and his seat is taken by Harry J. Lennon, a department of justice clerk in Allegheny county.

LENNON is not asked how much he got out of the campaign for liberty and democracy waged by the

Mellon interests in the recent primary because this as Gilbert and Sullivan have it, "has nothing to do with the case."

But he does tell a lot of things about the Workers (Communist) Party, which have nothing to do with the case of "the People of Pennsylvania versus George Papcun." He wants to tell more but the judge is getting tired, probably feels that this so-called evidence makes but little difference anyway when the steel trust, in the name of "the People of Pennsylvania," has indicated so plainly its wishes in the matter of the disposal of Papcun's time and place of residence for the next ten or twenty years, and decides that it is not necessary to read the Communist Manifesto, Theses and Statues of the Communist International, pamphlets of the Trade Union Educational League, some of the works of Lenin and Bucharin, etc.

THE judge was right.

Papcun was convicted altho the defense sent out a story claiming that the ruling out of the above evidence was a victory for it.

These legal victories doubtless give lawyers a great deal of satisfaction, but the case of "the People of Pennsylvania versus George Papcun" will not be fought out in the Pennsylvania courts or the United States courts. The courts will reflect the political struggle now centering around the question of trade union organization.

It will be fought out in the mines and mills of Pennsylvania by workers who know that the real name of the case is the "Steel Trust of Pennsylvania versus the People of Pennsylvania."

IT seems to me that the Pennsylvania rulers have picked a poor issue. It is so clear that workers can understand it easily when it is brought to their attention. In the course of the struggle going on in Pennsylvania there will be developed many more George Papcuns.

When the Papcuns outnumber the paid spies of the steel trust, Pennsylvania will have a real labor movement.