
CLP Trial:

Communist Labor Party Trial Continues On. State Concluding. Defense Expected to Present Its Case by Monday. Dramatic Climaxes Fail to Climax.

by Jack Carney

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CHICAGO, Ill., July 19 [1920].— The case of the 21 members of the Communist Labor Party continues to occupy the legal arena of the Cook County Criminal Court. The state is expected to present its case by Wednesday, July 21st, and the defense expects to wind up its side by Monday [July 26, 1920].

Since last we wrote of the trial, the state has occasioned us many disappointments. We read the morning papers and our dear and delightful young hearts, speaking in the first person of course, receive a thrill, when we learn that a “*mysterious*” person is to testify and disclose a *t-t-t-terrible conspiracy* of how certain young men met and formed an organization and the aforesaid organization even went so far as to say there was a class struggle. Mind you a class struggle, and furthermore they had a constitution. Thank whatever the gods there may be that we have a good constitution to stand it all.

Thrill No. 1.

Comrade [G.A.] Engelken turned State’s Evidence. He goes upon the stand and testifies (hold your breath for a moment). He testifies that members of the Communist Labor Party when they desired to discuss anything, went so far in the undermining of this country’s institutions as to call a PUBLIC meeting. They were so daring as to leave the doors of their meeting place, the *Clarion Book Store*, 204 North Clark Street, Chicago, Ill., wide open and allow a detective to walk in and listen to what they had to say. Mind

you, these men are alleged to have met together for the purpose of conspiring to make the government turn a double somersault. This is not a joke, because we are charged with overthrowing the government twice, at the same time, which means a double somersault. What did these revolutionists care? They just met and told the world. When they wanted to enlist support for their cause they marched into the State Attorney General’s Office, Cook County, Chicago, Illinois, and shouted, “We are going to overthrow the government,” and then all the comrades would shout, “We’ll tell the world.” Of course this is how it appears from the evidence of the prosecution. Coming back to the comrade who is alleged to have turned State’s Evidence, all that he had to say was that when the comrades desired to meet, well, they met.

Thrill No. 2.

Call Detective Egan! The defendants all turned a ghastly pink. Eyes shot out of heads, as the Napoleon of the Chicago Radical Squad, better known to fame as the “Bum” Squad, Mistawh Egan, walked to the witness stand.† The judge went pale as this mastermind of the criminal world took the stand. The editor of *Truth* [Carney] was so overcome that he fell asleep twice during the item this Robespierre was giving his story to the jury. When Egan came to recite the story of the Cook County Convention, even the very heavens set forth their mighty protest, and Egan sang his swan song as a detective to the tune of the

†- The oft-repeated joking reference to the police anti-red units of Chicago, New York, and other metropolitan centers in this period as “Bum’ Squads” is a play on their ostensible *raison d’etre*, that of being “Bomb Squads.”

rolling thunder.

Mind you, let there be no mistake about it, Egan is a detective. He is on the payroll as a detective, so we will not argue about his qualifications, because this is a free country. He tells the jury that the CLP of Cook County made *Soviet Russia* their official organ. Of course he knew that was all “bull,” but it sounded good. You see the point — *Communists and Soviet Russia*. Clever fellow Egan. After telling a few of the defendants what he was going to do, Darrow has the unmitigated gall to inform Egan that the defense has no desire to question him. Poor Egan! How are the mighty fallen!

Thrill No. 3.

Call Detective Gaynor! Gaynor is a man of about 6 feet in height, well-built, and a very muscular fellow. He marched to the gallows, beg your pardon, to the witness stand and told of how he arrested Edgar Owens. Owens is a cripple, going blind, has a touch of tuberculosis, and is paralyzed down one side. But despite all that, you could not frighten Gaynor. Imagine if you can, the tremendous amount of courage displayed by this detective! Gaynor, along with George Kenny, a rather well-built fellow, handsome (but why say handsome? — he is Irish), † Henry Berger, another well-built fellow, a lawyer by profession, hardly by practice, and the big burly Chief of the Police of Moline [Illinois]. Fancy all these men had the courage to start on their way to Owens’ mother’s house and without any sign of fear they arrest Owens. Where are your heroes of the past? Was there ever such heroism displayed? Gaynor told of how he found the American flag in some dust. But he never told who threw it there. They discovered a Red Flag. The flag was brought into court. During the recess, Heth, Comerford, and Barnhardt had their pictures taken with the flag. During the operation, that is how it appeared from the grimaces they were making. Heth dragged the flag on the floor. To the lasting credit of W.B. Bross-Lloyd, he protested. The flag was made by the dead wife of Owens, but Heth and his assistants did not have the common decency to show a particle of respect for the memories of the dead. Gaynor thought that he had a

wonderful story to tell. But it fell flat. Owens the “bloody” conspirator throws open all his books, explains how much money he received and where it was spent, and even goes so far as to lend the authorities two suitcases to carry away his stuff. Some conspiracy.

Thrill No. 4.

Call Bonner! Bonner is the handsome detective who led the raid upon the Clarion Book Store. He told of the posters that he took down from off the walls of the store. He also told of the buttons that were found in the shop and the books. But of course he never told the jury that all of the transactions of the CLP of Cook County were open to the inspection of anyone who would take the care to examine them.

This is a sample of the evidence that was found in the Clarion Book Store: *4 posters advertising the contents of a British social paper and 2 placards advertising the contents of an Irish paper*. The former were printed in London, England, and the latter in Dublin, Ireland. These posters are being used as evidence against *all* the defendants. Evidence as to their criminal intent to overthrow the government of the United States by force. Papers published long before the law, under which the defendants are charged, was passed, and books also, are used as evidence. Let us proceed with the “Deadwood Dick” story. Excuse us if we fail to impress you with our serious outlook on life, occasioned by this trial.

Thrill No. 5.

A two days’ discussion ensued over the admission of the Seattle and Winnipeg strikes into the evidence. After a long argument, during which Comerford proved how little he knew about law and how good a soapbox orator he would make, the Court ruled that a strike that took place 6 months before the CLP was organized could be used as evidence against the defendants.

The first witness called to the stand was Harry J. Wilson, a self-confessed spy. He told how effective the Seattle strike was. Up to the time of writing he admitted in his cross-examination by Attorney [William H.]

†- Jack Carney was born in Dublin in 1886 and came to the United States in 1917, thus the little gibe here.

Forrest for the defense that he was a male nurse when he was 14 and studied medicine. Not being able to understand medicine, or perhaps unable to take his medicine, he started to learn the art of photography. Then he drifted about and when court adjourned, he had been located in about forty and one different places. He is a wise guy. He knew all about the strike and he told us of how the dead were refused burial by the strikers and so they postponed their dying. Hospitals were left stranded, no food and patients suffered. Children went to school with empty stomachs, etc. As if that is a strange affair in this prosperous country. He told a good story. But one story is good until the other side is told. Tomorrow the famous Knight of the Bullthrowers, Ole Hanson, called Ole on account of his perforated brain, all due respects to OPL. Many of the defendants are planning on sleeping out on the Lake Shore, afraid of going to bed, because they fear the morrow, when Ole will take the stand.

Many dramatic climaxes have been worked up by the state, but they failed to climax due to the battle-axe [*sic.*] of the defense. Many mysteries were told to us how this defendant or that defendant had made a confession and when it was read.... Well, Italy, France, Germany, England, and America are beginning to trade with Soviet Russia. Canada signs up \$6 million worth of business with Soviet Russia. England decides to deport Santeri Nuorteva and Martens decides to cancel all Canadian orders. England regrets the talk about deportation. Who in the????

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