
“I Came — I Saw — And I Flopped.”

[written circa July 24, 1920]

by Jack Carney

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CHICAGO, Ill. — In order to prove how revolutionary the members of the Communist Labor Party are the story of the Seattle [general] strike was introduced. After listening to the accounts given by the “SPY” [Harry J. Wilson] and Ole Hanson, followed by James A. Duncan, we do not know whether to urge the admission of the AF of L to the Third International or the Manufacturers’ Association.

Ole is a wonderful fellow! In fact he is the one man that save Seattle from adopting and carrying out the Soviet form of government. Standing in the City hall as the guardian of the past, present, and future of Seattle, Ole spoke the magic word and by the power of his eloquence and the masterful character that he inherited from Napoleon and Roosevelt, the Seattle strikers found themselves hopelessly beaten. One word from Ole and the strike collapsed. Seattle *still* remained in America. *This is all according to the gospel of Ole Hanson.* Ole made a wonderful impression, until the defense began to cross-examine him.

“Were you the Mayor of Seattle?” Asked Attorney [William H.] Forrest for the defense.

“I was,” replied Ole.

“Did your term expire?”

“No, sir, I resigned.”

“Why did you resign?”

“Because of poverty, neuritis, and dire need.”

“How have you earned your living since you resigned from your position as Mayor?”

“By lecturing.”

“What was your salary as Mayor?”

“\$7,500 per year.”

“Have you any other position?”

“President of a land company.”

“How much did you receive for lecturing?”

“I averaged \$300 per lecture.”

“How much have you earned this year?”

“\$38,000.”

“What do you lecture on?”

“Americanism.”

“Who books you to lecture?”

“Chambers of Commerce, Merchant and Manufacturers’ Associations, American Legion, and women’s clubs, etc.”



Ole proved “conclusively” that a man, with a wife and 9 children cannot support himself and family in comfort on a salary of \$150 per week, and also money derived from a land company. *Yet when men strike for \$5.50 per day, they are charged with overthrowing the government of the United States by force, crime, and vio-*

lence. Furthermore, Ole Hanson has been paraded around the country as a great American. Strange, is it not, that when he had the chance to guide the destinies of a city, he should wander around the country! *Ole received \$38,000 for his lectures on Americanism. Draw your own conclusions!*

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Thomas Ryan "found" a letter from W. Bross Lloyd addressed to C. Feichtmeir, secretary of the Wausaw, Wis., local of the Socialist Party, written in *APRIL 1919, 3 months before the Illinois law was passed. The letter was introduced as evidence.*

The letter says in part:

All through the war, even before our entry into it, the members of the National Executive Committee (of the Socialist Party) have trimmed, dodged, compromised, and hesitated, instead of sticking to the class struggle, first, last, and all the time, and during the course of the Russian revolution they have not done their share in the support of the Bolsheviki, but they have only approved and helped them as compelled to do so by the rank and file.

* * *

This capitalist ownership of the means of production and distribution gives the capitalists political control and gives them industrial control. There is a constant class struggle on for division of the social products and for the question of power. The only thing the socialists are concerned in is the question of power and the overthrow of the capitalists. No capitalist government will do anything for the working class unless the capitalist class, for its own reasons, desires to do that thing or unless it is compelled through fear of getting worse and more of it.

The one compelling force in the workers' interests is the working class power, and the Socialist Party executives, with the world in tumult, with the American proletariat saturated in unrest, have done absolutely nothing to organize working class power to compel the capitalists to give up and enable the worker to take over the government and industry of the world. It is time we tried a new deal and put in a bunch of men who would stick to their business, which is to organize working class power to take over government and industry, peacefully if the rulers choose to give up, by force if they do not make that choice.

Fraternally yours,

William Bross Lloyd.

The state rested its case after the introduction of the letter.

James A. Duncan, Secretary of the Seattle Central Labor Council, was called to the stand as the first

witness for the defense. Duncan explained the reasons for the general strike and the calling of it. He was constantly interrupted by the prosecuting attorney, Frank E. Comerford. Any evidence that would place a different construction upon the strike than that presented by Ole Hanson was vigorously opposed. Duncan was not aware he was to be a witness until he arrived in this city. Consequently he came without any documentary evidence. So the state, through Comerford, constantly objected to the evidence of Duncan. *It was clear to be seen what Comerford was trying to do!*

Duncan explained the formation of the Central Labor council of Seattle and the Metal Trades Council. He then went on to state the reason for calling the strike. We are all more or less familiar with the calling of the strike. The general strike in Seattle grew out of the strike of some 35,000 shipyard workers. The shipyards of Seattle are operated upon a closed shop basis, there being collective bargaining between the shipyard owners and the Metal Trades Council. **THE STRIKE WAS A PURE WAGE STRIKE. THERE WAS NO REVOLUTIONARY DEMAND.** The shipyard workers simply walked off the job and tied up the shipyards. The rest of the trades within the city dropped their tools in sympathy with the strikers of the shipyards.

The state has made considerable play around the story of Ole Hanson stating to the jury that the strikers intended taking over the city and running it through a soviet formed by the Soldiers', Sailors', and Workers' Council. But the state did not state that a person named Charles Piez, acting as a GOVERNMENT official, told the shipyard owners that if they gave in to the demands of the strikers, they would find their supplies of steel cut off. Whilst the employers and the workers were in conference, Piez told them that if they came to any agreement with the men that the shipyards would neither receive steel nor would they receive contracts. The employers could do no other than obey the demands of the representative of BIG BUSINESS, camouflaged in the role of a government official. *The strike was forced on the men.*

Duncan testified that Ole Hanson came to the Labor Temple and took him and Charles Doyle, business agent of the Central Labor Council, out to lunch. Instead of Ole being the great Savior of the Nation and the Napoleon of the 20th Century, he was a mere

chile, as far as levelheadedness was concerned. Pleading and practically gong down on his knees, he begged of Duncan, "Jim, Jim, (referring to Duncan) *give me my lights. Jim, don't take my lights away from me.*" *No words of strength, only the pleading of a weak fool.*

Ole was dying to have martial law declared. Turning round to Duncan at a meeting called by himself, he said he was ready to declare martial law. After he had stated that he was prepared to go to Washington and ask that the demands of the men be granted. At the mention of martial law, Duncan replied to Ole, "*If you want this strike to spread, declare martial law. And furthermore, you don't know how the boys in Camp Lewis will stand on the question of strikebreaking.*"

"By God," said Ole, "if they are not loyal I want to know it."

"*If you want to see the streets of Seattle run with blood to satisfy your curiosity about loyalty, we don't,*" replied Duncan. As Duncan proceeded with his testimony, the state, through Comerford, made repeated objections. In the midst of an objection, the judge declared that the day's work was done.

Duncan told of how Dr. Matthews, a Presbyterian minister, and a Mr. Spangler, tried to bring about a settlement. Mr. Spangler, in the beginning, had been of the opinion that the strikers were for a revolution, but admitted later on that the opinion was not a correct one. Duncan continued to testify as to the real causes and nature of the Seattle strike.

Comerford, representing the state, endeavored to make Duncan contradict his own testimony. Did you not say so and so, Comerford would ask and Duncan would reply, "If I did, I wish to correct it, as I did not intend to say such things — that is, if I did say them." *Duncan proved to be a better witness than Comerford proved to be a lawyer.*

Mr. Swenson, a traveling salesman and a member of the Typographical Union, told of his work in the strike and of how peaceable it was. He was followed on the stand by Mrs. Graham, am member of the women's club of Seattle and chairman of the CITY COMMITTEE OF THE CIVIC FEDERATION. An EXALTED RULER of the Elks tried to make a name for himself by testifying for the state in their rebuttal evidence, but the defense just quietly raised an objection to a reopening of the evidence by the state and the Exalted Ruler of the Elks was dethroned.

"Call Ole Hanson to the Stand!"

Ole came to the stand and endeavored to deny the truth of what Duncan had said. Shown a copy of *The Soviets at Work* by LENIN, he stated that Duncan told him that in *The Soviets at Work* he would find what the strikers were out for. It was plain to see that OLE WAS TELLING A LIE. Duncan was not slow to let Ole know it. Comerford objected to Duncan calling Ole a liar. So do we, we have a respect for some liars, but not of the Ole kind. This 150 Percent American goes on the stand and deliberately lies, not caring if those lies will send 20 men to the penitentiary. Some 150 Percent American is Ole!

All the evidence was in by Friday noon [July 23, 1920]. In the afternoon arguments followed by both sides as to the admissibility of certain statements in addresses by the lawyers. The defense contended that they had a right to admit the statement of Judge Anderson, of Boston, stating that the program of the Communist Labor Party did NOT advocate force and violence. They also asked permission to read the ruling of the Secretary of Labor, W.B. Wilson. The Court stated he was inclined to admit the Judge Anderson decision. The state contended that as both rulings were "prunes and prisms" rulings, or some other Latin expression used in legal circles, they could not be cited. We shall wait until Monday [July 26] for the decision of the court.

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The full list of defendants who are on trial follows: William Bross Lloyd, Winnetka, Ill.; Jack Carney, Duluth; L.K. England, Rock Island [Ill.]; Edgar Owens, Moline, Ill.; Perry Shipman, Moline; Max Bedacht, San Francisco; L.E. Katterfeld, Dighton, Kan.; Edwin Firth, West Virginia; Ludwig Lore, New York; Dr. O.J. Brown, DeKalb, Ill.; Arthur Procter, Samuel Ash, Dr. Karl Sandberg, N.J. Christensen, Neils Kjar, Samuel Hankin, James A. Meisinger, Charles Krumbein, M.A. Stolar, and John Vogel, all of Chicago.

Classified by professions and trades, the lineup of the defendants is as follows: 2 doctors, 2 lawyers, 2 editors, 1 bookseller, 2 plumbers, 2 carpenters, 3 printers, 3 machinists, 1 farmer, 1 salesman, and 1 student.

Before we come to the beginning of the great legal battle which commences on Monday [July 26, 1920], we want to give our readers some facts about the special prosecutor, Frank Comerford. Frank Comerford is a lawyer; of course that conveys a great deal. He was picked up by the Democratic Party and elected to the State Legislature. Whilst in office he was found to [have] "betrayed," so it is alleged, the Democratic Party. In other words, he told tales out of school. They naturally enough dropped him. The next we hear of him as the valiant defender of labor. He defended Carl Pierson, who was charged with killing a scab. He succeeded in having [him] released.

Later on, comerford was asked to speak at a Labor Day meeting in Springfield, Ill., by the labor unions. He came down with a 4th of July speech, and was told to put it back in his wallet and go home. He did and gave the speech to the *Chicago Tribune*. Later on we find him in Poland watching the Russian War "through a spyglass," as Darrow neatly describes it. He returns home satisfied with what the Bolsheviki are doing. He speaks in glowing terms of the Bolsheviki. Friends invite us to meet Comerford and listen to his wonderful story. Hoyne next announces his candidacy for Mayor of Chicago. COMERFORD ASSISTS HOYNE IN HIS CAMPAIGN.

Last January, you will all remember how Hoyne stayed the "revolution." The members of the CLP, now on trial, were indicted by the Grand Jury. They needed legal counsel. THE FIRST LAWYER TO MAKE ADVANCES TO THE CLP MEMBERS WAS FRANK COMERFORD. HE SENT HIS WIFE AND URGED THE DEFENDANTS TO ENGAGE HIM AS COUNSEL. The defendants, understanding the legal ability of Comerford and his political record, wisely declined to even consider him. Comerford had rendered services to Hoyne and Hoyne is not a rich man. So Comerford was made special prosecutor in the trial of the CLP. What Hoyne could not pay Comerford, the state of Illinois can. What shall we say of courts of justice, when lawyers can swing so readily from one side to the other? If Comerford had been counsel for the defense, he would have told of how these members of the CLP were endeavoring, in their own way, to make the world better. All the eloquence at his command would have been utilized to prove that we were all that is humanly good. But now

that he is prosecuting the Reds, he will tell a "heart-rending" story of the horrible conditions that exist in Russia; of how the Seattle strikers held up the city and made Ole ridiculous, and of how Marx and Engels planned the revolution in America. So much for Comerford!

In the great world of REAL things, Comerford is like the bug on the Ford. A bug was on a Ford car that was traveling along a dusty road. Naturally a great deal of dust was raised. The bug, with his chest out, proudly pointed to the dust and said, "See the dust that I AM kicking up!" It is the old, old story of pride goes before a fall. Frankie, you had better look out. Maybe the jury might be keen students of psychology; if they are them you have our sympathy.

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Before the verdict has been rendered we want to speak a few words to our many friends. We do not know which way the verdict will go. It may mean that for many years we will never meet again, or again it may mean that there are 12 men who are not afraid to render a protest at the reactionary manner in which the employers of Illinois are endeavoring to stifle the voice of those who feel moved to protest against the social injustices of today. WHICHEVER WAY THE VERDICT GOES — WE SHALL STAND TRUE TO THE CAUSE OF THE INTERNATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY WORKING CLASS.

We are not pessimistic, but a kind of sad at heart. The best members of the revolutionary movement, most of them our own personal friends, are in prison. We cannot feel really happy when we think of lovable Gene Debs being in prison; also that great souled fighter, Jim Larkin, and the many brave souls of the IWW. *It is not a hard task for an editor of a radical paper to have to go to prison, but the lot of the unknown members of the rank and file, such as many members of the IWW, is very hard.* Nobody writes to him in prison; lonely he sits in his prison cell, not knowing what it is to receive a letter. If only he could hear occasionally from comrades on the outside, it might cheer him up, but the comrades do not write to him. BECAUSE THEY HAVE NEVER HEARD HIS NAME. So it is not hard for prominent (?) radicals to go to prison, because we know, due to our being editor of *Truth*,

that many will write to us. The two years at Leavenworth and this probable sentence do not occasion us much concern. COMRADES, IT MAY BE GOOD-BYE FOR A LITTLE TIME! You must carry on the fight. Let your energies be renewed and your spirit re-awakened. All over the world the voice of the great working class can be heard. Today Russia, *Soviet Russia, if you please*, stands triumphant! Statesmen who were going to crush her now go on their bended knees and piteously whine to her. The great days are ahead and are within our sight. Comrades, the future IS ours!

The men who think that they can stifle our voices or stay the progress of our movements by sending men to prison are like King Canute, who tried to stop the approach of the waves. The ideals that we pledge our faith in and the task that we have set ourselves are like a mighty force that has seized our lives, and we go on, unable to turn back. As Seymour Demings states in the *Pillar of Fire*:

You are called to fight not in the orderly disciplined ranks of nationalism, but in the disordered, self-disciplined ranks of internationalism. * * * He is highest among you who serves best, and to serve best he must esteem himself less than the least. From Prometheus chained to crag in the Caucasus for his too-great love of mankind to the ragged apostle of working class revolt, flung bruised and bleeding into a county jail — demigod, prophet, saint, sage, liberator, martyr — the glorious company plods on through shame and spitting; through alleluias changing to curses; through curses changing to alleluias, stoic and steadfast. MARK WELL THAT BAND. Look on them long and earnestly. Always they beckon. Whether you are of them matters little to their cause — that will triumph without you. * * * Are you for joining? Then know that singly you become as nothing, but that together you are all that is. Unknown here; forgotten hereafter; yours, none the less, are all the years that are yet to be. * * * The road leads upward, through thickets, past frightful chasms, in murky gloom at first, through dangers ever. There is black night of storms, with lightnings that rive the oak; but when the storm has passed, while it is yet dark, comes a delicate fragrance exhaled from drenched turf, and comes a sleepy twitter of waking birds. The air quivers with a stir of life. Morning awaits.

Morning waits, there at the summit of that mountain path. Here begins the trails. It is difficult and steep. Beset with perils. It leads no man knows whither save that it leads to something great. But you may tread it joyfully — hearts aflame; heads sober; hands in the present; eyes in the future; and your foreheads touched with dawn.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.

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