
Testimony of Sheriff George I. Bridgman in the Trial of C.E. Ruthenberg, St. Joseph, MI — April 20, 1923

by John Hearley

Mimeographed press release of the Workers Party of America Press Service.
Copy in Comintern Archive, RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 211, l. 78.

April 20, 1923

For IMMEDIATE RELEASE.

St. Joseph, Mich.— Sheriff George I. Bridgman, the first witness for the prosecution in the trial of C.E. Ruthenberg, was forced to admit this morning, under cross-examination of Attorney Frank P. Walsh that the raid at Bridgman was made on the initiative of agents of the Department of Justice and without any information of his own that any law was being violated.

Bridgman said that Jacob Spolansky, federal agent, had come to him asking that the convention of Communists be raided. He stated that after two days of negotiations he summoned some 20 deputies, and together with 4 agents of the Department of Justice, raided the Wolfskeel resort arresting the 17 men found sitting on benches and lolling under trees.

Bridgman was asked whether he had any warrants for arrest or search warrant and stated he had not, having evidently acted merely upon the statements the federal agents made to him.

Attorney Walsh then brought out that the papers which it is charged were found on the grounds at Bridgman were in the possession of federal agents most of the time, that they were in a room to which Allen O. Meyers, head of Burns' International Detective Agency had access whenever he desired.

Walsh made the witness admit that Allan O. Meyers, Burns' chief, had questioned Ruthenberg about the Communist movement.

Walsh also brought out that Sheriff Bridgman had the picture of 17 men arrested at Bridgman taken with deputies with shotguns standing in front of them. Bridgman admitted that all his deputies and the federal men who made the raid were armed, but that no weapon of any kind or character was found on the men arrested at the Wolfskeel resort.

Bridgman, although making a desperate attempt to evade, was obliged to tell how he paraded the 17 men through the streets of St. Joseph, hand-

cuffed and chained. At first denying that there had been any chain he later admitted that there was, evidently remembering that a picture of the men marching through the streets had been taken.

When first questioned about the seizure of Ruthenberg's bag and suitcase, Bridgman did not remember anything about it, but after a recess, when his memory had been refreshed he told a different stories.

Federal agent [Edwin C.] Shanahan followed Bridgman on the stand.

Edited by Tim Davenport

1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR · November 2011 · Non-commercial reproduction permitted.