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# **“Foster at Bridgman”: Spolansky. Identified by Testimony of US Operative: Defense Paves Way to Claim Evidence “Planted.”**

Unsigned report in the *St. Joseph Herald-Press*, March 16, 1923, pp. 1-2.

Counsel for William Z. Foster, on trial in Berrien County Circuit Court for alleged violation of the Michigan syndicalism law, today began paving the way leading up to its contention that the evidence to be used against the noted labor agitator was “planted” by government operatives as the state introduced evidence identifying Foster and several of his associates as being in attendance at the Bridgman convention.

That the defense will attempt to prove that the evidence was “planted” was indicated while Attorney Frank P. Walsh, chief defense counsel, was cross-examining Sheriff George C. Bridgman, the first witness called to the stand.

## **Had Access to Room.**

Bridgman has previously testified to bringing the papers seized at Bridgman to the county jail. They were first piled up in the residence portion of the jail building and later removed and placed under lock and key in a room in the jail proper, according to the testimony.

“How many federal men looked at the papers the first day?” Bridgman was asked.

“Spolansky, Wolff, and Shanahan,” was the reply.

“Were you there?” was the next question put to the witness.

“In and out,” Bridgman answered.

“All of these United States detectives had access to the room where the literature was stored? You never questioned them?” Walsh asked.

“Yes, they could get a key any time,” the witness responded.

## **Foster is Identified.**

The state identified Foster as being at the Bridgman convention when it placed Jacob Spolansky, a federal operative, on the stand.

Spolansky, after identifying himself and producing the commission issued to him by the Department of Justice to investigate and collect evidence of violation of laws in which the United States was or might be later involved, testified to coming to Bridgman and locating the Karl Wolfskeel resort where the convention was being held. Under direct examination by Attorney Smith, Spolansky testified as follows:

Q. — Did you see anybody there?

A. — Yes, Foster and a number of others.

Questioned further, Spolansky also stated he had recognized Earl Browder, C.E. Ruthenberg, Charles Krumbein, Ed Lindgren, Joseph Zack, and two or three others whose names he could not recall. The witness also testified that he knew Foster by sight and had heard him speak a number of times. Spolansky then came to St. Joseph to secure the aid of Sheriff Bridgman in the raid that followed, he stated.

## **Walsh Objects Often.**

Spolansky’s testimony was interrupted frequently by objections on the part of Mr. Walsh,

whose tactics were protested by Mr. Smith.

The state sought to qualify Spolansky as an expert witness in radical activities. Walsh strenuously objected and Mr. Smith changed the line of his questioning but in the end secured the information the state desired.

The witness declared he was familiar with the programs of the Red Trade Union International and the Communist International and later in his testimony connected these Russian organizations with similar groups in America. Spolansky further asserted he was acquainted with the organization and workings of the Trade Union Educational League, of which Foster is Secretary and Treasurer.

### **Tells of Raid.**

Sheriff Bridgman was called to the stand just prior to adjournment last night and resumed his testimony when court convened this morning. He told how Jacob Spolansky of the radical bureau of the Department of Justice in Chicago came to him [Friday] August 18 of last year and requested his aid. The raid was made the following Tuesday [Aug. 22, 1922], with Spolansky, Maurice Wolff, and Edward Shanahan, federal agents, helping the sheriff's posse.

The sheriff described the scene of the convention as a deeply wooded ravine hidden away from the Wolfskeel dunes, 20 miles south of St. Joseph and on the shore of Lake Michigan. Here

the communists, he said, had taken over the cottages of the Wolfskeel summer resort and were holding their sessions in a dance pavilion.

Sheriff Bridgman described the digging up of the evidence, buried in two barrels specially prepared to protect their contents from moisture. The evidence was brought into court and pile up before the jury.

Besides the 76 documents files in which the delegates kept their papers, there were piles of printed documents, one or two leather briefcases, half a dozen typewriters, and two duplicating machines.

Mr. Walsh cross-examined the sheriff at length about Frank Morrow, the government's "undercover man" at the convention.

Bridgman testified that while Morrow was taken from his cell and would return complaining of having been beaten by the authorities, in reality he never had been mistreated.

The defense counsel sought to show that when Morrow was released he signed a paper absolving the officials of any mistreatment. There was talk of some such paper, but whether it was ever signed the witness could not remember.

Mr. Walsh endeavored to learn whether Allan O. Meyers, general manager of the Burns Detective Agency, had sent any of the literature seized to the Boston Transcript.

"Not to my knowledge," was the sheriff's reply.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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