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SPYING

on

WORKERS

by

Robert W. Dunn

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SPYING ON WORKERS

BY ROBERT W. DUNN

A "Fellow-Worker"

THERE was a young fellow, named Sam Bastwich, who used to hang around the office of the textile union in Passaic where I was an organizer. He was a strong union man, he said, even something of a radical. No, he didn't work in any of the big woolen mills of the city—he was just a "sympathizer," a volunteer, glad to help around the office when he had any spare time. He was a fur-worker, he said, temporarily out of a job. He was fairly well read on labor movements, and he told stories of his father's activities as a member of the old Jewish "Bund" in Russia before the Revolution. He addressed me and the other union members as "fellow-worker."

He was interesting to talk to, and we used to go out for lunch together to the Hungarian restaurant near the office. We two would discuss union matters, problems of organization, such as how to get around the police ban against union meetings and distributing union literature in front of the mills. He would often go with me to distribute leaflets to the workers. Once when we had printed what we thought was a particularly effective exposure of conditions, he insisted on taking one personally and slipping it under the office door of the local manufacturers' association—the Passaic Council of Wool Manufacturers. He would show his devotion, not to say daring, in other small and convincing ways.

One day a friendly newspaperman told me that the Wool Council had a report of a certain conference held in our union office. This was puzzling—no one had been present besides myself and two other quite trustworthy persons. Then we remembered that Sam Bastwich had happened in for a few minutes during

the conference. Clearly, the mill-owners must have gotten their information through Sam. But little damage was done by the report, and we allowed our suspicions to subside. Not long after, Sam disappeared; I supposed he had finally picked up work at his trade in New York.

Several years later, I was back in Passaic, in the strike of 1926. A close friend outside the labor movement introduced me to a friend of his who had recently worked for the Public Service Corporation of New Jersey—the big Morgan utility company that controls the power, light, and government of the state. This man had worked in the “intelligence department” of the company, but he was out of the “game” now. And when he had left the company he had taken along a list of 230 “investigators,” that is, spies, who had at one time or another been useful to the corporation. After most of the names on the list appeared the home address, certain key letters indicating the various detective agencies the “investigator” had worked for, and in some cases a code number. After some of the names was indicated whether the “operator” was good at “industrial” work or just plain shadowing and informing.

As I looked down the long list my eyes stooped at a line which read: *Bastwich, Sam, alias Bastwitch, 66 Linden St., Passaic, I. W. W., Schindler, D. N. S.*

There was “fellow-worker” Sam, sure enough, at the same address he had given me as his Passaic residence! The I. W. W. notation meant that he had once been affiliated with the Industrial Workers of the World, where he had probably learned to address his victims as “fellow-worker.” “Schindler” meant that he had once been engaged by R. C. Schindler, Inc., a New York “investigation” service, with a flourishing “industrial” spy business. “D. N. S.” meant that he had also been employed by the Public Service Corporation of New Jersey.

I recognized other names on the list. Some had been spies in the Paterson and Passaic district. Some were definitely labeled “Wool Council.” But for me Sam stood out above them all—

I had known him so personally. Sam, a genial, entertaining fellow, but—like the 229 others on the list—a rat.

The purpose of this pamphlet is to describe the system that makes Sams, pays them, and keeps them busy betraying their fellow-workers in the trade unions and other labor organizations.

Types of Spies and Agencies

The most common kind of labor spy is the worker who, for a few dollars extra, a small favor when in trouble, or a chance to advance himself to a better position, will report to the boss or to a company executive what he sees going on in the factory or in the union, if he belongs to one. Hundreds of plants and shops that could not afford to take the "service" of the more elaborate spy agencies, have their own "spotters" who tattle to the boss or to the office. These more cheaply paid spies are the most difficult to detect, since their reports are usually not made in writing.

In some larger companies there is a special "intelligence department," which directs the company spies. Many street railways have this type of department to check-up on union activities, as well as the general conduct of employees. Still other companies, such as the United States Steel Corp., direct their spies through elaborate "welfare departments," while Ford has a "Service Department" to do this dirty work in his motor plants. Other larger concerns, like the Enka Corp., one of the leading rayon manufacturers in the United States, employ under-cover men through the company police force. Their wages are made up partly from the general pay roll and partly from the company's police department.

Many companies have, in addition to their own spies, spies furnished by employers' associations, who offer this sort of "service" to members. These operate locally, like the Passaic Wool Council, or on a national scale, like the National Metal Trades Association. When systematic espionage is used by a group of companies in this way, a blacklist of active union or

radical workers is often built up from the reports of the association's spies operating in plants of the affiliated firms. Workers on this list are refused jobs in all the plants involved. Although "illegal" in some states, the blacklisting of workers by employers is common in every industry. And the labor spy is indispensable to the keeping of an effective blacklist.

Some of the nation-wide employers' associations that have used spy systems as a part of their anti-union operations are such well known bodies as National Founders Assn., National Metal Trades Assn., National Civic Federation, National Erectors Assn., National Manufacturers Assn., and National Clay Products Industries Assn. Local bodies such as the Philadelphia Textile Manufacturers Assn. and the Employers Association of Indianapolis are particularly notorious for their use of the system, some of them employing their own operatives, others engaging the regular detective agencies.

The spy about which we know the most—for he is more easily exposed—is the one furnished by the outside detective agency or "engineering" bureau, the company paying the agency for its work. For spying on workers has become a definite, specialized type of business, organized into companies and selling "service" to individual firms and corporations as well as to employers' associations.

Most private detective agencies have, in addition to their usual type of detective work in criminal cases, divorce suits, thefts and the like, an "industrial service" for employers. During certain periods, especially when workers are organizing and striking, this branch of the detective business becomes most profitable. Burns, Foster, Flynn, Pinkerton, Bell, Riley, Mooney-Boland-Sutherland, Eagle, Russell, Thiel and scores of other agencies have made millions out of "labor" or "industrial" work, which of course includes the furnishing of gunmen and strikebreakers as well as spies. In the words of one of their type, they have found that "there's more money in industry than in crime."

Some spy agencies are careful not to use the word "detective"

at all. Specializing, sometimes exclusively, on "industrial" or "labor" work they operate under such names as "industrial service bureau," "human engineering service," "industrial conciliators," or "human relations counsellors." Such concerns as the Sherman Corporation, Engineers, the Corporations Auxiliary Co. (also known as International Auxiliary Co.), and the Railway Audit and Inspection Co.—all with offices in a dozen or more cities—are of this type. They pretend to operate on a somewhat "higher plane" than the regular detective agencies and make much larger claims for the "constructive" character of their business. They usually apply smoother, "scientific," and more modern methods both in approaching the client employer and in hiring secret agents to work in plants and labor organizations. A specific record of the operations of a number of these agencies as well as of several of the regular detective agencies, is given on pages 158-59 of the *Labor Fact Book*.

Getting the Business

Spy agencies employ the customary commercial methods in landing business. They advertise. They write skillful sales-letters and issue attractive booklets. They dispatch high pressure salesmen to make large promises and clinch the contract. To help things along they may even stir up a little "agitation" in the plant of a prospective client to scare him into action. If it serves their ends they will provoke violence. They are especially pressing with their sales literature in time of labor "disturbances" when the employers are particularly susceptible to their arguments. In 1919-21 they did a big business, while the growing unrest of labor during the present economic crisis is again stimulating their activities.

What do they offer the "client firm"? They usually agree to provide information on what employees are doing, "how the men feel and talk on labor matters," "the sentiment as to trade unions and similar movements," to quote from a letter of solicitation written by the Turner Service to a prospective client. They prom-

ise, of course, to prevent strikes, to discover and report "agitators," and to keep the management fully informed as to what goes on among the workers on the job, on the streets and in their homes.

But some agencies do more than this. They offer a wide variety of "constructive" service. They promise to "work on" the employees, to "lead them properly," to guide them with "correct ideals," to make them see the "company's point of view," to "help them think straight about economics"—in short, to be loyal slaves of the corporation.

The usual arrangement is to have the company that hires the agency pay wages directly to the spy so he will appear on the pay roll as one of the regular workers. He receives in addition directly from the agency a certain amount each month for salary and expenses. This comes out of the fee paid by the company to the agency, which may be a flat rate per month or year, or a certain amount, say \$150 per operative a month.

Hiring and Training the "Operative"

Methods of hiring and training spies differ widely, depending on the size and character of the agency. But the most common method, used especially by the "industrial services," begins with the agency placing a "Men Wanted" ad in a daily newspaper. When the boilermaker, knitter or molder—whatever job is mentioned in the "blind" ad—writes to the given post-office box, he receives a letter from the agency, which for this purpose usually employs another name, telling him to come to its office for an interview, bringing along the letter for identification.

If the job-hunter goes to the office the letter is taken away from him. Then he is interviewed and told that he can have a job in a certain mill—usually not named at the start of the interview—but that in addition to his regular duties as a worker, he is to have an opportunity to earn a little more cash. There is a very easy way to do this, the agency executive points out. He is simply to send in a daily report telling what is happening in

the plant or at least in his department. Is the shop clean? Does the work move efficiently? Are there any suggestions made by workers as to how things might be improved? What do they complain about?

The invitation is put so skillfully, offered on such an innocent basis, that the worker may often swallow the bait. If he falls for the job, he may, at least in the larger agencies, be given elaborate instructions as to procedure. This period of training may last for a couple of weeks, the worker studying an instruction book, and writing sample reports to headquarters even before he is assigned to a factory.

The larger agencies, such as Sherman and Corporations Auxiliary, have used elaborate lessons, correspondence courses, and even handed out "very confidential" instruction booklets which the operative is advised to hide under his pillow when he goes to sleep at night. But some of the spies have neglected to follow these instructions and the booklets have fallen into the hands of unions or their friends.

Here is a typical paragraph from an instruction letter sent out by the Corporations Auxiliary:

Try at all times to find out who is a member of a labor organization. Report same at once in your daily report. Be a good mixer. Mingle with the fellows in the noon hour, in the factory and in the street car. Try to find out how they feel, if they are dissatisfied or if they are satisfied with their jobs. Try to find out if they urge other fellows to join their organization. Be always on your guard. Do not display too much money, but don't be a miser. Be willing to spend a few cents for a drink if it will make a man talk. In the organization where you are a member, try to get as popular as you possibly can. Try to hold as many and as high offices as you can. Try always to keep in close touch with other officers of your organization, in particular with the business agents.

Another set of instructions handed to operatives by this company, and captured in the hands of a Detroit spy, included:

Give names of workmen who are agitators or fault finders.

Send in names of all I. W. W., Reds and Socialists employed in your plant that you are aware of.

The Sherman agency once had an elaborate course of instruction, carried out through its hiring subsidy, which used the names National Mutual Service and National Manufacturers Syndicate. It was a correspondence course, each instalment headed: "Read and Return Without Fail." In the course of taking the lessons the prospective spy or "representative" would answer such questions as "What are your sentiments toward Socialism?—toward Bolshevism?—toward Labor Unions? —"; and finally, "Would you be willing to work hard, faithfully, and do more than an ordinary day's work to help Americanize the foreign workers?—". He would also be told in the lessons how "our work is invisible" and that "as your mission [*sic*] is to be considered confidential absolutely you must follow our directions relative to divulging your real vocation or business to any one."

And the preliminary instructions included such enlightening paragraphs as the following:

The rules and regulations of our organization exclude even one's closest friends and families from any knowledge as to the details of any assignments a representative may receive. This is simply common sense and any violation of this principle will be considered sufficient cause for immediate dismissal.

You will receive frequent instructions from us relative to the work you are doing, which instructions you are to mail back to us *together with envelope in which it was sent* you as soon as you have carefully read them over and understand what they mean. You are not to destroy them or keep them on your person over twelve hours.

You are not, under any circumstances, to use the telephone in connection with this business from the town or city in which you may be employed, unless it has over 50,000 population, otherwise you are to proceed to nearby city or town of reasonable size, at least five miles beyond the out-skirts of the town in which you are employed.

In mailing your daily communications to us, you are to take care that no one observes you and that the post-office clerks do not see the specific letter which you yourself deposit in the mails, which bears the same address each day.

Our system of carrying on our work frequently requires that many representatives, unknown to each other, are engaged in the same

factory at the same time. Therefore, you are not to approach or speak to any of them regarding your business, should you know them to be representatives, unless specifically directed to do so by your official. **YOU MUST NOT INDICATE THAT YOU KNOW WHO THEY ARE, NEITHER MUST THEY INDICATE THAT THEY ARE AWARE OF WHO YOU ARE.** The best way to do is to ignore them entirely. **DO NOT VIOLATE THIS RULE AT ANY TIME.**

When assigned to inside work in mill or factory, as a mechanic, as a helper, or even as an unskilled worker, get a rooming place the same as any other worker would but be sure and get a room for yourself. Do not share it with others, as the presence of an outsider would materially interfere with the writing of your confidential communications, and the making up of your expense accounts.

It will be necessary for you to be very careful in writing your reports, to see that you are not observed by fellow workers, the landlady, fellow roomers, or otherwise. **DISCRETION** should show you that your writing must be done in **ABSOLUTE PRIVACY. DO NOT TAKE ANY CHANCES, BUT FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS TO THE LETTER.**

REMEMBER—you must be consistent and if you give any reason as to who you are or how you happen to be in a certain town, or what you are doing there, tell the same story to all. If you are compelled to tell what is not exact truth in order to bring about a proper result, **DON'T FORGET WHAT THE STORY WAS,** also don't forget that you have a good reason for making mis-statements. The official who assigns you to out-of-town work will aid you by advice and will give you a plausible reason for being in a certain place, and **YOU MUST STICK BY THAT STORY.**

Daily Job of the Spy

Although the approach to the prospective "operative" is smooth and his training has a certain pseudo-scientific flavor, the job he is actually called upon to perform soon leaves him with few illusions. It is, first of all, to act as informer on his shop mates. And in those plants where unions "threaten," it is to wreck the plans of the union. He must, at all events, turn in a daily report in writing signed with his code number—A 27, X 3, Y 19 or what not. He never signs his name to a report. He must, where possible, give names of "agitators" and the progress of the union in its attempt to organize.

There are several kinds of operatives employed by the same agency. There is the "inside" spy, who reports on all the doings within the plant. There is the "outside" spy, who may pretend he is out of a job, and who sits around the union office during the day to pick up information. In most cases, however, the spy combines the functions of "inside" and "outside" man. He reports on shop activities during the day and attends union meetings and mixes with the workers at night and on Sundays. But whatever he does, he is expected to record it in his daily report to the agency, and he is encouraged to give every possible detail. Hundreds of these spy reports—all of them too long for reproduction here—have been collected by the writer over a period of years.

Invariably the spy is a union-wrecker, although posing among his fellows as an ardent member, often the most enthusiastic of them all, and quite "revolutionary" in his speech. He may become an outright *provocateur*, that is one who provokes the union into doing expensive and unnecessary acts which weaken it, drain its resources, or put it at the mercy of the police.

On instructions from the agency, the spy may go so far as to help precipitate a strike before the workers are prepared for it. But once the strike is declared, he is then instructed to do everything to break it either by a whispering morale-weakening campaign or by more open measures, ranging from organizing the scabs to forming a company union.

Various methods are used to break strikes. Many professional strike-breaking agencies hire operatives only for the duration of a strike. These may disguise themselves as salesmen and go around to the houses of the strikers attempting to destroy the morale of the strikers' wives, as the Corporations Auxiliary operatives did in the Elizabethton rayon strike in 1929. They may be infiltrated among the workers in the plant a few days before a strike in order to go out with the workers and thus have influence over them as fellow strikers. There is scarcely a point or a moment in connection with union and strike activity at which

the spy may not be injected. And the history of strikes shows spies being exposed in every conceivable position. At times they have been nothing but thugs or gunmen prowling about, looking for a chance to start something to discredit the strikers. But often they have held very responsible positions in the strike leadership.

Agency Operations

The spy reports to the agency. The agency in turn reports—and at great length—to the company that hires it. Of course it doesn't always report what the spy tells it. It "reworks" the material, "digests" it, and puts it in such shape as to impress the client, that is to convince the company that it is getting its money's worth, so that its contract for service will be renewed when it expires.

Along with reports on what is happening in the plant there may go recommendations on "personnel relations" or ways of keeping workers "loyal." The agency may advise the company to install a company union or some other bit of welfare to fool the workers. Or it may advise the adoption of a "yellow dog" contract. The Sherman agency, for example, helped the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad to introduce the "yellow dog" among its shop craft workers in 1923.

In time of strike the agency, as we have noted, must keep the company informed on the activities of the strike committee and the leaders. It may give its operatives specific instructions in methods of strike-breaking. In the great steel strike of 1919, for example, the Sherman agency instructed its operatives in the following words:

We want you to stir up as much bad feeling as you possibly can between the Serbians and Italians. Spread data among the Serbians that the Italians are going back to work. Call up every question you can in reference to racial hatred between these two nationalities. . . . Urge them to go back to work or the Italians will get their jobs.

Some agencies give fewer verbal or written instructions as to methods of strike-breaking. They merely provide strike-breakers

or gunmen to take the places of the strikers, to beat up workers on the picket line, and to provoke trouble. Sometimes the agency's thugs are appointed as deputy sheriffs by the state and thus given governmental power to carry out the anti-labor policies of the employers.

Other functions of spy companies in addition to espionage, making of blacklists, "constructive advice," "harmonization," and strike-breaking, include:

(1) Fingerprinting workers. This was done by the U. S. Detective Agency for the Wright Aeronautical Co. in Paterson in 1930.

(2) Organizing employers associations—such as the Allied Manufacturers' League, Inc., set up in the full fashioned hosiery industry in 1929 by A. R. MacDonald, detective agency head, for the purpose of fighting labor and introducing a "yellow dog" contract in all the plants of the members of the association.

(3) Bribing labor leaders and placing them on the pay roll of the agency, thus weakening the union and securing additional good sources of information. Hundreds of leaders of unions have been "approached" by agencies, and many of them, all too willing to be corrupted, have been easily persuaded to take on this "extra" work for the employing class. For example, James C. Cronin, president of the Central Labor Union of Philadelphia and "big shot" in the International Molders' Union was exposed as "operative 13" for the Bureau of Industrial Relations, a spy outfit. He later started a spy service of his own. A dozen officials of local unions in Akron, Ohio, were discovered to be on the staff of the Corporations Auxiliary Co. a few years ago. And Robert Beattie, vice president of the Stationary Firemen's International Union and secretary of the Pittsburgh Central Labor Union was shown to be a spy for the Railway Audit & Inspection Co.

(4) Helping to frame up workers active in the struggle. Practically every frame-up in labor history has seen a labor spy somewhere in the picture, committing perjury and otherwise

doing the dirty work for the employing class. (See Vern Smith, *The Frame-Up System*, International Pamphlets No. 8.)

Killing for the Corporations

The story of the labor spy and labor spy agencies in the United States is at the same time a record of murderous violence against the workers. The labor spy, whether as thug, gunman, *provocateur*, or armed guard has always been the chief instigator of violence in the battles of labor.

The record of detective agency violence and gangsterism is so long it is possible to give here only a few samples from its bloody pages. There were the Pinkerton spies in the Molly Maguires in the Pennsylvania coal fields in the 70's; and the early railroad strikes in which Pinkerton served the Pennsylvania, the Union Pacific, the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy, the New York Central and many other railroads, shooting down the strikers by the dozens. There was Homestead in 1892, when 300 Pinkerton "guards" paid by the Frick steel interests attacked the workers, and were repulsed. There were the thugs of Thiel and other agencies who led the armed offensive against the workers in Colorado coal strikes both in the 90's of the last century and in the battles of 1904 and 1913. It was Harry Orchard, a Thiel and Pinkerton spy, who assassinated the ex-governor of Idaho—the culmination of a series of outrages, including numerous murders and dynamitings plotted by the employers' agents to discredit and destroy the militant Western Federation of Miners (See *Bill Haywood's Book*, p. 209). There were the professional killers employed by the Baldwin Felts Detective Agency, who used machine guns to fight the mine workers organizing in West Virginia in 1912 and 1921.

We remember also the paid killers for the corporations who murdered workers on the Mesaba Iron Range, in Lawrence (textiles), McKees Rocks (steel), Butte (copper), Bayonne and Roosevelt (oil), San Pedro (dock workers), and in Denver (street car workers massacred by Blackjack Jerome's agency). In all

these places—to mention but a few—the hirelings of the companies broke strikes and butchered workers striking for better conditions.

And in more recent days there was James Biscardi, who after a reign of violence in the strike of the Allen-A Hosiery Co., Kenosha, Wisconsin, in 1929, admitted that he was hired by the company to “create terrorism.” And William Pfeiffer, operative of the Bell Detective Agency, the cold-blooded murderer of Carl Mackley, Philadelphia hosiery unionist in 1930. And the 14 operatives of the Manning Industrial Service of Newark, who tried to murder three unarmed Allentown silk workers in the strike of 1931. And the imported killers who, in Harlan County, Kentucky, shot down miners attempting to organize, these gunmen having been purposely released from jail in West Virginia to do the job. And the New York racketeer, Pete De Vito, who received at least \$300,000 for breaking a gasoline truck drivers’ strike in that city in 1929. He hired some 1000 strike-breakers and his gunmen, protected by Tammany politicians, were paid \$25 a day to shoot, stab and blackjack the workers, the Rockefeller-controlled Standard Oil Co. paying the bill. De Vito made an additional \$200,000 that year doing similar jobs for two other firms. One of them, the American Can Co., paid him \$138,000 for breaking a strike.

There is scarcely a strike of any size whether it be a taxi workers’ strike in Pittsburgh, a bakers’ strike in the Bronx, or a cotton workers’ walkout in Fall River or Gastonia to which these agencies do not dispatch their gunmen to spread terror and violence on the orders of the companies. Wherever the workers strike today against wage cuts or the speed-up they will find these gangsters of the capitalist class, ready to slug them, bomb their homes, blackjack them on the picket line and to “take them for a ride.” It is against these mercenaries of the underworld, the potential forces of fascism, as well as against the police, deputy sheriffs and state troopers that the militant workers are beginning to organize their own defense corps.

Some Corporations Employing Spies

Workers must not be misled by the honeyed phrases of the personnel managers and publicity agents even of the most "progressive" corporations. Their policy is to build up "good will" among the public and to boast of the fine "human relations" existing between the company and its workers. The whole array of welfare and personnel devices used in industry is intended to create the "company spirit" and make workers forget low wages and speed-up. And almost invariably along with these welfare tricks goes a spy system.

A list of a few corporations that now hire or have used spies against workers ought to destroy the illusion that only the more "backward" firms in the "sick" industries are using espionage to fight labor organization. It cannot be too emphatically stated that the spy is used by the very corporations that claim, through pension plans, group insurance and employee representation plans (company unions), to have cultivated "right relations" with their employees. Here are a few of the spy users. The list is only fragmentary, but it may be an eye-opener to some workers who read this pamphlet and never knew that their own company used under-cover operatives against them.

The roster of spy-users includes:

Industrial companies: American Bemberg Corp., American Can Co., American Glanzstoff Corp., American Sugar Refining, American Woolen Co., Amoskeag Mfg. Co., Anaconda Copper Mining Co., Anchor Duck Mills, Armour & Co., Astoria Gas Works, Atlanta Woolen Mills, Bell Telephone Co. of Pennsylvania, Bethlehem Steel, Borden Milk Products, Botany Mills, Briggs Mfg. Co., E. G. Budd Mfg. Co., Colorado Fuel and Iron Co., Commander Milling Co., Cudahy Packing Co., Davis Coal and Coke Co., Dodge Bros. and Chrysler Motors, Duluth Milling Co., Dunegan Mills, du Pont de Nemours & Co., Durant Motor Co., Thomas A. Edison, Inc., Federal Cable Co., Ford Motor Co., Forstmann and Huffman Co., Georgia Power Co., General Motors Co., B. F. Goodrich Rubber Co., Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co., Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co., International Harvester Co., International Paper Co., Hooker Electro-Chemical Co., Knoxville Power &

Light Co., Lowe Mfg. Co., McCord Radiator & Mfg. Co., Minnesota Flour Mill Co., National Biscuit Co., New Bedford Cotton Mfrs. Assn., New Orleans Public Service, Inc., New York Edison Co., Old Dominion Co., Omaha Flour Mills Co., Otis Elevator Co., Pacific Gas and Electric Co., Pacific Mills, Pacific Steamship Co., Peerless Woolen Mills, Phelps Dodge Corp., Pierce-Arrow Motor Car Co., Pillsbury Flour Mills Co., Pittsburgh Coal Co., Public Service Corp. of New Jersey, Pullman Co., Saco-Lowell Shops, Sauquoit Silk Mfg. Co., Sheffield Farms Co., Sperry Gyroscope Co., Standard Roller Bearing Co., Standard Oil companies (all of them), Studebaker Co., Swift & Co., Tennessee Electric Power Co., Timken-Detroit Axle Co., United States Steel Corp., Washburn-Crosby Co., West Boylstown Mfg. Co., Western Electric Co., Westinghouse Electric and Mfg. Co., Wheeling Steel Corp., S. S. White Dental Mfg. Co., Willys-Overland Co., Youngstown Sheet & Tube Co.

Steam railroads: Atlantic Coast Line; Boston and Maine; Delaware, Lackawanna and Western; Great Northern; Long Island; New York, New Haven and Hartford; New York Central; Pennsylvania; Pittsburgh and Lake Erie; Santa Fe; Union Pacific.

Electric railroads: Brooklyn-Manhattan Corp.; Interborough Rapid Transit Co.; Kansas City Railways; The Louisville Railway; Minneapolis, Milwaukee Electric Railway and Light Co.; Twin City Rapid Transit Co.

These are only a few—a partial list of those that have come under the eye of the writer in his study of labor espionage.

Government Spying on Labor

Under the capitalist system of society the government is the executive committee of the capitalist class. As such it is always at the service of this class in its struggles with labor. The entire machinery of government is devised to serve the owning and employing class, to protect its property, increase its profits—in short, safeguard and advance its economic interests.

Certain branches of the government are specially devised to help corporations spy on the working class and destroy militant organizations of labor. We find these branches attached to the federal, state and local governments. They are set up to check any “agitation” among the workers and report any tendency of

the workers to revolt against their conditions, to join unions, or to participate in any kind of activity that might jeopardize the position of the exploiting class.

The Federal government operates a number of departments used for spying on labor. Some of its spies are attached to the Bureau of Investigation of the Department of Justice. The practices of this bureau during the "deportations delirium" of 1919 are described in a pamphlet, *Report upon the Illegal Practices of the U. S. Department of Justice*, signed by twelve prominent liberal attorneys. It tells how:

Wholesale arrests both of aliens and citizens have been made without warrant or any process of law; men and women have been jailed and held *incommunicado* without access of friends or counsel; homes have been entered without search warrant and property seized and removed; other property has been wantonly destroyed; workingmen and workingwomen suspected of radical views have been shamefully abused and maltreated. Agents of the Department of Justice have been introduced into radical organizations for the purpose of informing upon their members or inciting them to activities; these agents have even been instructed from Washington to arrange meetings upon certain dates for the express object of facilitating wholesale raids and arrests.

The same practices continued at least until 1925, when the appropriations for this department were curtailed as the result of liberal and radical protest. The chief of the Bureau at that time was William J. Burns, who used his government stationery and powers of office to further the operations of his own private detective business. The revival of this notorious official spy bureau, with heavy appropriations to conduct its anti-labor work, was recommended by the Fish Committee of the House of Representatives in 1931. This Congressional Committee urges the creation of a huge Federal political police to war on the workers. And the report of the Committee is based largely on the testimony of various spies, both paid and voluntary.

In addition to the Department of Justice, we find the Department of Labor through its Bureau of Immigration using spies and

WM. J. BURNS
DIRECTOR



WJB-S.

Department of Justice
Bureau of Investigation
Washington, D. C.

May 23, 1923.

Mr. G. P. Pross,
624 I. N. Van Nuys Bldg.,
Los Angeles, California.

My dear George:

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 10th inst., inclosing the reports on radicalism throughout Arizona, for which please accept my sincere thanks.

I have just received a letter from Mr. Dowell in which he suggests that he have two of our Agents in Arizona call on Frank Carlock, Special Agent of the Old Dominion Copper Company, located at Globe, Arizona, so that they together might be able to suppress some of the activities of the I. W. W. radicals.

He also states that he is going to have you go to Arizona next month in order to familiarize yourself thoroughly and get acquainted with some of the people he would like to have you know.

Let me know what he is doing in this matter and if you agree with him that I should send a man to Globe Arizona.

You ought to wire me a night letter on receipt of this letter.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

W. J. Burns
Director.

This letter shows William J. Burns, head of the Wm. J. Burns Int'l. Detective Agency, promoting his private detective business on government stationery. The letter, written to the Los Angeles manager of his agency, relates to a group of copper companies for which Burns was paid spy fees. It shows clearly the close link between the private spy agencies and the Federal government. Matthew Woll and his National Civic Federation are now supporting the Fish bill in Congress to give \$25,000 or more annually to this same Bureau of Investigation, to spy on radical workers' organizations in the U. S.

other secret agents against workers. Not only are the agents of this immigration bureau used to terrorize foreign-born strikers and deport them to countries such as Poland, Italy, China, or Yugoslavia, where they are certain to be murdered; there is also the so-called conciliation service of the Department of Labor which makes a specialty of trying to break strikes of workers under militant leadership. In New Bedford in 1928, in Gastonia in 1929, in the New York shoe strike of 1929, in the Rhode Island textile strikes of 1931, and in Lawrence in two strikes in 1931, these snooping "conciliators" were busy drawing up black-lists of radical workers, seeking to deport foreign-born workers and aiding the employers, and sometimes the A. F. of L. leaders in their attacks on the striking workers. They attempt to intimidate foreign-born workers so they will be afraid to join any union except the A. F. of L.

One of the most brazen of these conciliation agents, Charles G. Woods, reveals the technique of his department in a book he wrote in 1930. Later he appeared before the notorious Fish Committee to make further wild statements about the activities of Left Wing unions.

Another department of the Federal government which has sleuths and spies in its employ is the Treasury Department with its Secret Service Division which "unearthed" information and "documents" that "revealed" the Hunger March of 1600 working class delegates to Washington in December, 1931. The Department of Agriculture also has agents who have been busy in reporting organizers of radical unions among the exploited farm workers. The Department of the Interior has also used spies against labor. The Military Intelligence Division of the War Department, with its officer spies known as section G men, has its branches in every part of the country and makes voluminous reports to headquarters on the activities of radicals, especially those working in factories to be used for war purposes. Agents of this division, such as Jacob Spolansky, who has also been employed by the National Metal Trades Association in its war

on unions, have been stationed in automobile centers like Detroit and have reported minutely on the organization efforts of the workers. The capitalist government naturally wants to guarantee that these plants making motors, shells, airplanes and other war materials will be strikeproof and free of "agitators" in the coming imperialist war.

The Intelligence Division of the Department of the Navy is equally busy in the plants manufacturing ships and naval supplies. The Fish Committee reported that officers of this Naval Intelligence Division were extremely active in spying on the workers, and that they had submitted to the Committee "a most helpful and detailed report of the communist organizations throughout the United States, with accurate information as to leadership and activities."

Local Officials as Spies

Not only these federal departments but many state, county, and city administrations, especially in the industrial districts, have engaged in the espionage business at the request of corporations. These local politicians are always at the service of the Chambers of Commerce and the employers associations as well as of individual companies for use in apprehending and arresting "agitators."

Many of these local spies testified before the Fish Committee. Their testimony usually supplemented that of private spies and A. F. of L. agents, who are as bitter against militant unions as the employers themselves. During its local hearings in the South, the Committee called before it such spy experts as the captain of the Chattanooga police department, the chief of police of Birmingham, a "special investigator, Governor's office, State of Alabama," a "captain of police, Atlanta," a "sergeant, New Orleans police department," the "chief of detectives, Memphis, Tenn." Like their counterparts in New York, Chicago and the larger cities they testified that they employ informers, and boasted of their undercover work against radical movements, as

well as their brutal assaults on strikers, union meetings, unemployed demonstrations, and other gatherings. Many of them admitted they were working in close cooperation with the private detective agencies. This close relationship is shown likewise in a set of confidential instructions given to Sherman Corporation "representatives" in which they are told that if they ever become involved with police or have to explain their "presence in any town," they are to talk only with the chief of police, "giving him your name and number. When he communicates with us *you will be dismissed at once*, and then you can offer some reasonable explanation to your fellow workers."

During his term as Police Commissioner of New York City in 1930, Grover Whalen, representative of the business-backed Tammany graft machine, in his campaign against the militant workers, bragged of a particularly nasty piece of spy work. He claimed that his police detectives had worked their way into radical circles in order to disrupt the workers' organizations. He declared that, on the basis of their reports, he had prepared what amounted to a blacklist of radically inclined workers employed by New York corporations, particularly banks. He made this city-paid spy service available to the employers, suggesting that they fire all employees who were in any way suspected of unorthodox economic ideas. On March 10 he announced that he had supplied to "twelve heads of industrial corporations" a "list of 300 names" of radical suspects. Whalen also boasted at the time that he was cooperating with the U. S. Department of Labor in its anti-red snooping and deportations drives during shoe, food, and clothing strikes.

The City of New York, as well as other industrial centers, has its "radical squad," "bomb squad," "industrial squad," and other special gangs of spies, plain clothes men and gangsters who are used against the workers in strikes, as, for example, the strike of subway workers in 1926, when these city thugs made savage attacks on the transit workers when they were leaving a meeting in their union hall. The industrial squad of New York City has

been particularly vicious in its attacks on left-wing strikers in more recent years. Members of this squad have received compensation for their work both from the employers and from the A. F. of L. unions particularly in the needle and food trades.

These city stool pigeons will become increasingly active with the growing unemployment, wage cuts, and other employers attacks that will call forth the resistance of the workers and the growth of fighting unions. In Portland, Oregon, in 1930, a city stool pigeon, under orders of the Chief of Police, joined the International Labor Defense and the Communist Party. Later at the hearing before the immigration authorities, he was the "star witness" against workers who had been arrested for their activities and held for deportation.

In Detroit in the summer of 1930 an under-cover agent from the local prosecutor's office gave the main testimony against the heads of a working class camp which was raided by the police. And in the trial, on criminal syndicalism charges, of the nine Imperial Valley agricultural worker organizers in El Centro, California, in the same year, detectives hired by the local district attorney were three of the four witnesses for the state, one of them being the notorious chief of the Los Angeles Red Squad. *These detectives admitted, under cross examination, that they had tried to get the defendants to use violence.*

The head of this Los Angeles Red Squad, Capt. William S. Hynes, spread a lurid and voluminous mass of "evidence" before the Fish Committee. Under his directions raids on labor organizations and brutal attacks on speakers have multiplied in Los Angeles. The *Record*, a capitalist newspaper of that city, in its issue of July 17, 1931, describes a typical assault by the brutes of the Red Squad. A young girl of 18, Doris Clay, was addressing a peaceful meeting of unemployed workers on a vacant lot at Sixth and Towne Ave. "The police burst through the crowd, yanked her from a wooden box and slugged her over the head with blackjacks. Not content with felling her with one blow, the officer struck her savagely again as she lay on the ground." In

a single week in September, 1931, this same police squad stopped two meetings of the Friends of the Soviet Union, beat and choked a man and two women, broke up a meeting of the local Unemployed Council, slugging the participants, and raided a meeting of Young Pioneers.

Professional Patriotic Snoopers

Closely associated with these local, state and federal spies are various unofficial capitalist societies and associations, commonly called "professional patriots." "Volunteer fascists" would probably be a better name for them, as they represent very largely that element of the capitalist class which believes in the most "vigorous handling" of strikes and working class movements, no matter how many so-called civil liberties or constitutional rights are violated in the process. They are the most articulate and outspoken agents of capitalism, militarism and imperialism. Liberals and Socialists smile at them and call them silly and harmless. But actually they represent the core of fascism, Hitlerism and white guardism in the United States. Their social composition, their financial backing, and their activities are analyzed in Norman Hapgood's *Professional Patriots*, which exposes their links with such leaders of the A. F. of L. as Woll, McMahon and Lewis, and with such detectives as William J. Burns.

Some of these volunteer fascist bodies, like the American Vigilant Intelligence Federation, issue regular mimeographed bulletins containing at least some information that could be obtained only by spies in the workers' movement. This Federation uses a series of codes and passwords to inspire its members with the secret significance of the work it is doing to help the government keep tabs on the Reds. It claims close personal relations with the Army and Navy intelligence sections and with chiefs of police and various types of government detectives.

These agencies also work closely with White Russian and monarchist groups in the United States. For example, the National Civic Federation, headed by the super-patriots Ralph

M. Easley and Matthew Woll, A. F. of L. Vice-President, helped Grover Whalen in his efforts in 1930 to put over the forged "documents" attempting to implicate the Amtorg Trading Corp. with radical propaganda. Easley, in fact, peddled the "documents" about Washington a month before Whalen released them to the press in a clumsy effort to advance his political fortunes. The National Civic Federation also, in this connection, worked with the forgery experts, George Djamgaroff and Gregory Bernadsky, who were later to hire out as advisors to the Fish Committee. And it was Djamgaroff who took credit for calling the mass meeting of patriotic societies in Carnegie Hall on January 9, 1931, in his well-financed drive on Communism. It was likewise Djamgaroff who told newspapermen of his espionage system, his vast knowledge of labor activities, his phoney ABC News agency, his reporter's card from Whalen although he was not a reporter, and his cooperation with the professional patriotic groups of all shades. Later the same Djamgaroff was called in by the police of Flint, Mich., and the General Motors Corp. to spy on the workers in the Chevrolet and Fisher Body plants and to advise on methods of destroying militant trade union activities in that city. At the same time he was receiving generous support from an ardent monarchist admirer, Mrs. Henry P. Loomis, the sister-in-law of Secretary of State Stimson.

Many of these movements, like the Keymen of America, the Sentinels of the Republic, and the American Vigilant Intelligence Federation, put a premium on volunteer spying and sign up members on the basis of their willingness to become amateur snoopers upon radicalism, working, of course, in conjunction with the local and federal police agents.

A. F. of L. Officials Spy on the Left Wing

In recent years, as the trade union leaders of the A. F. of L. unions and the railroad brotherhoods have drawn closer to the employers in class collaboration agreements, as they have become more open in their loyalty to capitalism, spies have been used

less frequently against A. F. of L. unions. There is little to report upon in a dying union. Sleuths and informers are only useful where there is some sign of life and struggle.

At the same time, a new breed of stool pigeon has developed. He informs on militants and those who fight for progressive measures within the unions. A member of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, for example, was active in 1931 in spreading Left Wing literature among the brotherhood members. The officials of the brotherhood informed the company. The company in turn discharged the worker. The same practice is common in many unions; workers will tell you they are afraid to open their mouths about conditions, for fear some union spotter will overhear them and they will be fired as a "Bolshevik."

Many A. F. of L. officials, being patrons and officers of fascist patriotic societies, such as the National Civic Federation, consider they are performing a duty for the government when they inform on a radical worker. Holt Ross, President of the Mississippi State Federation of Labor, and "special representative" of the A. F. of L. in Mississippi, told the Fish Committee at its hearing in New Orleans, November 18, 1930:

We have an agreement with the leading employers in that state whereby the representatives of the American Federation of Labor immediately report to the local officers of the State of Mississippi the presence of any communist. The leading employers of labor also make these reports and the minute we get in touch with one of these communists we make arrangements to get him out of the state.

By "communist" he meant any person really trying to organize the exploited workers of his state.

This is a frank and somewhat crude expression, of the general attitude of the Federation leaders, both state and national. As they feel themselves identified completely with the capitalists in the upholding of property rights these misleaders of labor act as police stool pigeons reporting all militants to the government, and assisting in their persecution by the capitalist state. Other A. F. of L. officials who appeared before the Fish Committee

in 1930 showed the same close association with police and prosecuting attorneys.

To cover up this traitorous conduct—and acting on the theory that the best defense is a good offense—the labor officials in recent years have referred increasingly to the radicals as spies. This is common in A. F. of L. papers as well as in *Labor*, organ of the railway brotherhoods. When the National Miners' Union, affiliated with the Trade Union Unity League, is active in organizing the workers in Pennsylvania and exposes the treacheries of John L. Lewis, as it did in 1931, the United Mine Workers (A. F. of L.) officials immediately begin to brand the Left Wing workers as spies. When the National Textile Workers' Union sends rank and file organizers into Danville, Va., or Manchester, N. H., the United Textile Workers (A. F. of L.) raises the cry of "spy" without an iota of evidence to back their charges. In some places, after the A. F. of L. officials actually cooperated with the postal authorities to open the mail of radicals, and with the police chiefs to have them jailed, they then turn on the Reds, calling them the "agents of the employers."

Fighting the Capitalist Spy System

Like other problems of the labor movement the menace of the spy must be faced realistically. It cannot be wholly eliminated. So long as there are classes in society and class struggles the spy system will continue. But the effectiveness of the spy can be neutralized to a certain extent by the proper practical measures on the part of the workers.

The exact technique of handling spies depends very largely upon the exact conditions prevailing in the union or other organization. Unions that have reason to believe a rat is in their midst may have some of their own trusted members follow the suspected one to discover what he does, where and with whom he lives, what are his sources of income, to what office buildings he reports regularly, and, if possible, what sort of correspondence he carries on. Or they may assign the suspect to some difficult task

which he cannot refuse to perform but which, if done, can only benefit the organization. This piling on of heavy duties has been the means of disposing of many a lazy spy in the labor unions.

In checking on the presence of spies one must, of course, guard against any tendency to a "spy complex" of over-suspicion and the feeling that spies are everywhere and cannot be successfully resisted. The tendency to be suspicious on slim evidence should be avoided. It is naturally difficult to catalogue all the characteristics of the spy or list exact rules for apprehending him. (This job must necessarily be left to a reliable confidential committee.)

Perhaps the most typical spy, at least in the radical wing of the movement, is the one who is always nosing for news and purveying loose gossip; one who whispers of others being "unreliable" in order to remove the glance of suspicion from himself; one who makes illogical and ultra-left speeches and proposals; one who tends to disrupt meetings and spread dissension in the ranks; one who acts irresponsibly in money matters; one who without reason gives phoney addresses to his fellow workers.

In trying to identify a supposed spy it will always be well for the investigating committee to ascertain where he spends his time in his spare hours; what his real interest in the movement is as reflected in the level of his talk and the newspapers he reads; whether the suspect loafes around the office a good deal trying to draw workers into conversation; and what is known of him in the place which he says he has come from in recent months or years.

If actually caught with a "report" on his person or going into an office that is obviously an undercover agency, the disposition of a spy varies with the organization and its immediate needs and strategy. Some merely expel him. Some hold a trial and make as big a newspaper exposure as possible. Some photograph the snake, give him a "polish," and pitch him out the door. Some induce him to make full confession, giving the name of the agency he has worked for, and telling all he knows about it and the firms which employ it. As a rule, the more publicly the spy can be exposed the better for the movement, and the more the workers are warned

of the activities of the outside agency involved. His picture published in the labor press always helps.

Organization Will Beat the Spy

But better than any negative measures aimed against individual spies and spy agencies, though they are necessary, too, are the large, constructive, positive measures of broadening and strengthening the ranks of the workers. Rats must be ferreted out and gotten rid of, in any way possible. But more important is to make the fortresses of the workers—the mass organizations—so strong that the nibblings of the rats cannot undermine them.

One of the characteristics of the spy, especially in the radical movement, is his tendency to favor individual action and individualistic stunts as opposed to the slower and less spectacular job of building broad mass organizations. The employers and their government are interested in preventing such organization of workers. Naturally they set their stool pigeons upon them.

The capitalists also know that in a broad organization the spy can do little harm. And by the same token, the workers realize more and more that the surest defense against the spy and the *provocateur* is stronger, wider and better organization. A workers' body firmly rooted in the masses is, therefore, the most effective answer to the spy system. The building of the new revolutionary unions is the best way to fight the spies of the corporations, the Black Hundreds of the fascist bodies, and the undercover operatives of the state.

Both the employed and the unemployed workers are learning this lesson of organization. It was the solid organization of the Unemployed Councils that made possible the successful Hunger March on Washington in December, 1931, and smashed the ring of fascist provocation by the Matthew Wolls and Herbert Hoovers. And in the recent strikes against wage cuts and speed-up the firm organization of the workers has been the measure of their success.

Along with the building of strong unions goes the job of creating a more powerful International Labor Defense as a shield of

the working class against the company espionage and the terror and lynching system closely related to it. The International Labor Defense fights against the labor spy, the frame-up system, yellow dog contracts, anti-labor injunctions, police persecution, deportations, and all the other weapons of the employing class. The I. L. D. fights the recommendations of the Fish Committee and the National Civic Federation for extending the anti-labor activities of the Federal police and spy bureaus.

The capitalists and their government will attempt by every method, open and secret, to destroy the resistance of the workers. They will use every means to prevent any sort of militant organization. Against these capitalists and their forces the combined forces of the workers must be united; and this work must go on in spite of spies, both state and private.

The workers in Russia once had the same problem to face. Spies, some of them, like Evno Azef, the most notorious in all history, wormed their way into the unions and political organizations. They were used by the capitalists of tsarist Russia to prevent the development of revolutionary organization.

But the Russian workers kept on fighting and building their organizations, and in the revolutionary struggles of 1917 they swept away the whole system that creates spies on the working class. A similar road lies ahead for the workers of all capitalist countries. The workers of the United States are now organizing and struggling along that road which leads to the complete destruction of the capitalist spy system and the organization of a socialist society.

Note on Books

Other material on the industrial spy system may be found in:
Spies in Steel, by Frank L. Palmer.
The Labor Spy, by Sidney Howard.
The Labor Fact Book (Chap. VII), by Labor Research Association.
The Americanization of Labor (Chap. V), by Robert W. Dunn.
The Stool Pigeon and the Open Shop Movement, by J. E. Spielman.

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