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# Duncan Brands Hanson as Liar and Imposter: Strikebreaking Mayor Stripped of Patriotic Veneer by Seattle Union Leader.

Unsigned article in the *New York Call*, v. 12, no. 177 (June 26, 1919), pp. 1-2.

James H. Duncan, one of the labor leaders prominent in the Seattle strike with whom Ole Hanson pleaded to keep the light and the water gong, calling him “Jim,” last night stripped the “fighting Mayor of Seattle” of all his camouflage and veneered patriotism at a crowded mass meeting at the People’s House, 7 East 15th Street [New York City].

As pointed out by Alexander Trachtenberg, the chairman of the meeting, the raids on the Rand School evidently acted as good advertisement for the meeting. During the entire talk the doors of the auditorium had to remain open to allow those who could not get in to receive the benefit of Duncan’s recital of the sensational Seattle strike and his severe verbal drubbing of Seattle’s “hero” of the hour.

“Ole Hanson did not stop the strike,” Duncan declared. “The workers themselves called it off. The strike started with the stroke of the clock and ended with the stroke of the clock when the workers decided the strike should be called off.”

He charged Ole Hanson with refusing to speak for or help the first Liberty Loan and the Red Cross drive in May 1917, sending back the subscription books, with the reason that his time was entirely filled up. That Hanson was not only an expert camouflager, but also a “liar, an imposter, and swindler,” were among the other accusations that Duncan made.

## Says Hanson Was Sued.

“During the election Ole Hanson declared that during his 15 years of real estate experience he had

never once been implicated in a lawsuit,” said Duncan. “That is not true. Ole Hanson, during that time, as was proven by signed affidavits by the other party, did have a lawsuit. He was trying to sell some property for a lady, a client of his. He informed her finally that he could sell it for \$1,200. She assented. Then the man to whom the property was sold came to talk over some matters connected with the property with the lady, and it developed that Ole Hanson had received \$1,750 for the property.

“And in the courts Ole Hanson had to form out the \$500. So much for Ole Hanson, the honest real estate dealer.”

## “Hold Me Back!”

The short, red-haired man with the baggy trousers made these assertions from the platform in a calm matter-of-fact tone. His thin prominent features did not work nervously — nor did he stride up and down the platform in the stagey manner attributed to “Bolshevists” — and that’s what Ole Hanson called him. He had certain statements to make that were due to the public. And he was making them.

According to headlines in the Spokane newspapers, which Duncan displayed, Ole Hanson positively won’t run for President. He didn’t know politics, was his excuse. No, he won’t run for President of the United States. Duncan ridiculed this new flighty aspect of Hanson’s, telling of some parts of the Seattle strike when the man who refuses to accept the US Presidential candidacy came down to the labor temple to take

†- James H. Duncan was President of the Central Labor Council of Seattle. He was the 1919 candidate for Mayor of Seattle of the Labor Party of the United States. He later was a fixture on the Seattle School Board, serving in that capacity from 1934-56.

“Jim” Duncan to lunch.

“He called me up,” narrated Duncan, “and said, ‘Jim, Jim! You won’t shut off the light and the water. Come on, say the word.’ Then followed the invitation to lunch.”

### **Retarded Shipbuilding.**

Referring to the shipyard experience of Ole Hanson, when the Mayor worked in the yards for 24 hours, Duncan said:

“Why, during those 24 hours he wasted much time of the shipyard workers who really could work and did work by having himself photographed shaking hands with every Tom, Dick, and Harry that he held back the program of the United States government rather than aided it.”

Ole Hanson sometimes flourishes the mention of his being a union member, that he holds a card in the Boilermakers’ Union. According to Duncan, the boilermakers did give Hanson an honorary membership in a night of fitful enthusiasm, but later revoked his membership.

In the words of Duncan:

**“Ole Hanson is a liar. Ole Hanson is an imposter parading as a patriot. Ole Hanson had nothing to do with the calling off of the strike. If he says so, he is imposing himself upon the good nature of the people. Ole Hanson is the biggest four-flushing politician. He’s about as big a liar as ever came down the pike.”**

Duncan’s intimate narration of the strike drew applause from the listeners at frequent intervals. His remarks on the Bolsheviki were met with continued applause or approving silence, but his mention of Samuel Gompers and the recent AF of L convention at Atlantic City, to which he was a delegate from the Seattle Labor Council, was greeted with subdued hisses and scornful laughter.

### **Most Reactionary.**

“The last convention,” he said, “was the most reactionary ever held. However, i do not believe in secession and dual organizations. It is true that many good opportunities were missed at the last convention, but we will fight within the AF of L to reform the labor movement. The Seattle Labor Council has sent out its program of dividing up the unions of the country into 12 big Internationals. As soon as the rank and file of the labor movement express the wish to form such union, that thing will occur. It is up to the rank and file.”

### **Bolsheviki and Workers.**

Duncan declared that he recognized the Russian Bolsheviki as workers at least.

“America and Russia have something in common,” he said. “They were both born out of revolution. We can look each other in the eye. American workers should wish the Russian workers well and should aid them as well as they know how. If they call us Bolsheviki, it is because we refuse to be carried away by catch phrases.”

“We don’t say that we want Bolshevism in America, but if the workers want Bolshevism in Russia, it’s their right, and their privilege. And we should say: ‘Hands off and give them a chance.’”

Credit must be given to the Bolsheviki for their maternity laws, Duncan pointed out — referring to the fact that women in the factory in Russia were given vacations previous and after childbirth, with pay.

“If that’s Bolshevism,” remarked Duncan, “I’m for that much at least.”

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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