
Cop Pictures Dodge at End of Rope, the Victim of Mob:

**Associate Protests Innocence of WIU Leader Who Comes
to Trial on Monday on Charge of Evading the Draft
[events of June 22-28, 1918]**

by Philip S. Kerr

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The average high school graduate chock full of history as taught by conventional historians in reading the following narrative, were the names and places omitted, would immediately suspect that the incident occurred in Old Russia during the reign of the Tsar.

Availing themselves of the privilege accorded numerous other organizations, the members of the Workers' International Industrial Union held a meeting at the corner of Mohawk and Main Streets on June 22nd [1918]. The object of the meeting was to acquaint the worker with the necessity of organizing in accordance with changed industrial conditions.

William Dodge, the speaker, pointed out that as long as the capitalist system continued there would be an endless struggle between the working class and the employing class. He explained the manner in which the capitalist class came into power and the methods by which they retained their power. Only by cooperating upon the political and industrial field could the workers hope to cope with the ever-growing power of capitalists. He elaborated upon the necessity of developing a higher intelligence than the ruling class and the fallacy of attempting to capture and hold the industries by methods of violence. The weakness of the craft union was explained and the advan-

tage of the industrial union made manifest. During this talk Dodge avoided all reference to the war or the administration.

A collection for the benefit of the union was made, the audience responding liberally. During the questionnaire that followed, a mean fellow, later recognized as a well-known habitue of Buffalo's tenderloin, raised a disturbance by forming a little group of ruffians about him and heckling the speaker. Dodge outwitted him by his cutting retorts and scathing sarcasms, much to the elation of the audience. In a rage the skunk went up the street and, as was afterwards learned, told a couple of sailor boys whom he met that a soapboxer was down the street criticizing the government. He advised them to beat the speaker up. They hastened to the scene of action, listened a short time, and instead of disagreeing with the speaker, sided with him as they later stated.

Not satisfied, the heckler continued to disturb, much to the annoyance of the audience, many of whom remonstrated with him. He had his part to play and played it well. He called Dodge "pro-German." This Dodge denied. Pro-Germanism was a new phrase, one they did not have a few years ago and was generally used as a term of derision by someone who did not agree with someone else. Interrupted again by the same spy and

called pro-German again, Dodge denied it, stating that he was pro-working class.

He returned again to his theme and was going along swimmingly when an officer burst through the crowd, stopped in front of the speaker for a minute, and then strode forward, yanked him off the stand saying, "Come, get out of here with that pro-German stuff," the same time showing him so roughly against Axel Petersen that Petersen, himself a powerful man, was nearly knocked down. He protested at the unnecessary brutality of the officer.

At this juncture, there was a loud protest on the part of the crowd against the unlawful action of the police. Meanwhile this minion of the law was yanking Dodge about, undecided as to what to do. Finally he shouted out, "I didn't hear what he said but I will arrest him and those who did, come to the station house and make a statement against him." He dragged Dodge along, holding his arm in such a viselike grip, as I later learned, that his arm was crippled for several hours.

A policeman on guard at the station house door kept the crowd back, permitting only those who signified their intention of making a statement against Dodge to enter. Axel Petersen, Max Lichtenstein, and myself were seized when we denied that Dodge had made seditious remarks. The two former were held 4 hours and released. I was held, taken to a back room with Dodge, and held there from 10:15 pm until 12:01 am before a charge was placed against us.

While in this room we were questioned by the captain, detectives, and uniformed police. Every effort was made to browbeat and intimidate us. We were vilified, threatened, cursed, and abused. The language used by these guardians of the morals of the people would be the envy of a Bowery bruiser. One offered me his gun to "blow my yellow brains out" with. I told him to do it as I was sick of the struggle for existence anyhow. Upon this the captain told me I could jump into Lake Erie, etc. Another fellow threatened to split

my skull in two because I refused to answer his questions.

A big, burly tough in plain clothes who began to bully Dodge became infuriated and with clenched fist and a demoniacal expression threatened to knock him through the window when Dodge asked him to show his shield. They visualized us as dangling at the end of ropes, facing a firing squad, and being torn to pieces, tarred and feathered by an infuriated mob led by the police. The captain stated that we should be taken to the outskirts of the city, flogged, and then tarred and feathered because we were IWWs.

The officer who arrested us told the captain that he saved us from being mobbed. Dodge denied this, telling them the only mob that concerned him were the police, whose minds were warped by the poison venom propagated by the capitalist press.

Shortly after 12 o'clock a charge of draft evasion was placed against us and we soon heard the iron doors clang behind us. Dodge was placed in one corridor and I in another but we could communicate by shouting. We whiled away the long hours by singing and watching the antics of the hordes of rats that played about the open sewer at the end of each cell. We received 2 meals a day, small ones at that, which gives the lie to the capitalist press that stated that prisoners are well fed at No. 3. Extras cost 300% more than outside, showing someone is profiteering at the expense of helpless prisoners who have not yet been given a hearing. A package of edibles left for us by Mrs. William Brooks, of 171 Mariner Street, was accepted, but we did not receive it.

Monday, June 24th [1918], we were taken to the Department of Justice. Upon investigation it was found Dodge was OK with the draft board. I had registered in Boston, so a telegram was sent there. When it was found that Dodge could not be held as a draft evader, they held him because a police spy and his agents declared he had made seditious remarks. He was taken to the Erie

County Penitentiary. Lack of space prohibits an elaboration of the horrible conditions there. I was sent to the Municipal Lodging House. Conditions were a little better there.

Wednesday, June 26th [1918], I was taken to the draft board. There I was informed a telegram was on hand ordering me to Camp Dix that night. As I could not pass the physical test, my case was sent to General Crowder for review and I was released. The next day I got busy on Dodge's case. Together with other comrades we tried unsuccessfully all day to get in touch with our lawyer, Irving M. Weiss. That evening I met with him. He informed me the hearing would be the following morning [June 28, 1918]. This amazed me. In such a short time it would be next to impossible to secure enough competent witnesses.

The spy and 7 or 8 fellows of doubtful character sworn in for the emergence were the witnesses against Dodge. Think of the despicable

character of these witnesses who are so ready to sacrifice the liberty of an innocent man on perjured testimony. Every word they uttered was a base lie.

Dodge is entirely innocent of the charge against him, but there are forces at work that seek to weed out every active member of the labor movement. It is a sign that the class struggle is becoming more intensified. Every voice that speaks in the interest of the oppressed worker must be hushed. The "Iron Heel" of [Jack] London's fancy, yesterday a dream, is today a reality.

Philip S. Kerr,

Chairman, Dodge Defense.

(Those who were at the street meeting when Dodge was arrested are asked to communicate with Mr. Kerr at 131 Mariner Street.)†

† - Socialist Labor Party and Workers' International Industrial Union member William J. Dodge was sentenced to 6 years in the penitentiary for his purported utterances, which were held to have been made "for the purpose of injuring the United States." Dodge served time in the Maryland State Penitentiary from Sept. 18, 1918 to Nov. 22, 1920, when his sentence was finally commuted.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.

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