

incapable of lifting anything heavier than an empty hat-box—and yet they represented longshoremen. So many of them had polished, manicured fingernails that are hardly the result of labor on the docks. But they elected—in the name of their locals—Joseph P. Ryan president for another four years. Only the West Coast opposed Ryan—five delegates headed by Bridges cast their 8,700 votes against the machine. As the chairman of the convention put it, “We’ll let ’em vote against Mr. Ryan. We’ll see what type of man it is who will vote that way.” Only a certain type—the rank and file delegates and one lone voice from Baltimore. A different type from Ryan’s men; a different type from President Green who attended the convention looking like a prosperous Rotarian worried only by the problem of whether he should take bicarbonate of soda now or later to settle his sour stomach; different too from McGrady who gave the delegates a straight-from-the-shoulder talk aimed at “disrupters” like Bridges. The whole chorus of yes-men attacked the Red. He’s dangerous. He represented the rank and file, he wanted the union to conduct struggles for the workers, for the thousands of members of the A. F. of L. in this country whose economic inter-

ests are in direct conflict with those of their employers. Bridges is a partisan. He is on the side of the great “toiling millions” that the A. F. of L. constitution promises to protect. He is opposed in every possible way to Joseph P. Ryan, International president, politician, toady, often called gangster, who uses his position at the head of a powerful union to exploit his membership, to cooperate with their oppressors, to thwart any move designed to benefit the rank and file.

At the convention, Bridges ran into the machine. He expected what he got—continual attacks; he expected the tabling of his resolutions for a referendum vote on the election of union officials, and for a national agreement and hiring halls in all locals, for the six-hour day and the five-day week. The convention agreed with the latter “in principle” but saw to it that nothing was done to procure their benefits. So it was with all the proposals, with the anti-fascist measure, the strike to free Tom Mooney, the elimination of speed-up.

The Ryan machine functioned equally smoothly in a reverse direction when it became known that Bridges and the Pacific Coast delegations had been instructed to seek a reduction of union officials’ salaries. Fine

colored shirts with tailor-made ties to harmonize show to good advantage only when surrounded by the proper accessories; but all these things come high. So Ryan’s pay was raised by Ryan’s machine from \$8,000 to \$15,000 a year. (Even with the benefits won through last year’s strike, Pacific Coast longshoremen get \$2,000 a year or less for a full year’s work on the docks.) The salary of the first vice-president was boosted from \$3,900 to \$5,200; that of the secretary-treasurer from \$5,000 to \$6,000—with only Bridges and the Western delegation opposing.

Joseph P. Ryan is still in the saddle on the East Coast. Harry Bridges is the leader on the West Coast. Harry Bridges represents the future, the leader who serves the interest of the majority and whose final victory will bring the end of the estimable Mr. Ryan, his henchmen, his supporters and the hundreds of other Joe Ryans who now dominate the American labor movement. Perhaps that is why the Joe Ryans hate the sight of Harry Bridges; perhaps that is why they will spare no effort to oust him, to frame him, to get rid of him some way, any way. But Harry Bridges is not an isolated figure; behind him is the working class which alone is able to produce such men as Harry Bridges.

Ten Years of the I. L. D.

SASHA SMALL

JOE HILL, rebel, poet and organizer for the Industrial Workers of the World organized the miners and the railroad men and the itinerant agricultural workers. Joe Hill wrote fighting songs for them. Joe Hill was a menace to the bosses. When every other means of silencing him failed, they framed him for the murder of a grocer, J. S. Morrison, in Salt Lake City, Utah. Morrison was killed by two masked robbers on January 10, 1914. The enemies of Joe Hill had found their way out at last and Joe Hill was framed, tried, sentenced and executed on a trumped-up murder charge.

Joe Hill went on trial for his life in June, 1914, with practically no defense. The bourgeois press did not even report the trial. Neither did the liberal or socialist press—except that the International Socialist Review carried a few lines, buried in the back pages, asking for funds.

The trial was a brutal farce. There was absolutely no evidence against Joe Hill. The jury was packed and the verdict was guilty. On the morning of November 19, 1915, Joe Hill was led into the prison yard and shot down by a firing squad.

His last words were, “Gentlemen, I die with a clear conscience. I never did anything wrong in my life. I die fighting—not like a coward! Goodbye. Fire! Let ’er go.”

Because there was no defense organization,

no machinery ready to leap to the protection of a worker framed because he was a fighter, no apparatus to rouse the whole country and the whole world to his support, Joe Hill was murdered.

Looking back over the history of the American labor movement—filled with glorious struggles, with traditions of the greatest militancy and determination—we find many stories like that of Joe Hill.

Since the earliest beginnings of the American labor movement, hundreds of “unknown soldiers” of the class war, victims of ruling-class justice, have been railroaded to long prison terms for their loyalty to the working class. Hundreds have been murdered. Thousands of brave fighters in the battle for the right to live have faced the courts of the enemy practically defenseless. Those imprisoned left behind them wives and children facing hunger and destitution until the ruling class had taken its full measure of ruthless revenge against its victims.

History demanded a nation-wide defense organization, permanent, with a clear-cut policy and program, with affiliation all over the world, to aid these victims, and history dictated the date on which the International Labor Defense was born in 1925.

But the I.L.D. was not the first defense organization established by American labor. The need for working-class defense had long

been felt. Workers had made many attempts to shield their ranks against the savagery of the courts meting out ruling-class justice. But these attempts were scattered and isolated and in too many cases ineffective. Created in the heat of battle, these defense committees for the most part died as soon as their immediate work was done.

In building their unions American workers had realized the principle “United we stand, divided we fall”—but it was long before they were able to see the necessity of applying it to defense work.

In 1877 when the first great strike wave swept across the United States thousands of arrests followed in its wake. Dozens of defense committees were formed through the trade unions and other labor groups to collect funds for legal defense. Most of these groups were not connected. None of these groups retained any degree of permanence and none of them developed any clear defense program or policy. Less than ten years later, in 1886, the first attempt at a national defense movement came into being.

Six leaders of Chicago’s working class were framed on a charge of throwing a bomb into one of their own meetings. The movement for the eight-hour day was gaining momentum on the crest of a strike wave started on May 1, 1866. The strike at the McCormick Reaper Plant continued. On May 3, the police

crashed down upon workers assembled before the plant. Five were killed. August Spies, who had spoken at the meeting, rushed to the office of his newspaper, *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, to issue a leaflet calling for a protest meeting on May 4 at the Haymarket. Into the midst of this peaceful protest meeting someone, no one ever learned who it was, threw a bomb. After a trial that lasted sixty-one days, five leaders of Chicago's working class were condemned to death.

The defense movement around the Haymarket case spread all over the country. Great protest meetings were held, resolutions and petitions flooded Chicago officials and the governor of the state. Long tables were set out on the streets of Chicago before which hundreds of people filed to sign protest petitions. But in vain. November 11, 1887 was the date upon which these five heroes were executed—four on the gallows and one in his cell. The police said it was a "suicide." The whole defense movement fell apart after the legal murder. No provisions for the future—no permanent machinery left standing ready to defend the next victims of the class war in the years to come.

Again in 1903 broad defense movements were developed in behalf of the leaders of the Western Federation of Miners, C. H. Moyer, Bill Haywood and George Pettibone and in 1912 in defense of Ettor, Giovanitti and Caruso, leaders of the great Lawrence textile strike charged with a murder that was committed by a police agent of the American Woolen Co. Thousands of dollars were collected and spent in exposing the frame-ups and rousing opposition to the charges. Complete victory in both these cases came for the workers. But neither of these bodies made any attempt to establish a permanent defense apparatus.

Immediately after the World War, the forerunner of the present day Red Scare was dragged across the country. A dragnet was set for all "alien trouble makers" and the deportation delirium reached its frenzied height in 1919. The organized labor movement attempted to establish some lasting defense machinery.

The National Defense Committee was founded in 1920, with Edgar Owens as national secretary. It handled most of the arrests and frame-ups that attended Attorney General Palmer's "Red Raids." There was also the Workers Defense Union, founded in 1918, headed by Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, active in the Centralia case, in the Winnipeg General Strike and in the early years of the Sacco-Vanzetti case. Finally, there were the Labor Defense Councils, started in 1922 around the Bridgman, Michigan, case, in which thirty-two leaders of the Communist Party were arrested and charged with criminal syndicalism. This organization was still in existence in 1925 and sent twenty-three representatives to the conference which founded the I.L.D. It voted to merge with the new organization as a body.

On June 28, 1925, delegates from trade unions, fraternal organizations, political parties

and existing defense committees gathered together in Chicago to bring into being the International Labor Defense. The delegates reviewed the work of the past, the attempts that had been made to organize to shield the ranks of the labor movement against the barrage of oppressive measures from the armory of American capitalism. All that was good in the lessons that the pioneers of labor defense had left as a heritage to the working class was embodied in the program of the I.L.D. It set out at once to make good its promise and its pledge to defend all persecuted for their activity in the labor movement, to defend the struggles of the national minorities and to support the families of the victims of ruling class terror regardless of their color, creed, nationality or political belief. It strained every effort and every resource to organize the broadest possible mass defense and mass protest, in the courts themselves, on the streets, in every organization and to supplement and spur this with the best available legal defense.

The ruling class propaganda about "fairness and justice to all before the law" had taken a strong hold on the minds of the American people. Politics were supposed to be left outside the door of the courthouse like rubbers on a rainy day. It was difficult to smash through the dense fog of illusions about the courts. It is still difficult today. But it is a necessary part of the job of organizing working class defense and now, as in the early days, the I.L.D. continues to expose the courts as repressive instruments in the hands of the capitalist state.

Big Bill Haywood, leader, fighter and many times a political prisoner hailed the formation of the I.L.D.

Voices from prison—the graves of living men—will come to thank you for your deeds [he wrote in 1926]. Tom Mooney, Warren Billings, Jim McNamara, Matt Schmidt, Sacco and Vanzetti, will realize that in the I.L.D. another force has been launched in their support. . . . Many of the cases that confront you could have been averted by the organized strength that you will develop. . . . Money or lawyers are not the only requirements of legal or real defense. . . . One who has been placed in jeopardy as I have been most keenly feels the power of organization. It is to an expression of solidarity on the part of the workers that I owe my life . . .

Bill Haywood was right. Thousands of American workers, farmers, students, are free today because of the work of the I.L.D. Hundreds of them faced long jail sentences, many even death. Most of these cases never saw the limelight of national publicity. But they were fought with the weapons of mobilization, agitation and fearless exposure of class forces in the courts. Thousands were won in the obscurity of little towns and dingy courtrooms, forging new weapons in the hands of the toiling masses in defense of their own. Scores of cases rang around the world—Passaic, Sacco-Vanzetti, Gastonia, Herndon, Scottsboro—names that call up scenes of battles fought from Berlin to Shanghai, from Paris to New York.

As important as these defense battles them-

selves is the program and policy of workers' defense which they have so clearly forged. Mass protest and mass defense have proven their might time and again—positively, by their effective presence and results in the repeated victories in the Scottsboro case during the last four years and negatively by their absence in the Sacco-Vanzetti case.

By June, 1925, Sacco and Vanzetti had been in jail for almost five years. The legal battle against their frame-up had traveled from the lowest to the highest courts of Massachusetts. Mountains of evidence had been collected to show that Sacco and Vanzetti, "the poor fish peddler and the lowly shoemaker" had been far away from the scenes of the mercenary crimes for which they were tried and convicted. Thousands had learned to revere and love the quiet courage of these two men who would not surrender their principles even though these were being openly used against them to send them to their deaths in the electric chair.

The Sacco-Vanzetti case became a battle between the American bourgeoisie riding on top of the wave of post-war prosperity and the world wide protest of the working class and its sympathizers.

By the time the I.L.D. entered the case, the various Sacco-Vanzetti defense committees had squandered five years in useless and confusing capitulation to illusions in bourgeois justice. "Don't annoy the courts, don't antagonize the governor," had become the slogans of the defense rather than "storm the heavens to free Sacco and Vanzetti."

The I.L.D. mobilized nation-wide protest meetings. Hundreds of thousands of leaflet gathered hundreds of thousands of people into the streets and meeting halls of the land to demand freedom for their fellow workers Native and foreign-born, side by side, collected funds, passed resolutions, finally went on strike in many sections of the country for the lives of Sacco and Vanzetti—the "anarchist bastards" whom Massachusetts capitalism was determined to kill.

But the answer to Vanzetti's call for "million men" came too late. And an outraged working class all over the world raised its voice in anguished protest on August 22, 1927, when two heroic lives were burned out in Massachusetts. Their names remain as symbols of the heroes which the working class can produce.

Remembering the words of the Haymarket martyrs, spoken on the scaffold in Chicago in 1887, "There will come a time when our silence will be more powerful than the voice you are strangling today," the I.L.D. has pledged itself to keep the voices of the victims of ruling class justice loud and ringing—from the tomb, from prison, from chain gangs.

On its tenth anniversary the I.L.D. renews its solemn pledge to the martyrs of the past to the victims of today, to the heroes of tomorrow—"We will not forget. We will not permit you to be forgotten. We will battle on until you are free."



William Gropper

A Report on Harlan County

To the Governor of Kentucky

Violence against miners has been raging in Harlan County, Kentucky, for the past five years. In 1932 Harry Sims, nineteen-year-old union organizer, was murdered in cold blood by sheriff's deputies. A group of writers who attempted to investigate the killing was forced out of the state and Waldo Frank and Allan Taub were beaten up for insisting on their constitutional rights. Unions had been protesting intimidation and suppression for a long time and these incidents served to call the attention of the country to what was happening.

Theodore Dreiser headed another investigating committee. He was indicted for criminal syndicalism and later published the committee's findings in Harlan Miners Speak. A student delegation that attempted to investi-

gate was not permitted to stay in Harlan. Members were taken back to Tennessee and leaders were beaten up.

Writers and students alike agreed that all civil liberties had been suspended in Harlan county and that a virtual dictatorship had been established by coal operators. They submitted evidence to show that newspaper publishers, law-enforcement officers and ministers were under the domination of operators and that union activities had been placed under a ban.

The volume of complaints grew until Governor Laffoon finally appointed an investigating committee last February. The committee was headed by an adjutant general. The report which is printed here bears out the charges made four years ago.—THE EDITORS.

Hon. Ruby Laffoon,
Governor of Kentucky,
Frankfort, Kentucky.

Dear Governor Laffoon:

Your Commission, appointed February 12, 1935, to investigate a state of unrest long existing in the southeastern Kentucky bituminous coal fields, desire to submit the following report:

The Commission met at Frankfort, Kentucky, and organized on February 15, 1935, the following members being present:

Adj. Gen. Henry H. Denhardt, Chairman

Rev. Adelphus Gilliam

Hon. Oren Coin

Hon. Hugh B. Gregory.

The Commission conducted hearings at Frankfort on March 7, 8, 9 and 11. On these dates, the United Mine Workers of America presented their testimony in chief. On March 25, 26, 27 and 28, the Coal Operators of Harlan County took their evidence. Further evidence offered by both sides was heard May 6. On May 23, 24 and 25, the Commission visited the coal mines and camps of Letcher, Harlan and Bell Counties. Certain evidence was offered by both sides during this visit to these Counties. The Commission also interviewed a number of miners, mining operators, certain officials and many other citizens. In all, several thousand pages of evidence was taken and the investigation was full and thorough.

The Honorable A. Floyd Byrd of Lexington, Kentucky, represented the United Mine Workers of America during the various hearings, while the Honorable J. B. Snyder, Honorable William Sampson, Honorable B. B. Snyder and Honorable George C. Ward, all of Harlan County, represented the coal operators. . . .

The representatives of both sides to the controversy are honorable men of the highest type and their treatment of the Commission was all that could be expected. On our visit to the coal fields, we could not have received more courteous, more kindly or finer treatment anywhere than was given us by the leaders of both sides. It is hard for the members of your Commission to understand why, with such splendid citizens heading and controlling their organizations, that conditions in Harlan County can not be amicably settled to the satisfaction of both sides concerned. However, your Commission regrets to have to report that conditions of the most serious nature exist in Harlan County which, if permitted to go on, will continue to reflect on the good name not only of Harlan County, but of Kentucky as well.

It is almost unbelievable that anywhere in a free and democratic nation such as ours, conditions can be found as bad as they are in Harlan County. There exists a virtual reign of terror, financed in general by a group of coal mine operators in collusion with certain public officials; the victims of this reign of terror are the coal miners and their families.

We found conditions in Bell and Letcher Counties entirely the reverse of those in Harlan. We believe that these better conditions existing in the first two counties are due to a better understanding between employers and employee. In these counties, freedom of speech and the right to peaceably assemble are recognized. There is no oppression from above; there is helpful cooperation and understanding between the operators and the miners. However, it is true that these outrageous conditions complained of in Harlan County do not exist in all the mines in that county. There are some operators in Harlan County who do not

condone the practices indulged in by the Harlan County Coal Operators' Association. These operators who do not indorse the methods of the Harlan County Coal Operators' Association are fair and just to their men and treat them as human beings, yet while affording fair and decent treatment to their employees, these operators are operating their mines apparently as successfully as are other operators where ruthless oppression is the rule. The Commission wishes to especially express its commendation of these operators who have the courage to operate their mines in a righteous manner when surrounded by so many operations where unjust and un-American methods are practiced.

In Harlan County, we found a monster-like reign of oppression, whose tentacles reached into the very foundation of the social structure and even into the Church of God. Ministers of the Gospel of the very highest standing complained to us of these conditions. Reprisals on the part of bankers, coal operators and others of the wealthier class were practiced against churches whose ministers had the courage to criticize from the pulpit, the intolerable state of conditions that they of their knowledge know to exist in Harlan County. The miners themselves and their families generally, hesitated to discuss their affairs with the Commission. Free speech and the right of peaceable assemblage is scarcely tolerated. Those who attend meetings or voice any sentiment favorable to organized labor are promptly discharged and evicted from their homes. Many are beaten and mistreated in most unjust and un-American methods by some operators using certain "so-called peace officers" to carry out their desires.

There is no doubt that Theodore Middleton, Sheriff of Harlan County, is in league with the operators and is using many of his deputies to carry out his purposes. This sheriff was elected by a big majority given him largely by the laboring people. It is not denied that the operators had a candidate opposing him. Several days prior to his election, the sheriff and others captured a ballot box which had already been stuffed. This box contained some six hundred and fifty ballots already marked against him and upon his plea that National Guard troops be furnished to help "un-stuff" many other of the stuffed ballot boxes in the county, which was done, he was elected by the people in one of the few fair elections ever held in that country. He had been Chief of Police of Harlan and while so acting as chief of police, he always permitted public speakings on the union's questions. He even roped off the streets for this purpose. He promised, if elected, that