

Imitation of an Anti-Crime Drive

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AT THE head of one of the many pages of carefully mimeographed material recording all the mountains and mountains of talk about crime and criminals that filled the halls of the State Capitol chambers during Governor Lehman's conference on "Crime, the Criminal and Society," there is a typographical error which characterizes the whole business very neatly. The unfortunate sentence refers to a discussion which was "in conformity with the purposes of the conference as stated by the Governor at the opening session last night, the *imitation* of an active campaign against crime."

Four whole days were consumed in this active imitation. Everybody who is anybody in the "crime" world was there. Even the criminals were there and enlarged photos proudly displayed what was left of their corpses after the G-men got through with them.

Wardens, chief guards, district attorneys, commissioners of correction, judges and ex-judges, professors and social workers, lobbyists and just plain politicians sat around in the comfortable furniture provided for New York state legislators, smoked innumerable, expensive cigars, burnt holes in the elegant rugs in putting them out and discoursed upon crime and criminals. The actual organization of the conference consisted of four general assemblies held in the evening and five Round Table conferences, conducted during the day. The topics discussed at the round tables fell under the following headings: Crime Prevention, Detection and Apprehension, Prosecution and the Courts, Institutional Care and Probation, Parole and Rehabilitation. Long high-sounding words, that were bandied around and repeated until they re-echoed through the corridors. Fancy ways of describing miserable reformatories and cruel children's courts, hounding and third-degree methods, railroading and frame-up, long sentences in hellish jails, corruption-ridden follow-up work and the non-existent "reform." I spent most of the time at the Round Table on "Institutional Care." The gentlemen and ladies participating in this discussion were people who at present administer this "institutional care"—wardens, matrons, guards, a sprinkling of psychiatrists and doctors, a few professors.

There is no need to repeat most of the high-flown hypocrisy that wasted four valuable days. The wardens hastened to reassure each other and the prison commissioners and the press that all this talk about "coddling" men in their jails was ridiculous. Even liberal Warden Lawes rose to the occasion, glowing at all about him and smilingly admitted that "punishment" was not lacking at Sing Sing, that every inmate was made to feel that the state was punishing him and under no circum-

stances was he ever told that society had been bad to him. He is made to feel the full responsibility of his crime. After that he expanded on the merits of football for prisoners and laughingly admitted that he never had to put armed guards on his walls to keep men out.

Educational projects, classification, psychiatric reports are the fashion of the day and all the best prisons in New York state tolerate them—but there was well-rounded applause at Tuesday evening's general session when Nathan L. Miller, ex-governor of New York, boomed forth that punishment (imprisonment at hard labor) must continue to be the chief deterrent and warning to others, that while he did not suggest third-degree methods, the police ought not to be hampered in their dealing with the enemies of society and "in the matter of judgment, undue severity undoubtedly reacts, but I think that it is better to err on the side of severity if at all."

With the exception of Commissioner Austin MacCormick of New York who pleaded for understanding of the fundamental principle that neither crime nor criminal can exist without a social order to define them, that the criminal is a product of social forces—all the other worthy participants were most eager to whitewash themselves in the eyes of those who criticized them as incompetent, soft-hearted.

The real criminals have little to fear from the governor's conference. The establishment of state G-men, compulsory fingerprinting of all citizens, compulsory police training of citizens, deportation of foreign born, stricter parole—will all be used most effectively against militant workers, friends and the "small criminals" who break into grocery stores to get bread for their kids.

Two startling moments of the conference which will not see the light of day except on these pages were of really far-reaching significance. The Honorable Sanford Bates, Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons for the United States Department of Justice, gave a report on the International Prison Congress recently completed in Berlin. He reported that there was a congress, that it was held in Berlin, that there were 1,000 delegates, of whom 600 were Nazis, that Goebbels and other Nazi leaders addressed the congress, that resolutions were passed—and then he sat down. Even the jailers were shocked. For a moment there was complete silence. Everyone had read the papers on what transpired at that congress, how the Nazis had harangued the delegates on the virtue of replacing all concepts of law, imprisonment, justice with the tenets of the National Socialist Party. The congress opened right after the intensified wave of pogroms against the Jewish people, the Catholics, the Protestants. The international delegates, infuriated at the Nazi farce, had insisted on

seeing Ernst Thaelmann and finally were permitted to watch him taking his daily walk. Even the fattest of the wardens had heard about German concentration camps, the People's Courts, the summary executions, the tortures in the dungeons of the Gestapo. But Mr. Bates had nothing to say on all this.

Some one ventured a question—were the German jails any better under the Nazi regime? While he was speaking Bates openly waved him to silence. Another American delegate, James V. Bennett, Bates' assistant, rose and said, "I saw——" Bates called him to the front of the room, whispered in his ear and he proceeded to hem and haw about the cleanliness of Germany's jails, the good food the prisoners were getting, the fine solitary confinement arrangements. Then he sat down.

Finally an elderly lady from the Children's Court got up and indignantly asked what about concentration camps and the treatment of the political prisoners. Bates looked at Bennett. Bennett looked at Bates and smirked: "We didn't see any."

Bates then rose and explained that he would give no opinion because of what newspaper headlines try to do with "chance statements," but he would say that there was a lot "we" could learn from Germany's methods and jails.

Immediately after this thunderbolt Dr. Walter N. Thayer, Junior Commissioner of Correction of the State of New York, got up and said, "Speaking of political prisoners—there is an organization in this country which keeps sending me and most of you a lot of letters about political prisoners who are supposed to be in our jails." With a beatific smile he announced that of course there were no political prisoners in this country and with a properly dramatic frown he went on to say that these letters with their "*dee-mands*" for rights for these prisoners—literature, letters, visits, discussion groups—were ridiculous. What is more, this organization presumed to tell "us how to run our prisons. Ladies and gentlemen, these ridiculous letters can be ignored. These organizations that are promoting this sort of thing can rest assured that we haven't and won't alter our prison management to meet any these *dee-mands*."

He didn't mention the name of the organization, but the exchanged glances among several of the wardens showed clearly they all recognized the International Labor Defense and it may interest these gentlemen to know that this same organization is holding a conference on October 15 to plan a vigorous campaign, for the recognition of the status of almost one hundred long-term political prisoners in this country. A vital part of this campaign will be demands for special privileges for those who gave their freedom in loyalty to the working class.



Lynd Ward in *One of Us: The Story of John Reed*

America 1918

JOHN REED

This unpublished poem by John Reed was apparently begun in Russia in January, 1918. Reed worked on it during February and March, when he was detained in Christiania on the orders of the United States government. After his return to this country, he was too much occupied with lecturing on the Russian revolution, writing Ten Days That Shook the World and organizing the Left wing of the Socialist Party and subsequently the Communist Labor Party, to revise the poem. The two stanzas in italics and the preceding stanza appeared in Poetry

for April, 1919, under the title "Proud New York." Otherwise the poem remained unpublished. The manuscript was in the large collection of letters and documents turned over to the Harvard John Reed Memorial Committee by Louise Bryant and now being used by Granville Hicks in the biography of Reed which he is preparing. The significance of the poem in its relation to John Reed's work as poet and as a revolutionary is discussed in an editorial in this issue.

THE EDITORS.

Across the sea my country, my America,
Girt with steel, hard-glittering with power,
As a champion, with great voice trumpeting
High words, "For Liberty . . . Democracy . . ."

Deep within me something stirs, answers—
(My country, my America!)
As if alone in the high and empty night
She called me—my lost one, my first lover
I love no more, love no more, love no more . . .
The cloudy shadow of old tenderness,
Illusions of beautiful madness—many deaths
And easy immortality . . .

I

By my free boyhood in the wide West
The powerful sweet river, fish-wheels, log-rafts,
Ships from behind the sunset, Lascar-manned,
Chinatown, throbbing with mysterious gongs,
The blue thunderous Pacific, blaring sunsets,
Black smoking forests on surf-beaten headlands,
Lost beaches, camp-fires, wail of hunting cougars . . .
By the rolling range, and the flat sun-smitten desert,
Night with coyotes yapping, domed with burst of stars,
The grey herd moving eastward, towering dust,
Ropes whistling in slow coils, hats flapping, yells . . .
By miles of yellow wheat ripping in the Chinook,
Orchards forever endless, deep in blooming,
Green-golden orange-groves and snow-peaks looming
over . . .

By raw audacious cities sprung from nothing,
Brawling and bragging in their careless youth . . .
I know thee, America!

Fishermen putting out from Astoria in the foggy dawn
their double-bowed boats,
Lean cow-punchers jogging south from Burns, with
faces burned leathery and silent,
Stringy old prospectors trudging behind reluctant pack-
horses, across the Nevada alkali,
Hunters coming out of the brush at night-fall on the
brink of the Lewis and Clark canyon,
Grunting as they slide off their fifty-pound packs and
look around for a place to make camp,
Forest rangers standing on a bald peak and sweeping
the wilderness for smoke,
Big-gloved brakemen walking the top of a swaying
freight, spanner in hand, biting off a hunk
of plug,
Lumbermen with spiked boots and timber-hook, riding
the broken jam in white water,
Indians on the street-corner in Pocatello, pulling out

chin-whiskers with a pair of tweezers and
a pocket-mirror,
Or down on the Siuslaw, squatting behind their summer
lodges listening to Caruso on a two-hundred-
dollar phonograph,
Loud-roaring Alaska miners, smashing looking-glasses,
throwing the waiter a five-dollar gold-piece
for a shot of whiskey and telling him to
keep the change,
Keepers of dance-halls in construction-camps, bar-keepers,
prostitutes,
Bums riding the rods, wobblers singing their defiant
songs, unafraid of death,
Card-sharps and real-estate agents, timber-kings, wheat-
kings, cattle-kings . . .
I know ye, Americans!

2

By my bright youth in golden Eastern towns . . .
Harvard . . . pain of growing, ecstasy of unfolding,
Thrill of books, thrill of friendship, hero-worship,
Intoxication of dancing, tempest of great music,
Squandering delight, first consciousness of power . . .
Wild nights in Boston, battles with policemen,
Picking up girls, nights of lurid adventure . . .
Winter swims at L street, breaking the ice
Just for the strong shock on a hard body . . .
And the huge Stadium heaving up its thousands
With cadenced roaring cheer or song tremendous
When Harvard scored on Yale . . . By this, by this
I know thee, America!

By proud New York and its man-piled Matterhorns,
The hard blue sky overhead and the west wind blowing,
Steam-plumes waving from sun-glittering pinnacles,
And deep streets shaking to the million-river—

*Manhattan, zoned with ships, the cruel
Youngest of all the world's great towns,
Thy bodice bright with many a jewel,
Imperially crowned with crowns . . .*

*Who that hath known thee but shall burn
In exile till he come again
To do thy bitter will, O stern
Moon of the tides of men!*

Soaring Fifth Avenue, Peacock Street, Street of banners,
Ever-changing pageant of splendid courtesans,
Fantastic color, sheen of silks and silver, toy-dogs,
Procession of automobiles like jewel-boxes—