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47 DAYS IN SPOKANE CITY JAIL

By William Z. Foster, Special Correspondent "The Workingman's Paper"

On the afternoon of December 11th, when a contingent of men left the I. W. W. headquarters for the purpose of speaking on the street, I accompanied them, as usual, so as to witness their arrest and be enabled to report any unusual features attending it. On this particular afternoon Korshagen and Holland, two I. W. W. members from Seattle, among others, were billed to speak, and having been closely associated with them in Seattle, I was anxious to be in at the death.

I walked with them to the appointed street corner, and while they spoke I stood some twenty feet away in the thick of the crowd. They were duly arrested and a few moments later the redoubtable Captain Burns came on the scene in answer to a call sent in to the station; and although he knew nothing whatsoever as to what had taken place, and had no warrant for my arrest, he immediately placed me under arrest when he happened to see me standing in the crowd.

At the police station I had the honor of a half-hour's talk with Pugh, Sullivan and Burns, during the course of which conversation these worthies attempted to pump me. They adopted a dozen different ruses by which they hoped to secure a promise from me to desist from taking part in the street fight in return for my liberty. One of these was ridiculous in the extreme. Chief Sullivan (brainless man) said that he had just received a letter from the I. W. W., stating that I was a Pinkerton, his plan being to rouse my ire against the organization and to get me to desert it, or at least promise to take no active part in the fight. Failing in this he adjudged me guilty in his office of some unknown offense, because I wouldn't answer for my conduct for the future, and I was taken to the notorious sweat-box, where I joined the balance of the street-speaking "criminals."

Although we had not gone through the formality of a trial in Judge Sham's (I mean Mann's) court, we were placed on bread and water. The portion of bread was that customary in I. W. W. cases, one-fifth of a five-cent loaf, twice daily. As a punishment, criminals who refuse to work are sometimes confined in the sweat-box on a ration of a loaf of bread daily, but we untried I. W. W. prisoners were so much worse than rebellious convicted criminals that we got less than half the customary amount of bread.

The next afternoon we were taken to Judge Mann's court and were railroaded in the usual manner. In common with the rest, I was charged with "Disorderly Conduct." Officer MacDonald was the witness against me. He testified that I stood in the crowd of prospective speakers and stimulated their ebbing courage by urging them to go out and speak. MacDonald has a good imagination, and in the pretty little picture he drew of the affair I even went so far as to shove some of the weak-kneed (?) speakers into the street.

Needless to say, this was a barefaced lie. These men needed no urging, but if they had I fear some one else would have had to do it, as I stood in the crowd at least twenty feet from them. It was impossible for MacDonald to have even seen me in the crowd, as during the whole affair he had his back turned toward me. However, a little like this is of no importance to the Spokane police. MacDonald was made to "see" me in the chief's office, and that was sufficient.

I put five witnesses on the stand who flatly contradicted MacDonald, but it was no use and I got the same sentence as the balance—thirty days, \$100 and costs.

Judge Mann has recently expressed his determination to stop perjury in his court, and if he is sincere it would perhaps be good tactics if he would operate on a few of these imaginative policemen. My bond was set at \$500, although the customary bond in all the I. W. W. disorderly conduct cases has usually been \$200.

Although the I. W. W. had recently decided that the speakers arrested should go to work on the rock pile so as to avoid punishing themselves on the terrible bread-and-water diet, I refused to go to work, as I wished to be sent to the modern Libby prison, the notorious Franklin school, where the authorities still held I. W. W. prisoners, who vainly demanded the privilege of going to work. (This was done because these men stubbornly refused to accept liberty on the condition that they leave town.)

My desire to get a little "local color" at Franklin school was frustrated, however, as next morning I was loaded with ball and chain (15-pound ball attached to ankle), and shackled by the leg to another man, and then marched to the rock pile, where I was told to work or freeze.

I felt quite flattered at so much attention, particularly so because the ball I wore had been previously carried by a notorious pimp who henceforth enjoyed the comparative freedom of simply being shackled by the leg to his partner.

The weather was intensely cold and I have no doubt the Rev. Jake Warner, the chain-gang boss, Bill Shannon et al., thought I would be stubborn enough to stand there and freeze rather than go to work.

The I. W. W. motto in Spokane is, "Find out what the boss wants you to do, and then—do the opposite," so I went to work, and here began the most educational experience I ever had.

When talking to Pugh in Sullivan's office he jokingly remarked, "Why, Foster, you haven't got any kick coming; this is money in your pocket." This is literally true, and though at times the confinement was irksome in the extreme, I consider my experience in the Spokane city jail as almost invaluable. Through it I have learned a few of the possibilities of organization and direct action, and more especially of the marvelous effectiveness of the passive resistance strike, in addition to learning many new wrinkles about the law, police, etc.

At the time I arrived at the city jail the total number of street speakers held by the police was forty (exclusive of "conspirators" in the county jail), and this bunch immediately after getting settled at the jail proceeded to organize themselves. So perfect did this organization become, both in the jail and on the rock pile, that all the individualists were suppressed and the collective wish was undisputed.

In the jail we held rousing meetings and in order to do it systematically we elected a secretary and chairman and set aside Sunday night for propaganda meetings and Wednesday night for business meeting. It was surprising the amount of business we had to transact, and we established rules and regulations of all kinds, from tactics to be pursued if our shackles were put on too tight, to forbidding I. W. W. members from shouting to the women prisoners who were confined within calling distance. This latter regulation was adopted in consideration of any woman prisoners who might be insulted by some of the doubtful remarks continually bandied between the men and women prisoners. Needless to say, these rules and regulations were scrupulously obeyed by the I. W. W. members, and also by many of the ordinary prisoners, who fell under the magic spirit of the well known I. W. W. discipline.

The Salvation Army annoyed us by raising a hideous clamor, alleged to be religious adoration, but we settled them by completely ignoring them and their meetings were shortened 80 per cent.

Our propaganda meetings were a howling success, and we made at least forty I. W. W. converts in the city jail. These were all workingmen who were arrested for the crime of being broke, and when they listened to our talks and saw how we handled ourselves they promised to read up on industrial unionism and to join the I. W. W. as soon as possible.

In the jail the cells are in a double row, opening from a corridor about six feet wide and it was in this corridor that we held our meetings.

Another good feature of our meetings was the spirit of democracy prevailing. We practically forced men to get up and speak who had never but once before attempted to speak before a crowd (said "Fellow-Workers" on Spokane streets), and a couple of these give promise of becoming excellent "soap-boxers."

We were getting along swimmingly when some one decided that our meetings were too successful and that we must have some "leaders" amongst us. As a result of this, on Jan. 3d Fellow-Worker Jones of Los Angeles (commonly called "Volcanic Sulphur Smoke"), who was speaker of the evening, and myself, who had acted as chairman of the meeting the night previous, were "grabbed" and put into the "strong box" (a steel cage reserved for the more serious criminals). Our seizure simply stimulated the remainder to greater efforts, and from that time on the jail organization became a pronounced success. Once more the grabbing of men suspected of being "leaders" acted as a boomerang.

The effects of the organization upon the work done on the rock pile was remarkable, and the possibilities of the passive resistance strike, even as evidenced by us chained prisoners, was a revelation to me. We simply went through the motions of working. We accomplished almost nothing. For instance, two men chained together pounded for four days upon one rock, when it was accidentally broken. To break that small rock (about as large as a wash bucket) cost the city of Spokane \$4.00 for food alone, at the rate of 50 cents per day per man, besides the other expenses for guards, etc. This is only a sample of how we worked, and by no means an exceptional one.

The notorious Bill Shannon helped guard us and he became insanely angry scores of times at our studied awkwardness and deliberation, and on one occasion kicked a man so severely that he may be ruined for life (a suit for \$20,000 damages against Shannon, and Warner, the other guard, for this assault, is now pending), but he usually confined himself to calling us all the hard names in the calendar and putting us upon bread and water occasionally. He would shift us from shoveling to wheeling, carrying or breaking rock, but it was the same old story wherever we were put. Nothing doing. Passive resistance is an art, and many of the men have really become experts at it in this fight.

The organization spirit and tact of the men in our contest with our guards and the jail officials was good beyond praise. It has convinced me that it is possible to really organize the working class. Once in a while we had "labor difficulties," which were always precipitated by some wanton cruelty of the officers, such as tightening a man's shackles so as to stop the circulation of the blood in his leg, or chaining some victim to a telegraph pole, or as in one case, forcing a man who was boiling his shirt and underclothes, to go to work with nothing on above his waist but his coat. This man (Henry Rutter, an expert at passive resistance) was game, and tucking his coat back he took the lead in the chain gang, and marched through the crowded streets of Spokane, exposing his manly chest (and stomach) with a vengeance.

We had several hunger strikes in retaliation for these barbarities, and the police always caved before we got really hungry.

On the whole, the worst hardship we suffered was from the arctic weather, as we were poorly fed and naturally unable to resist the biting weather as well as we otherwise would. The I. W. W. came nobly to our aid and kept us fully supplied with socks, gloves, and tobacco, although on various occasions the police confiscated large consignments of tobacco "planted" for us by the organization.

Although Jones and I were allowed to go to work on the rock pile we were forced to make our jail headquarters in the "strong-box." Here I had many experiences which I value highly. We were confined there for a month, and during that time there were several alleged murderers, a dozen forgers and numerous "hold-up" men, burglars, embezzlers, sneak thieves, pickpockets, pimps and various other kinds of criminals, "dope" fiends and insanity cases.

We had the pleasure of spending a night in the same cell as Joe Vigue, the alleged wife-murderer, who was convicted recently

FOSTER RELEASED

Mrs. Bessy Fiset reached Spokane Thursday night, January 27, a total stranger and editorial representative of "The Workingman's Paper," a newspaper more hated and feared by Spokane officials than any other except the I. W. W. organ.

Her special mission, as announced in these columns two weeks ago, was (1) to get Wm. Z. Foster, our imprisoned correspondent, out of jail, (2) to secure the sale of "The Workingman's Paper" on Spokane streets the same as other newspapers, and (3) to work for the repeal of the Spokane Gag ordinance.

On Tuesday, February 1, four days after she began her task, we received the following press dispatch:

(Special to "The Workingman's Paper")

SPOKANE, Wash., Feb. 1, 1910.—Foster was released today on his own recognizance and his case dismissed.

B. F.

This dispatch meant that, after 47 days suffering at hard labor for the crime of reporting the truth for this paper, our correspondent was discharged, as the result of Mrs. Fiset's determined efforts, without being obliged to put up bonds and the case against him stricken from the calendar. That is, the officials in Spokane feared to allow his appealed case to come before a drawn jury of 12 men for a fair trial.

In other columns of this issue appears Foster's own remarkable account of his arrest, trial and jail experience. It is remarkable for its temperate tone, its modesty and its display of unconquerable Proletarian consciousness.

Foster is now free on the very streets of Spokane where he was arrested.

in Sandpoint, Idaho, of having beaten his wife's brains out with the stock of his rifle. He was a mild-mannered, rather likeable sort of fellow, and claimed that he was falsely accused, as his wife is not dead. He urged in support of this that the authorities refused to let him see her body and that he remembers nothing of having committed the crime. He was on his way to Boise, Idaho, to do a term of fifty years.

His traveling companions in hardship were two burglars with 15-year sentences hanging over their heads. Another man was kept in jail a week while his victim hovered between life and death (he finally died). This man almost went insane from suspense. He is now to be tried for manslaughter.

Many of these "criminals" are very intelligent and some of them remarkably so. They are able to converse fluently on almost any subject of ordinary conversation. One man, Lindsay, since taken to Seattle for forgery, had the most remarkable memory of any man I ever met. It was simply uncanny in its thoroughness.

One ex-convict whom I became very well acquainted with gave me a clear glimpse into the doings of the underworld and initiated me into the mysteries of the "strong-arm"—a wrestling hold used by highwaymen upon their victims. He also gave me full instructions as to the proper method of cracking a safe. He also gave me valuable information as to how to protect myself from highwaymen.

Thus are criminals made in our jails. Put a man in jail with a lot of experienced criminals for a few months and they will soon teach him the intricacies of their various "trades."

Dope fiends, full of cocaine, and raving maniacs, their eyes glittering with insanity, and their mouths spouting their delusions, were allowed to roam freely amongst us, and sometimes we were hardly in an enviable position.

Night after night the jail was made hideous by men in the clutches of the terrible delirium tremens. One of these unfortunates actually died in his steel cell raving for whiskey, which would have saved his life. He received no medical attention whatever, and died a terrible death. Nothing has been done about this poor unfortunate's death, as he was only a poor, old, broken-down workingman. His case is a matter of record and can easily be dug up if any one is interested in it. Since his death the other unfortunates suffering from delirium tremens are given a pretense of proper treatment.

The worst feature of my stay in the strong-box was the unsanitary condition of the cell. The prisoners sleep in hammocks without blankets. To keep them from freezing the windows were closed, and as a result at times the air became almost stifling from lack of ventilation.

I suffered from an ulcerated tooth while in jail, and the pain was so intense that I was unable to sleep, and I walked the floor for ten nights before I was allowed to have my teeth filled. The doctor (?) refused to do anything for me, stating that "we are not fixed to do any such work as that," and finally, when I was almost frantic from pain and loss of sleep Chief Sullivan accepted an exorbitant bond for me while I went to the dentist.

At the end of forty-seven days, on Feb. 2nd, I was released through the kind efforts of "The Workingman's Paper," its Spokane representative, Mrs. Fiset, and Mr. O. Lund, a prominent Spokane Socialist.

In many respects the imprisonment was irksome, but after all it was a most valuable experience, and aside from the pleasure of being one of the free-speech jail-birds, the advantages I gained from it are too numerous to mention.

WM. Z. FOSTER.

rested seven weeks ago for doing exactly what he is now doing, reporting the truth about "Barbarous Spokane." THAT IS A VICTORY WORTH WINNING. The officials of Spokane are having some sense hammered into them.

international Socialist Review" were sold on Riverside Avenue this afternoon between 5 and 6 o'clock by Mrs. Fiset alone. Police bluffed. No interference, though boys have been arrested whenever they sold I. W. W. papers.

WM. Z. FOSTER.

SALES CONTINUED.

(Special to "The Workingman's Paper")

SPOKANE, Tuesday, Feb. 8, 1910.—Papers on street again tonight. No interference. Capt. Burns states in "Inland Herald" he will not molest women making sales. More out to-morrow.

B. F.

Second Victory

Monday, February 7, we received this wire:

(Special to "The Workingman's Paper")

SPOKANE, Wash., Feb. 7, 1910.—"The Workingman's Paper," "The Industrial Worker," "Solidarity" and "In-

Gurley Flynn's Trial

(Special to "The Workingman's Paper")

SPOKANE, Wash., Wednesday, Feb. 9, 1910.—The trial is before Judge Kin-

non. He refused to grant the motion for change of venue. Affidavit was introduced by Prosecution signed by ten "citizens" declaring they had read newspaper comments on I. W. W. matter, but had no resulting prejudice and had not even heard any expressions of prejudice against I. W. W.

Yet out of first fifteen jurors examined by counsel today, only one so far has been found who did not admit his prejudice.

Only five jurors so far passed for cause. May be challenged peremptorily later.

Selection of jurors continues to-morrow.

B. F.

Boys Selling Papers

(Special to "The Workingman's Paper")

SPOKANE, Feb. 10, 1910.—Jury selected in Gurley Flynn's case as follows:

T. J. Horrigan, A. Klenholz, J. Humphreys, Wm. Boss, negro; J. L. Ford, W. Casselman, Wm. Johnson, Geo. Mosler, C. T. Gawthrop, W. J. Grogan, Geo. Cheney, Geo. Hendrickson. Five farmers, one stone mason, one scab carpenter; rest business men.

Prosecution opens tomorrow. No court Saturday. Case may take until Thursday of next week.

The Daily "Press" of last night states that police announce that men and boys may sell our papers. If they contain libelous matter, the sellers will be arrested.

Boys out tonight. If any libelous matter is discovered, the boys are threatened with arrest and papers will be confiscated.

Prosecuting Attorney Pugh is to act as judge of libelous matter, prior to arrest.

If boys are arrested tonight, women will go out again. Then will see if they will arrest middle class woman.

Prosecution in Flynn case shows fight.

B. F.

Special Spokane Edition

We make another appeal right now to our subscribers to contribute at once by return mail if possible whatever they can afford to put a Special Edition of "The Workingman's Paper" into the hands of the Spokane citizens themselves, who have been misled by the Capitalist dailies published in that city.

We want to set the whole matter before them in so calm and rational and convincing a manner that they will revolt against such a shaming of their fair city by its official representatives.

For two hundred dollars we can mail to selected addresses Ten Thousand Copies of such a paper as you know we can get out. IT WILL WIN THE FIGHT FOR THE REPEAL OF THAT GAG ORDINANCE.

Already the tide is turning. Spokane is sick of the whole business. Pratt and Sullivan realize now they can't fight all the world and the I. W. W. too.

But we are poor, poor, poor. If you want this "Special" send in your nickels, dimes, quarters, halves, dollars and more. It's up to you to finish this fight.

TO NEW READERS.

You get this paper as a sample. On the second page you will find a declaration of our principles. If you like the paper, subscribe. If you don't like the paper, but want to keep in touch with the progress of the proletarian movement, subscribe. "The Workingman's Paper" will thoroughly cover every field of battle, and no one who pretends to be up-to-date in these matters can afford to do without it.