

Chicago Gangster Syndicates Part of Capitalist System

(Special To The DAILY WORKER.)

By ARNE SWABECK.

CHICAGO, Dec. 29.—Every once in a while Chicago is stirred by the heavy detonations from some outburst of its famous gang wars; from a pretended war of law and order upon the gangsters or from some killings or bombings having alleged or actual union connections.

That the gangs of the Chicago underworld at times carry on active warfare against one another with modern implements is a well known fact. When the forces of "law and order" herald a new war upon the gangsters it may safely be assumed in advance that some crooked politicians are either trying to put over a deal or else merely making a pretense of the legal machinery existing to suppress "lawless" elements.

Frequent Wars.

These kind of wars recur from time to time. Some culprits are caught in the dragnet to be immediately released through political influence—with no change in the situation.

It must be remembered that these gangs of the underworld are a very important part of the capitalist election machinery serving for purposes of stealing votes, stuffing ballot boxes, miscounting, intimidating and shooting. But when the daily capitalist papers make a conscious, persistent effort to link the whole thing up with trade union activities, lumping gangsters, so-called racketeers of fictitious unions and actual trade unionists together, then the real purpose becomes clear.

Regular Thing.

This is what is happening now. Gang wars come and go. Wars upon gangsters come and go. Nerves are set a little bit on edge but it is all a part of regular capitalist politics. Yet it is being cleverly manipulated so as to be directed entirely against unionism. Had the trade union officialdom not been so much involved in capitalist gangster politics such manipulation would hardly be possible.

Many may visualize a gangster as the poor unfortunate, lurking in the dark alleys shabbily clothed; but this is not the case with the well known Chicago types. The business of bootlegging, gambling and capitalist politics has become lucrative. It seems to be conducted by syndicates, each established within certain territories, the acting chiefs appearing glittering as Christmas trees; gems sparkling from ties, cuffs, belt buckles and fingers. Their plans are often mapped out in the high class hotels and the necessary connection with higher-ups usually well taken care of.

General Capone.

"Scarface Al" Capone at the moment seems to be the chief figure. His syndicate claims control over Cicero. His predecessor, John Torrio, discovered this idyllic spot and made it a powerful base of operations. John Torrio got shot from ambush but lived and left the city. Dion O'Banion, one of his lieutenants, had previously revolted and established himself on the North Side. He was killed in his flower shop, had a sumptuous funeral and a couple of scores of killings followed.

Control over the North Side territory gangland is now said to be claimed by the George "Bugs" Moran-Bertche - Skidmore - Zuta syndicate while the South Side territory is claimed by the Frank McErlane-Saltis gang. Recently it was said that George "Bugs" Moran had made an alliance with "Scarface Al" Capone and one of the latter's lieutenants, Joseph Aillo, revolted, some killings following.

George "Bugs" Moran in private life is a wholesale grocer. One of the recently killed bootleggers, by name of Ferro, in private life was a "successful" manufacturer.

The Big Coliseum Catch.

A few weeks ago orders went out for a clean-up on the gangsters. The hunt started and quite a few of the prominent ones were rounded up and arrested. There were Peter Genna, one of two survivors of six gangster brothers, "Polack Joe" Saltis, of the South Side syndicate and others.



MAYOR THOMPSON.

The Judge Is Easy.

At the big Walker-Berlenbach prize fight at the Coliseum about 50 were caught and arrested. Prominent among them were Frank McErlane, William Channel, hophead, Jack Gussick, Dave Earsman, Joseph Montana and Pat Sullivan. The police swore they were all going to remain in the jug—but what happened? The next day all those who had any real gangster standing were released, 32 in all, on writs of habeas corpus issued by about 10 different judges. One of them, Judge Eller, was so eager to help that he held court right in his home in order to more speedily issue the writ.

And so it goes. The Chicago gangsters have completely become part and parcel of the capitalist political system. It matters little which political clique renders the direct assistance. But charges have often been made of the direct implication of State's Attorney Crowe, not to forget that Mayor Thompson is part of the same political faction with the state's attorney.

Crooked Politics Exposed.

As the atmosphere became heated

"Scarface Al" Capone withdrew to establish his headquarters at the Hill-side Tavern, just outside the county line. There, it was said, he summoned police officials and politicians to discuss the situation. There was altogether too much publicity to suit the higher-ups and Capone left for Los Angeles, however, to return immediately. And he is now back in Chicago despite the empty police threats that he would not be allowed to enter.

But these are merely small incidents compared to the exposures made by rival capitalist political factions in the 1926 primaries and the elections following. The crime issue was made one of the big issues. The city's annual crime bill was claimed to be about \$60,000,000. The immenseness of this sum can easier be understood in connection with pictures published at that time showing elaborate banquets given by gangster syndicates in loop hotels, one by the Genna brothers and one by "Diamond Joe" Esposito. At both, well known gangsters and capitalist politicians were present and at one of them State's Attorney Crowe and Senator Deneen were the main speakers.

Several election workers were shot and not less than 218,217 names were stricken from the registration lists because of being fraudulently entered. Shortly thereafter one assistant state's attorney, McSwiggen, was killed in Cicero—a murder which has since remained unsolved and nothing done to clear it up. Evidently there are some specific reasons.

Efforts To Connect Unions.

During this recent gang war the daily capitalist papers have been working overtime to focus attention upon the trade union movement, endeavoring to make it a part of this general war situation. So-called labor terrorists and "racketeers," functioning on behalf of fictitious unions and jobbers' protective associations were used as the connecting link.

Bombings and killings were exposed, some very real, and "conspiracies" between employers and union men have been discovered. A situation similar to the one existing im-

mediately preceding the Landis Award is being created, suggesting that a new attack upon the trade unions may be in preparation.

Day by day terrorist acts by some organization representatives or other are announced; all are lumped under the general name labor union. For instance the Bathtub Cleaners' "Union" is said to claim recognition. Candy jobbers are said to force merchants to join. Butchers, bakers and fish dealers (all the small merchants) are said to have formed associations to control prices under leadership of the notorious Maxie Eisen. Physicians claim to be terrorized to join an economic league. The shooting of a member of the junk peddlers' union was played up. Yet a notorious gangster who was accused of the killing was acquitted.

A "Union" Bomb.

The president and business agent of the Bootblacks' Protective Association were recently found guilty and convicted for a bomb explosion. This is an outfit claiming to be a union and actually affiliated to the A. F. of L. but taking in as members only the owners of the shoe shining parlors. Not only is all this paraded as evidence against trade unions, making no distinction between corrupt officials and union members, but claims are made of conspiracies in restraint of trade between unions and employers, a number of unions being listed. The purpose is obvious.

Surely the Chicago trade unions will again have to meet these kind of attacks, whether they fully materialize at this moment or later. Gangsterism prevailing within the movement should be rooted out completely; it has nothing in common with trade unionism. The corrupt officials should go with it. The only real effective defense of working class organization in any attack by the bosses and the capitalist politicians is the mobilization of the rank and file masses. Given militant leadership all attacks will come to naught.

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