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# “Indicted.”

by Marion E. Sproule †

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On the 19th of October I delivered a speech in New International Hall entitled “Americanism and Communism.” In this speech I tried to show that the true spirit of Americanism, as embodied in the writings and actions of men like William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, and Horace Greeley is the spirit that today finds expression in the teachings of Communism. These men, who were maligned and mobbed by the respectable and so-called intellectuals of their time, today have statues erected in their memory and our children are taught to revere their names. Abraham Lincoln, who is honored by all, said in his second inaugural address: “This country with its institutions belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it or their revolutionary right to dismember and overthrow it.” Fortunate he was not to live in this day and generation or he too would have been indicted and reckoned as a menace to law and order.

On October 20 [1919] the *Boston Herald* had a garbled and untrue account of my speech with these glaring headlines: “Advocates Overthrow of Government,” and on the same night the *Boston Transcript* printed an editorial against me which was incendiary in tone and which might easily have led to mob violence.

On October 30 [1919] at midnight I was arrested at my home in Lowell upon the following in-

dictment:

Jurors of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on their oath present that Marion E. Sproule on the nineteenth day of October in the year of our Lord 1919 by speech did advocate, advise and counsel and incite the unlawful destruction of real and personal property, and the overthrow by force and violence of the Government of the Commonwealth.

A true bill

Daniel J. Gallagher,  
Assistant District Attorney.

James N. Burke,  
Foreman of the Grand Jury.

Following the scurrilous reports in the capitalist press, my arrest was no surprise. I was placed in an automobile and, accompanied by Murray from the District Attorney’s office and Inspectors Crawford and Loughlin of Boston, started for that city. After having gone about 6 miles, the car broke down and we were delayed until 3 o’clock am. Meanwhile Murray had boarded a passing automobile, gone back to Lowell and got another car with which to finish our journey. Everything went well until we reached Winchester, when a tire burst and another delay resulted. It was just 5 o’clock when I reached Boston, chilled through and tired from the long trip. I was taken to the inspectors’ room and later through yards and passageways to a cell where I was locked up until 9:15 [am]. The in-

†- Marion Sproule was the State Secretary of the Communist Party of Massachusetts, state affiliate of the old CPA during the fall of 1919, before the party was driven underground by organized government repression. She was indicted under the Massachusetts state “Anti-Anarchy Law,” which was approved May 28, 1919. This act stated that “Any person who shall by speech or by exhibition, distribution or promulgation of any written or printed document, paper or pictorial representation, advocate, advise, counsel or incite, assault upon any public official or the killing of any person or the unlawful destruction of real or personal property or the overthrow by force and violence of the government of the Commonwealth, shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$1,000 or by imprisonment for a term of not over three years or by both...” It also explicitly stated that any person “in the violation of any provisions of this act may be arrested without a warrant” by officers of the law.

spector then took me before Captain Armstrong, who looked me over and said "What nationality are you?" And when I answered "American" he said he should think I would be ashamed to be mixed up in anything like this. From there I went to the Chief's office and then my picture and fingerprints were taken. Then I went to the detention room until 11:30, when I was called into the Superior Court to answer as to whether I was guilty or not guilty to the indictment against me. Upon my plea of "not guilty" I was once more lodged in the detention room where I stayed until 4 o'clock [pm], when my bail of \$2500 was arranged.

To anyone who has not been locked up in a damp and cold narrow cell, it is impossible to imagine the feeling of one who hears that door shut and the key turn. But somehow, in spite of it all I could not feel that I was really locked up; although my body was there my thoughts were busy with the work I have undertaken to do.

The capitalist class is insane with the fear that it is losing power, and it will stop at nothing to keep the workers in subjection. In its terror it will strain every nerve to have such laws as the Anti-Anarchy Law (under which I am indicted) so interpreted as to abridge any constitutional rights of free speech or press which may have weathered the storm of the past three years.

No less a person than President Wilson once said: "We have forgotten the very principles of our origin if we have forgotten how to resist, how to agitate, how to pull down and build up, even to the extent of revolutionary practices, if need be, to readjust matters. I have forgotten my history if that be not true history."

It is evidently one thing for the President to say this and quite another for someone else to interpret it literally.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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