
The Iron Fist Tightens Its Grip on Nation.

by William F. Kruse

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The powers of reaction, now triumphant in this country, are beginning to tighten their fast forming stranglehold upon the liberties of the American people. From all over the country come reports of the violation of the constitutional guarantees by high-handed petty authorities. There is no more dangerous enemy of freedom than the officious petty satrap. And there are a lot of them in this country — secret service operatives, police sergeants, district attorneys, and others of that stripe.

The State Office of the Socialist Party of Indiana was raided without search warrants being obtained, and Secretary William H. Henry and his wife were arrested and held incommunicado for a long time. Some literature was confiscated and our comrades were released without having any charges preferred against them.

Case of Aaron Fisherman.

In Seattle one of our members was arrested for instigating anti-conscription activity and held on federal charges. It developed that the one charge had nothing to do with the matter and that his name had been used without authorization — presumably with the object of implicating him and the Socialist Party.

In Pittsburgh, Pa., the Federal authorities raided the offices of the Socialist Party and confiscated, without warrant, all of the books and records of that organization. Some of them have been returned, most have not. Eleven members were arrested, everyone in the office, so that none were left to enlist the help of their comrades. They were even refused permission to send word to any of their families. Five were released on

\$1,000 bail, the rest on their own recognizance, to appear for trial before the Federal authorities, June 7 [1917], two days after registration day.

In Chicago, Ill., a meeting was arranged, in which Socialists participated, to demand that the President immediately state clearly and definitely, the terms on which peace will be made. The Auditorium, largest lecture hall in Chicago, was packed to capacity, 4,000, while 5,000 more were turned away. These constituted themselves an overflow meeting in Grant Park and there assembled to listen to outdoor speakers. The police tried in every way to provoke trouble and failing, they finally ordered the crowd to disperse because no permit had been issued for the outdoor meeting. A dozen patrol wagons and over 100 policemen appeared on the scene, with the result that 9 people were arrested, locked up, transferred from one station to another, and kept from getting out any word to their friends.

Press reports from Cleveland, Ohio, as yet unconfirmed, point to widespread outdoor disturbances there when police tried to break up peaceable meetings, with many resultant arrests.

It remained only for Secretary Lansing to place himself in the same category of officious understrappers by refusing to grant passports to the American Socialist Delegates, Morris Hillquit, Algernon Lee, and Victor Berger, to the Peace Conference at Stockholm.

Sticker Campaign Disclosed.

Two arrests are thus far reported in connection with a sticker campaign springing up here and there among individuals in different parts of the country. In

Chicago, Ill., Abe Brodsky, member of the Socialist Party and of the YPSL, was arrested on a charge of “disorderly conduct” for sticking up a label bearing this inscription:

Wake Up, America!

Selective conscription.
Compulsory service.
Militarism in the schools.
Free speech denied.
Ditto free assemblage.
And a free press.
Jails for radicals.
Prussianism overdone.
To hell with the constitution.
Machine guns in the police stations.
Imported Chinese labor.
Good-bye 8-hour laws.
Farewell, steaks and potatoes.
Enter rats, rice, and riots.
America, wake up.

This same inscription has been printed openly in several papers, both Socialist and Capitalist, and nothing has come of it. Yet when individuals have sought to further spread the message contained in these words, they are arrested.

Yipsel Faces Treason Charge.

For posting up this same sticker, and in addition another bearing these words: “Impeach Wilson,” Frederick Superior, 22 years old and the son of a prominent Socialist, Dr. J.J. Superior, of Elizabeth, NJ, is facing a Federal charge of Treason. This fact is flaunted across the front pages of the local capitalist dailies and every indication points to the pressing of as serious a charge as the facts will warrant.

Much is made of the fact that the sticker contained the line “To Hell with the Constitution.” No one with any grain of intelligence could fail to understand that this merely referred to a quotation now seemingly current in Administration circles. Looking at the unlawful arrests, searches, broken-up meetings, denial of public rights, and other usurpations of which the present administration is guilty, there can be no other motto adopted under which such methods can be

classified. The Socialist does not say “To Hell with the Constitution.” But the President of the United States, in demanding legislation that is contrary to the very letter and spirit of our fundamental laws, certainly says by implication, if not by words, “To Hell with the Constitution, I and my Party are the Boss.”

Socialists are not conscientious lawbreakers. We are lawmakers. The Socialist Party does not counsel its members and sympathizers to go out to break ordinances and laws relating to posting bills or decorating mailboxes. But the Socialist Party does insist that at least those in charge of the government of this country shall obey its fundamental laws. The Socialist Party does insist that the right of free speech shall not be interfered with. Nor the right of assemblage and petition, and the right to be a free, unmuzzled, unprostituted press. If there were ever a time when the people must get information and TRUE information — that time is now. The people of this country must think, and they must speak out their thoughts. And those whom the people have placed in charge of affairs must listen to the voice of the American people and give heed.

There is a decided tendency these days to construe as “treason” everything that does not agree with those in power. Thus it is considered “treason” to ask the impeachment of the President when the Constitution itself provides this as the only lawful method of removing him from office, and provides further that the people shall have the right at all times to petition for a redress of their wrongs.

Recent history, in Russia should serve as an eloquent warning to potential despots in this country. There was no provision for impeaching the Tsar. The people could not lawfully remove him from office. Yet they found the means and methods by which his removal was made possible. In this country there are certain clearly marked legal steps that can be taken to remedy an unwise election of a Chief Executive whenever the American people desire to do so. These steps are set forth in the constitution, and if it be treason to request that these steps be taken by Congress, then there are a good many Americans who are guilty of the crime.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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