

# Answering Uncle Sam

By Scott Nearing

SINCE governments make and remake their policies to fit circumstances, American radicals cannot afford to miss one move of "Our Enemy the State." The trial just staged at St. Joseph, Michigan, and the way in which the whole case was handled, both inside and outside the court room, mark a departure in Federal Government tactics. Hereafter, outstanding radicals are to be prosecuted and their opinions are to be broadcasted as the best method of discrediting the movements which they represent.

Until 1917, no great issue of this kind was raised, but the war was accompanied by a rigorous attack on the expression of opinion. The war is history, yet every great industrial State except Wisconsin has provided itself with some form of gag-law and the Federal authorities propose to use these State laws where the necessity arises. The gag-laws will not be repealed. They have become a permanent phase of Americanism. No one save the historian need waste further time talking about American liberty. American liberties and constitutional guarantees enjoy an honorable place in eighteenth century history. It is the twentieth century in which men are now living and working.

Before the war, the ruling classes of the United States ignored the radical movement. During the war, the authorities entered definitely on a policy of suppression. Since 1919 or 1920, an entirely new policy has been adopted—the policy of exposure. The Michigan case is a case of exposure; the newspapers are trying to tell the people what Foster and his associates stand for. They are giving the subject a very prominent place, with extreme headings, on the theory that if people really know what such men believe, they will unquestionably repudiate the doctrines. The people responsible for determining Government policy are convinced that the American people believe in the United States as it is today, and so they take it upon themselves to expose anybody who proposes radical changes. It may be a mistaken guess, but it is being tested out in this effort to expose the radical movement.

If this is a correct statement of the new Government policy, the American radicals must face the question: When the Government prosecutes a man or a movement because of the opinions held and expressed, what is the best attitude for the accused to take?

There is first of all the silent defense of the I. W. W. Instead of replying to accusations they refused to make any defense, and ignored the Court completely. Paraphrasing the Christian Scientists they insisted,—“There is no State.” They insisted: “We will not recognize you; you are not in our class.” But they went to jail. Non-recognition of the State is not realism, because if there is not a State there is certainly something which acts very much like one. It is not necessarily idealism to deny the existence of the State, and it is certainly not realism. Some people regard it as folly, but there is a certain grandeur about the gesture of the silent defense.

If the radical movement in the United States has a task to perform, it must begin by recognizing the society in which it works. In a farming or a steel manufacturing community it must adapt itself to the dominant economic forces. Booker T. Washington used to tell a story of a missionary who went to him for advice.

“What shall I learn?” asked the missionary.

“How do the people there make a living?” asked Washington.

“By raising sheep.”

“Then learn all about sheep,” was Washington’s advice.

No matter what knowledge he might have of the Kingdom of Heaven, the people would be much more inclined to listen to him if he knew some of the things that they knew best. That is true of any movement; it must recognize the community in which it carries on its propaganda.

Sadler’s recent book, “Our Enemy the State,” takes it for granted that the State is an opponent. Those who defend themselves in a prosecution must utilize this enemy since the State permits the accused to have a lawyer and to examine witnesses. No defense can be made until this permission is granted, so that the defendant not only recognizes the State, but uses it.

One of the rights granted by the State is the right to hire a lawyer, and hiring a lawyer is one of the most serious elements in this whole problem. One local union here in New York spent \$35,000 in one year on lawyers’ fees. Prosecution thus means a heavy drain on the funds of radical movements. A lawyer may ask anywhere from ten thousand to one hundred thousand dollars as a retaining fee in a big case,—that much to be put down before he will talk business at all. The State prosecutes and radicals defend. A great amount of energy and money that could have gone into some other form of activity is thus expended, and the costs are so enormous that a poor organization is swamped in the process.

There are a number of reasons for carrying on a defense,—first, to keep people from going to jail; second, to keep the leaders of a movement at work where they are useful in order to save the organization that they represent; and third, to propagate certain doctrines. Therefore, there is at stake in any legal defense,—first, the personal comfort of individuals, which is an important element, because if people are uncomfortable, it is hard to live with them. Men who are in prison for a great length of time are permanently harmed, but those outside who are too comfortable are likely to forget the men in Leavenworth.

Personal comfort, after all, is not so important; a few years or months in jail need not destroy either personal efficiency or social usefulness. Many revolutionary spirits have done their best work in jail. Every man and woman in the radical movement in the United States should realize that from this point forward a part of their business will consist in going to jail.



cause of a breach of contract, but because they and those who stand with them have certain ideas and are advocating certain doctrines. If opinions are not worth holding, then the sooner they are dropped the better, but if they are worth holding, they are worth it whether the Government prosecutes or not. The main thing is not the comfort of any individual member of an organization, but the advancement of the particular end the organization has in view. Foster is trying to establish a government of the workers in the United States; if individuals have to go to jail to accomplish it, that is but an incident to the main issue.

There are five general rules which carry the answer to the present government policy of exposure in the radical movement. First, never do or say anything that is unfitted to appear on the front page of the New York Times or the Chicago Tribune. There is a good practical reason for this rule. So long as the present policy is followed, what you do and say in the radical movement will go on the front page of the Times whether radicals like it or not. No matter how secret the organization, no matter how carefully it may be protected, reports of its activities will find their way to Washington. Wherever two or three American radicals are gathered together, an agent of the Department of Justice is among them.

Second, talk American. Each country has its own history, its traditions, its pet loves, its pet aversions, its phrases, its ambitions, its purposes. People absorb these things at home, on the street, in school, in the shop, from the paper, at the movies, until they become Americanized,—that is, until they think in terms of these traditions and phrases. Whoever wishes to reach people must understand their prejudices and the premises on which they base their thinking. It is a waste of time to use words and phrases that must be explained and defined. Each word and each act of the radical should bear some relation to the people he is seeking to influence, and to the historic situation in which they are placed. Since tradition and practice vary from one part of a continent to another (depending on economic and other forces) the radical must vary his language to suit the jargon of those to whom he writes and speaks.

Third, when an American radical is asked about his attitude, he should not deny but affirm emphatically. That is, instead of being left on the defensive he should take the offensive.

Fourth, when the radical defendant gets a chance, he should explain why he believes a certain thing, as a matter of information, not as a matter of apology. At all times the radical should be prepared to give a full justification for the faith that he holds.

Fifth, the radical must never retract nor apologize unless he changes his mind, then he must do it publicly and in writing, so that he is put on record. No radical can afford to dodge out from under the movement he represents.

On the main issue there is no compromise; men either believe that the present economic system is satisfactory or they do not; either they believe that the profiteers should run the country or that the workers should run the country. On economic rights and wrongs at this stage it is impossible to compromise. The individual who enters the radical movement should enter with these things clear in his mind. A

propaganda organization must be prepared to go the whole way or not to start. In the United States men cannot be radical and respectable, for a radical organization stands for fundamental change, and is therefore outlawed by the present order.

There is no other way in which radical causes may hope to advance in the United States. Apology does not further a cause. Foster and Ruthenberg did a masterly piece of work at St. Joseph because they went right down the line, apologizing neither for themselves nor their organization, telling what they believed and what their organization was trying to do, and putting before the country the issue between the established order as represented by the State and the Court and the new order which they represented. If that kind of a trial were repeated every three months, and were very generously reported and commented upon, with men like Foster and Ruthenberg making a clear cut stand, in a very few years there would be a comparatively sharp line-up and people would definitely be either with the new order or with the old order. Even though the Trade Union Educational League may be destroyed and the Labor Herald forced to suspend publication, in the long run the people of the United States will get a clear cut concept of these issues that they would not get in any other way.

## Ku Klux Klanthem

**N**IGGER, wop and dirty kike,  
Pestilences sent to blight men,  
God but rid us of your like—  
Us He made the world for,—white men!

Up before the winter's sun,  
At some filthy task you cherish  
Lest a grimy little one  
Of your comic brood should perish:

Needle, shovel, pick or hoe,  
Scarce we knew the job existed;  
Only that you slaved where no  
Decent white man had persisted:

Gripped your job for those you love,  
Muddy, bloody, but unswerving?  
Rather, grabbed the place above,  
Just to oust the more deserving!

Granted, now and then you rise  
From the humid heap you squirm in,  
We would boot you, were it wise,  
Down again amidst the vermin.

Nigger, wop and dirty kike,  
Pestilences sent to blight men,  
Take what filthy jobs you like:  
God rejoices in His white men!

Seymour Barnard.