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## American Civil Liberties Union

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BRANCH

REV. CLINTON J. TAFT, Director

540 Wilcox Building, Los Angeles  
206 South Spring Street, Phone 829-556

March 26, 1924

Dear Mr. Baldwin:

Under separate cover I am sending you some papers with marked articles that will unfold to you recent events here in California. Attorney J. H. Ryckman and I went down to the I.W.W. Hall in San Pedro as I told you in my letter of the 19th we expected to. The place was packed full of wobblies and a few others, while outside the hall were hundreds of people drawn there by curiosity and also other motives. Indeed, the word had been passed, so we were told by one of the women I.W.W., for women and children to stay away from the hall that night because the I.W.W. were to be roughly dealt with, and everything seemed to indicate that the stage was set for some drastic sort of action. There was a tension in the atmosphere, the like of which I have scarcely ever felt before. While the meeting was in progress, about 30 young rough-necks filed into the hall and took their places standing along side of the wall. The smell of liquor could be discerned on the breaths of several of them. It certainly looked as tho mischief was about to break loose. Judge Ryckman was speaking at the time, I having delivered my address before they came in. Mr. Ryckman finished and then the chairman of the meeting asked if I would repeat the things I had said. I did so and my remarks seemed to disarm the young invaders; anyhow, they filed out of the room quietly just as I was concluding, and the meeting came to a peaceful conclusion at about 10 o'clock. An hour later, while some wobblies were still standing around in little groups about the hall, one of the wobblies, Randall Altnow, a fine-looking young man of 19, was suspected of having taken numbers of certain of the automobiles around the hall and was suddenly seized by a party of young would-be marauders, thrown into an auto and spirited away some four or five miles from San Pedro. On the way he was beaten on the head with a hammer, but not injured particularly. Several other autos followed, and when they reached the desired spot they took him out of the car, searched him and failing to find the auto numbers (he had slipped the paper with the numbers on to a "fellow worker" while near the hall at San Pedro) they exhibited chagrin and exasperation, and then stripped off his outer garments, including his shoes, tearing some of his clothing and robbing him of \$7.00 or \$8.00 dollars in cash. After this they let him go, demanding that he leave those parts of California. He made his way back to San Pedro at a late hour that night. The matter was reported to the Police and the numbers of the autos, including the one that had conveyed him to the place of the indignities, and the department was asked to make an investigation and punish the culprits. As yet they have not done so, altho they claim that an investigation is in progress.



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Saturday night we held a great protest meeting here in Symphony hall, which was packed to the doors, several hundred people in fact being turned away, so we understand. Five uniformed policemen were in the meeting and two of the Red Squad plain clothes men who had helped wreck the I.W.W. Hall on Monday night were also there. We had some of the boys tell the audience just what happened on Monday night and about the kidnapping also, and the brutal treatment which some 22 I.W.W.'s had recently received in one of the tanks in the city jail. Besides these testimonies a number of others spoke, whose names you will find on the card inclosed advertising the meeting. It was regarded by all present a meeting of exceptional interest and value. The I.W.W.'s themselves (Mr. Kohn in charge of the local defense office and attorney Henderson of San Francisco, who was present) believe that it was one of the most effective meetings of the kind that has been held in this section for years. We concluded the meeting by passing unanimously the inclosed resolutions, which were turned over to the proper people and from which I think we are getting a healthful reaction. This morning a special committee of those who were present at the meeting appeared before the Police Commission when the resolutions were read and backed them up by speeches in which they demanded an immediate and thoroughgoing action concerning the outrages which had been committed.

The I.W.W.'s conducted an entertainment in their hall Saturday evening without molestation. Sunday night the chairman of their meeting and a young wobbly who had just come to San Pedro from Seattle were arrested and thrown into jail on suspicion of criminal syndicalism. Last night they held another meeting in their hall without any interference, and a rumor has just come to us that the Police of San Pedro have sent the I.W.W.'s a long letter, in which they apologize profusely for the way in which they have been treated, and promised better things for the future. I am hoping to get hold of a copy of that letter shortly.

You will be interested to know that I have prepared and sent on to "The New Republic", "The World Tomorrow", "The Nation", "The Christian Century", "The Congregationalist", and a local publication called the "Good Citizen", a special article dealing with the whole situation and asking them to publish it in whole or in part. We also have under preparation copy for a leaflet of four pages which we expect to get out shortly and to disseminate largely thruout southern California.

Thus, you will see Mr. Baldwin, that we are passing thru strenuous days here on the western coast, but we think that the skies are brightening a bit and that we are in a fair way now to get under motion a state-wide campaign looking to the elimination of the criminal syndicalism law from California's statute books. The intelligence which has recently come to us that people of the northern part of the state are organizing a branch of the American Civil Liberties Union which will cooperate with us in sweeping California with information concerning the



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iniquities of this law and its administration is heartening,  
indeed. We believe that in so doing even reactionary California  
will be restored to the status of civil liberties under the flag.

very cordially yours,

*Clinton J. Taft*

CJT/VB  
Inc.

P. S.

We have held out of the mail the above letter waiting for a copy of two letters written by Capt. W. L. Hagenbaugh of the San Pedro Police Division. These have just come to hand and I am inclosing them for your inspection. The wobblies got hold of them, we understand, thru some friend of the organization. The first of them you will note gives instructions to the police as to how they shall proceed in the matter of arresting I.W.W., and the second one which lacks any definite salutation, appears to us to have been sent to the K.K.K. possibly or some other band of super-patriots. I think, Mr. Baldwin, that you will agree with us that the counsels given in these two letters are indefensible from the standpoint of impartial police policy. Capt. H. practically turns the situation over to the business interests of San Pedro that may be affected, but I will not stop to discourse further concerning the contents of these letters, you can judge them for yourself. We shall immediately take up the matter with Chief of Police Vollmer.

*C. J. T.*