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JIM DAVIS, POLICE CHIEF

BY JOHN PONIARD

THE office of Chief of Police in Los Angeles has never been an easy task nor do its burdens lighten. Manipulated, persuaded and cajoled by the usual invisible but de facto city government of conniving interests, the Chief is compelled to play ball with the proper people or out he goes on his ear.

Chief James E. Davis has so far managed fairly well in remaining astride of the assorted steeds he is forced to ride, but it is apparent lately that he is not taking the hazards and hurdles placed in his path with the debonair confidence of yesterday.

In fact, the Chief's manipulators are fast wearing him down and when his broad shoulders can no longer carry the increasing load, he will go the way of his many predecessors.

Fortunately, in the circumstances, Chief Davis is not handicapped by an ascetic nature and his well-upholstered frame has cushioned jolts and jars that would have downed a more sensitive and less robust individual long ago. But his directors never know when to ease up, probably because of the abundant material to do their bidding known to be available in the police ranks.

Therefore, and behind the scenes, of course, the Chief's conniving bosses conjure up more and more grandiose schemes for Davis to execute, and this artful clique does not overlook seeing to it that Davis not only must carry the load but take the blame on anything that backfires. While he does his level best to please his managers, nearly everything he says or does

of late is quickly challenged by an increasingly-alert and suspicious citizenry. The spontaneous opposition everywhere to the notorious "Bums' Blockade" may be cited for illustration. From the start those in the know did not believe that Davis originated the idea but that it was conceived by the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce.

Although it was clearly illegal and manifestly inhuman, the shallow-brained instigators of the blockade believed it would be received with popular acclaim throughout the state.

But a storm of protest arose at once and the entire nation rocked with laughter at the ludicrous spectacle of Los Angeles police establishing outposts along the border of the state, the nearest of which was 250 miles from the city and the most distant more than 800 miles, and deciding on the spot who could enter and who could not.

However, the humorless men who hatched the grotesque idea and gave it to Davis to carry out, have not seen the joke yet. Davis, of course, is the goat as usual, and as intended, to bear the weight of this magnificent fiasco.

And evidence finally materialized to *prove* that the blockade was the handiwork of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce. It seems that before the police were sent to their border posts, the secretary of the Chamber of Commerce wrote a letter to Attorney General Webb requesting his opinion on the legality of the enterprise.

The Attorney General promptly responded that the patrol was not only illegal but that the police of Los Angeles had no

authority beyond the city's boundaries. Then when the blockade was established notwithstanding, and when weeks went by without the police being brought back where they belonged, the Attorney General gave copies to the newspapers of the opinion he had sent to the Chamber of Commerce. When the secretary of the Chamber of Commerce was questioned about the matter he was evasive and quite forgetful at first, but when pressed he remembered faintly that he had received such a letter but it had been mislaid, or filed, or something.

One thing only was clear in the confusion and that was that the Chamber of Commerce was much displeased that the general public had been informed that the blockade was a lawless affair and that the Chamber of Commerce had a hand in it.

Left alone in the front-line trenches, Davis had to defend the illegal act as best he could, while dodging the verbal missiles from an indignant populace, but those responsible remained secure in their dugouts well in the rear.

But perhaps Chief Davis has no one to blame but himself for his increasing troubles. Of all the many red baiters in Los Angeles, Davis is the noblest Roman of them all. For several years he has been warning Rotary Clubs, church congregations and women's organizations, of the imminent danger of a Communist revolution. And, according to Davis, anyone who protests against any injustice or intolerable human conditions, must have Communist affiliations. Apparently having taken a correspondence course in elocution the Chief tells his audiences in raucous monotone that Reds are leering from behind every billboard and dark cranny and nook, waiting for the go-signal from Moscow to begin their orgy of arson, rapine and murder. Davis really seems frightened himself over the impending catastrophe, yet it is noticeable that he does not peddle this flubdub before groups of working people or the unemployed. He probably senses the superior intelligence of those in tattered shirts over the well-dressed audiences to which he directs his chatter.

The latest menace to disturb the Chief's rest is the growing demand in the state to repeal the vicious Criminal Syndicalism Act. Readers of *PACIFIC WEEKLY* will recall the able argument in a recent issue by Assemblyman Richie to abolish this infamous law which is directed solely at the defenseless and dispossessed, and designed not only to make their few and feeble protests impossible, but a penitentiary offense as well.

Speaking before a women's club recently, Davis remarked that he had a list of 150 local intellectuals who advocated the repeal of this outrageous law and hinted that they were puppets of Moscow and should be boycotted. He was challenged immediately for these remarks and forced to alibi as usual. To indicate how his acts and utterances are scrutinized to-day, this affair was brought to the floor of the City Council by the all-too-few liberal members of that body, where it was debated and condemned at some length.

Davis, of course, denied everything. He said that he had been misquoted and misunderstood. But Epic Councilman Bennett introduced a resolution demanding the names of the 150 intellectuals and their alliance with the Communists, as indicated by Davis, "in order that this Council may have a clear picture of the activities of the police department in the enforcement of the Criminal Syndicalism law".

Councilman Lewis naively inquired if the term intellectual might not mean members of the City Council, but President Burns assured him that nobody would be so rash as to place Councilmen in that category.

It goes without saying that if there is any intellectual requirement to become a Communist, Chief Davis will never

qualify. But he worries, none the less, that there should be so many intelligent people working for the repeal of the Criminal Syndicalism law. Recently at a luncheon of the Juvenile Chamber of Commerce, Davis said that the rising Red tide against the Criminal Syndicalism law and all other American institutions was due to the apathy of the better element. The Reds must be proud and potent indeed over the Chief's compliments. Less than 300 are registered for voting but each one of these must be as effective as a division of infantry.