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Connecticut Big Business Vigilantes Threaten Labor Behind 'Defense' Cloak

By John Meldon

(Daily Worker Staff Correspondent)

STAMFORD, Conn., July 5.—

Scratch a super-patriot and you'll find a vigilante beneath the surface — scratch a vigilante and you'll invariably find a Fifth Columnist.

This town has its own crop of super-patriots and they have organized a "defense" movement that constitutes one of the greatest threats Connecticut labor has ever faced. It is a real Fifth Column, threatening the liberties, and perhaps later the lives of the people of this community and state.

Originally organized as the "Modern Minute Men," it has since been turned into the "Stamford Defense Committee," and due to political ambitions of certain

unscrupulous politicians connected with the outfit, it has also been affiliated with Republican Gov. Raymond E. Baldwin's so-called "Home Guard." The latter organization, newly created, is the vigilante movement on a state-wide scale. The "Minute Men" have the full backing, cooperation and guidance of high state officers of the National Guard, and retired regular army officers.

The Daily Worker in investigating the people behind the "Minute Men" here found, that in general, the instigators were about as reactionary a collection that can be found anywhere in the country.

SEASONED TORIES

The records of most of the leaders of the "Minute Men" show that they are seasoned tories, skilled in the art of fighting labor.

One of the gentlemen connected with the "Minute Men," the Daily Worker discovered, is an attorney in Stamford whose main mission in life at the moment is in acting as a purchasing agent to buy munitions and machine tools for the Allies. This same gentleman, one of the chief ranters of "patriotic" mouthings, is said to be a friend of the notorious Vladimir, Jabotinsky, Jewish fascist and leader of the Zionist Revisionists. Mr. Jabotinsky is very interested in munitions these days, and is here recruiting a "Jewish army" for the Allies, so his reported friendship with the gentleman from Stamford is undoubtedly more than mere personal affection.

The following are the organizers and leaders of the "Minute

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Men," and in the course of this article, the history of each will be given so that Connecticut citizens can decide whether or not they want to trust the "defense" of their state to such a group of enemies of labor.

THE BRASS HATS

A confidential letter and list of the organizers, secured by the Daily Worker, gives the following names among the organizers of the outfit:

Major Alfred N. Phillips, Jr., of Darien, Conn., in charge of organization.

Mr. Vincent Callahan, Stamford, chief of staff.

Mr. Prentice Hatch, Stamford, service of supply.

Daniel F. B. Hickey, naval. Samuel N. Pierson, Stamford, ordinance, ammunition.

Maj. Gen. Henry C. Hodges, retired, of Darien, board of strategy. Col. Howard Stout Neilson, Darien, in charge of horses.

Mr. Thomas J. Ryle, Stamford, intelligence.

Mr. Clarence Thompson, Stamford, finance.

Mr. Elliot Kingsbury, clerical.

Mr. Louis M. Altman, war veterans.

Mr. Gene Tunney, Stamford, recruiting.

Harry Junger, Glenbrook, military police.

Mr. John P. Keating, communication.

Rev. George Stewart, chaplain.

And Judge Matthew E. Hanna, Jr., in charge of the legal division.

Main instigators of the "Minute Men" in the above list were Maj. Phillips, former Congressman and heir to the huge Phillips Magnesia fortune, and Louis M. Altman, who is the attorney mentioned above, conducting the munitions business, and who is also an official of the Stamford Jewish War Veterans.

LABOR BAITER

Maj. Phillips has a reactionary labor-hating record as both a Congressman and a wealthy individual that will match either of the Hoovers—Herbert or J. Edgar. While serving in Congress from 1934 to 1938, Phillips achieved a unsavory reputation as one of the most savage foes against WPA and all forms of relief.

He repeatedly charged on the floor of the House that all forms of relief to the hungry unemployed were "demoralizing" and should be cut out altogether. He fought labor legislation tooth and nail and at times became so vicious that Connecticut organized labor, both CIO and AFL, turned their wrath on him and demanded that the people of the state never elect him to office again.

During the bitter struggle of the CIO in a collective bargaining pcell with Stamford's principal plant, the big Yale and Towne Lock Co., in 1937, Phillips, on the eve of the critical election, charged in Congress that both the CIO and the National Labor Relations Board were "red." His blast tipped the scale in favor of the company, which won the election

by a mere handful of votes. Ever since the loss of the election, the CIO has been weak in the city.

CONGRESSIONAL TORY

Phillips, while in Congress fought every aspect of liberal New Deal legislation in the days when the New Deal itself was progressive. Phillips was far ahead of the present crop of Washington Tories who are assaulting the Labor Act, the NLRB, the Wage-Hour Act and other vital measures. As far back as Nov. 18, 1937, Phillips proposed to massacre the National Labor Relations Act in virtually the same manner it is being accomplished today by the Smith Committee and other pro-war legislators.

Back on March 29, 1938 (before the war broke out) Phillips indignantly demanded that Congress appropriate \$3,000,000 for East Coast defense works, which he said was needed because, "our defense against attack along Long Island Sound and in New York Harbor is practically nil at the present time." This typical example of a fifth columnist didn't wait until the war started to begin talking about "invasions."

NAMED IN GRAFT PROBE

So much for Mr. Phillips, heir to millions, wealthy in his own right, who wants the people to let him organize an armed pogrom against their freedom and their homes.

Of his partner, Mr. Altman, we have already spoken. Sufficient to add that Stamford Jewish war veterans to whom the writer

spoke of him indignantly as a scheming, unscrupulous demagogue.

The next gentleman, Mr. Hickey, in charge of the naval division of the vigilante "Minute Men" has a record which can match that of his colleagues. Two years ago Mr. Hickey was Republican leader in the State General Assembly, and he was named by the Grand Jury in the Waterbury, Conn., investigation as having received 1,200 to 1,500 shares of a sanitation equipment company behind which the looting politicians conduct widespread bribery and graft. He was later released by a court which found that while he had received the shares, the evidence against him was not "sufficient." Because of the scandal, Mr. Hickey felt it advisable to retire from politics for a while. But he never retired from his reactionary activities, and is right back on the scene again ready to "defend" the people.

Mr. Prentice Hatch is in charge of Service and Supply and just the sort of person whom you would expect to find on an anti-labor outfit like the "Minute Men." Mr. Hatch is no less than a Morgan man, and is a tycoon in the power industry. He heads the Stamford division of the Connecticut Power and Light Company, and is an official of the giant power combine on a state scale. Nothing more need be said about Mr. Hatch. Anyone remotely connected with Morgan needs no further introduction.

Mr. Elliot Kingsbury, in charge of clerical work of the "Minute Men" is another fine specimen of reaction. He is secretary of the

Stamford Chamber of Commerce and drew applause from Stamford business circles last year when he launched a vitriolic attack against the unemployed and needy of the city who asked the Town Council for a renewal of the relief appropriation for the year.

FOUGHT CIO

Mr. Kingsbury's attack on the unemployed was nothing unusual in his activities and he merely went about it, according to Stamford folks, as part of his routine as a dyed-in-the-black Tory. Mr. Kingsbury also had a smeary finger in the pie during the vicious fight of the Yale and Towne Lock Co. against the CIO and contributed his bit to the anti-union drive. For his work, he is now assured to a life-long job as the big-shot of the local Chamber of Commerce.

Head of the Intelligence Division of the "Minute Men" is Mr. Thomas J. Ryle, the local counterpart of Jimmy Hines, political boss. Mr. Ryle for many years was the hard-fisted Democratic political boss of Stamford and, although a Democrat, spent most of his time raving against the New Deal in its liberal days. He was particularly incensed over the labor and relief legislation in the early days, and only made his peace with Roosevelt when the latter came back into the fold of reaction. Mr. Ryle lost his position of political boss when the current city Republican administration came into power, but he is still chief of the local Democratic Party.

The Rev. George Stewart takes to the "Minute Men" like a duck to water. The Rev. Stewart prides himself in being an "expert" on "revolutionists," and is the author of the cleverly written book, "With the White Armies in Russia." This book is a masterpiece of attempting to make a silk purse out of a White Guard pig's ear and was written as a warning to the capitalists of what will happen to them if they don't stamp out revolutionists before they can get things started. In writing his book, the reverend tailed all over Russia (white guard) during the revolution, doing "relief" work, and wrote the book on the basis of what murderers like Denikin, Kolchak and other counter-revolutionists told him.

Meanwhile, only last week the Rev. Stewart gave the Stamford public an inkling of what goes on in his ecclesiastical mind while addressing a banquet. Painting a lurid picture of the possibility of an invasion of this country, the Rev. said that the democratic form of government may prove impotent in such times, and went on to state flatly that if we need a semi-fascist form of government here, "we will have it!"

GENE TUNNEY'S PART

The "Minute Men" fascists fit nicely into the reverend's scheme of things. That's why he eagerly accepted the post of chaplain. Ex-heavyweight Gene Tunney is in charge of recruiting for the "Minute Men," according to the confidential memorandum in possession of the Daily Worker.

Ever since Mr. Tunney retired

from the ring and married a fortune, in addition to his own, he has steadily fought his way to the top ranks of reactionary circles in this country. At the moment, in addition to his "Minute Men" activities, Mr. Tunney is engaged in fighting the American Youth Congress for its anti-war stand and is trying to organize a counter-youth movement to combat the Geneva, Wis., youth convention.

Samuel N. Pierson, the local fifth columnist's arms and ammunition chief, as well as Col. Howard Sout Neilson, in charge of horses (sounds like Connecticut has a dose of terroristic night riders in store) can both be characterized in a few words like their pal, the Morgan man. Mr. Pierson is a big real estate operator and sits on the board of directors of several local banks. Mr. Neilson is one of the city's biggest bankers.

Mr. Clarence Thompson, the financial head of the "Minute Men," is the biggest banker of Stamford and has quite a history of his own. Mr. Thompson first came into prominence as a labor hater and earned his laurels away back on historic March 6, 1930 when the jobless of America swarmed on to the streets in the start of a battle that finally won unemployment insurance and relief.

In those days, Mr. Thompson was Police Commissioner of Stamford, and on March 6 directed a bloody assault on the demonstrating unemployed. Thirteen were arrested, including a man 65 years old, and in the presence and at the orders of Mr.

Thompson, all thirteen were brutally beaten in the police station. They were then taken singly upstairs and beaten again. All were horribly hurt, but Thompson would not allow medical care. Later, some had to be taken to a hospital. Mr. Thompson must be smacking his lips these days, contemplating what his "Minute Men" can do in the future when the starving ask for bread.

Last Thursday, a delegation of labor and civic leaders, speaking for the Connecticut Conference for Social and Labor Legislation called on Gov. Baldwin and told him that the "Minute Men" are outright vigilantes, organized, not as stated, for the purpose of "replacating the National Guard if it is called away on duty," but for the express purpose of combatting labor and the civil rights of the people. The Governor replied that he "would tolerate no vigilante groups" but committed himself no further than that general remark.

The "Minute Men" immediately changed their name, and opened a big headquarters on a busy Stamford street, at Bedford and Broad, calling themselves the "Stamford Defense Committee." Ironically enough, the floor above in the building is occupied by the Willkie campaign committee.

Labor in Stamford, as elsewhere throughout the state where vigilante fifth column groups are springing up, are alarmed and determined to fight against their growing and spreading. For labor knows that you simply have to scratch a vigilante to find a fifth columnist.