

Documents

ROSCOE FILLMORE

Early Socialism in the Maritimes

INTRODUCTION

To a generation of Maritimers Roscoe Fillmore is remembered mainly as “The Maritime Gardener”. In the 1950s his popular radio programme broadcast expert horticultural advice across the Maritime Provinces. Fillmore attracted national attention with the publication of four highly successful books on gardening, the first of which, *Green Thumbs*, appeared in 1953. For a period he was employed as head gardener for the Dominion Atlantic Railway and tended the gardens of Grand Pré Memorial Park in the Annapolis Valley. His own large nursery, established at Centreville, Nova Scotia in the 1920s, was a favourite calling place for devotees of the craft. All of this would make Fillmore’s reminiscences of some interest. But when he began to write his autobiography, another theme was uppermost in his mind. For most of his adult life Fillmore was also known as one of the region’s most articulate and dedicated “reds”. Having become a socialist at the age of 16, Fillmore led an active career in the Socialist Party of Canada before the First World War. In the 1920s he was a founding member of the Communist Party of Canada, and he remained staunchly committed to socialist ideals until his death in 1968. During the political isolation of the anti-communist years of the 1950s, Fillmore sat down to write his autobiography. The task was never completed, but the resulting manuscript takes the reader from his upbringing in Albert County, New Brunswick to the conclusion of his work as an agricultural expert in the Soviet Union in the 1920s. Fillmore was born in 1887 into an impoverished family living in the farming community of Lumsden, New Brunswick. His father worked by turns in the lumber camps, as a labourer in Saint John, and as a farmhand. Fillmore’s formal education began when the family abandoned the Lumsden homestead and settled in nearby Albert. In his early teens Fillmore left for Portland, Maine, and worked for several years in a railway shop, and it was in Portland that he became a socialist. Several times Fillmore also joined the annual harvest excursions, and while in western Canada furthered his political education in the railway construction camps of British Columbia and among the unemployed workers in western cities. By 1908 Fillmore had returned home to Albert, determined to sow the seeds of socialism in the Maritimes. He soon emerged as one of the most energetic Socialist Party of Canada organizers in the region. At its peak in the years before 1914, the SPC enjoyed vigorous growth in the Maritimes, especially in the region’s mining and manufacturing towns. Party locals existed in more than a dozen communities, newspapers like

Cotton's Weekly sold as many as 2000 copies a week, and a dedicated band of a few hundred socialists carried memberships in the SPC.¹ The following document is extracted from Roscoe Fillmore's uncompleted autobiography and begins with his account of his conversion to socialism in Portland.² The document adds to our knowledge of a popular Maritime personality and vividly recalls the history of early socialism in the Maritimes. At the same time, the autobiography is also a document of the 1950s. Throughout the longer manuscript we are warned repeatedly of the danger of nuclear holocaust, and as he reaches back into his memory to recreate the world of his youth, Fillmore unhesitatingly reaffirms his commitment to the cause of socialism.

NOLAN REILLY

Portland was not a large city then and still is not, but it was huge to my country-bred eyes and it was full of wondrous things. That was before the days of moving pictures, though there was already a place called The Bijou that showed animated cartoons. Vaudeville was in its heyday and I never tired of watching the wonderful stunts, the chorus girls, the tumblers, acrobats, hypnotists and sundry other acts that made up the recreation of that day. I never did succumb to the national craze, baseball.

At that time Portland had a theatre as well as vaudeville and I saw many plays. Try as I may, I remember only one, George Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman*. It was away over my head at the time and I suspect was too much for most of the audience. The rest are a haze though I did see at about that time various comic operas or musicals, two of which stick in my mind, *The Gibson Girl* and *The Boston Girl*. Also, summer stock companies performed at Old Orchard Beach and vaudeville was to be found at Riverton Park.

Grandma, with whom I was boarding, looked with jaundiced eye on the theatre. She had never been in one, and whips of scorpions wouldn't have induced her to set foot in one of those dens of iniquity. Being somewhat more grown up now than when she was in charge of our home, I argued and defended the idea and usefulness of recreation and entertainment, but Grandma laid down the law that I "would be much better employed reading my Bible" and nothing could shake her conviction. To her dying day she believed all those who had to do with the theatre were miserable sinners and very wicked people.

1 On the history of early socialism in the Maritimes, see David Frank and Nolan Reilly, "The Emergence of the Socialist Movement in the Maritimes, 1899-1916", *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 4 (1979), pp. 85-113, and J.K. Chapman, "Henry Harvey Stuart (1873-1952): New Brunswick Reformer", *Acadiensis*, V (Spring 1976), pp. 79-104.

2 I would like to thank Rosa Skinner, Centreville, N.S., for making the Roscoe Fillmore Papers available to me and other researchers at the Dalhousie University Archives.

One evening, strolling along Congress Street and into the Congress Square I walked into an experience that changed the whole course of my life I am sure. I was still a bookworm, the bookstores with their mountains of books and racks of magazines were almost Heaven to me. I was interested in almost everything and was a belligerent John Bull. I had even been fired from a job by a fanatical Yank who just wouldn't listen when I said our Canadian system of Government was better and more democratic than the American. He said, "Get to hell back among your herring chokers". Americans haven't changed much since then. They are still fanatical in their jingoism.

So strolling along the square I saw a small crowd listening to a soap-box orator and stopped. I became absorbed in what he had to say. I later learned he was Rev. George Littlefield of Massachusetts. I followed to the small hall which was Socialist Headquarters in Portland. A non-Socialist or anti-Socialist of course will never understand how a person can be taken in so quickly and easily as that, just as I find it impossible to this day to comprehend how any sensible, thinking person can resist the logic, the morality and ideology of Socialism. To me it means a decent human way to believe and live, and for a long time I was obsessed with the idea that all we had to do was explain its meaning to people and they would immediately begin to work and vote for the cooperative society. Alas, youth and its enthusiasms! That was in 1903, 56 years ago and though a large part of the world is today Socialist the people of my own country, Canada, are among its bitterest and most unreasoning enemies. I can only believe this largely due to U.S.A. influence.

Portland, Maine, like the rest of the State, voted dry but lived wet. For many years the State had been under a law prohibiting the sale of alcoholic beverages (at least 75 years I believe). Well do I remember the temperance orators who visited Albert occasionally and told us of the ideal conditions in Maine as compared with States and Provinces which had licensed bars. Imagine my amazement when I found more open bars in Portland than were licensed in St. John. There wasn't even a pretence at enforcing the law. I mention this only to introduce the fact that I became rather fond of beer and an occasional hot rum in the winter. I may have been well on my way to becoming a bar fly when I became aware of Socialism. Such danger did not exist after that revelation.

This philosophy, economic doctrine, or call it what you may, gave me an objective, an ideal, which has never failed me in all these years. At seventy plus a man hasn't the enthusiasm of youth and, if he thinks, he has modified his early views and of course I have done so as the years passed and the world changed, but I am still convinced that only the cooperative society, Socialism — Communism, can solve our problems. You, my friend, may gasp in wonderment at the gullibility of one who can believe a decent and equitable society may be built here and now. I never cease to wonder how a people have been hypnotized into agreeing to the ownership and control of their means of life by a small clique of

cartels and trusts, and the recurrent wars which could not be fomented without your consent and support.

Most Sundays we Socialists were on the street or at parks, ferry terminals, railway stations, distributing literature. It was not hard work but it exposed one to the sneers and contempt of many people. I found one day that I was no longer shy, that I could approach anybody and proffer a pamphlet, or if the recipient wanted an argument I could oblige. And finally I could stand on a box and talk to a group of people. Good training for any boy or young man.

I had finally found a steady job working for the Maine Central Railway in its locomotive repair shops at Thompson's Point. I liked the work and would probably have been there for years but for a matter of health. I wasn't as full of pep as a boy of my age should have been. Finally a doctor found a spot on one of my lungs and advised me to go back to my home and take on out-of-doors work.

My father had finally taken over the Albert Nurseries and there was a job at home doing work I liked better than machine shops. Grandma was convinced there was no cure for consumption and my father was frightened, but I am still around at a ripe age and my physical handicap now, aside from the usual things which come with age, is connected with the pump which circulates the blood and keeps us all alive. My lungs, though scarred, are sound.

I think I should record Grandma's attitude towards Socialism. She listened interestedly to my explanations and seemed impressed. She asked questions and they were intelligent. And then one day something anti-religious slipped out and she immediately sprang to the conclusion that my anti-religion, or shall we say skeptical attitude towards religion, was due to Socialism. From that day on she was belligerently anti-Socialist. A barrier had been erected and it never slipped. Of course, as relatives often will, she blamed my mistaken ideas on many things, the books I had read, bad company, absence from church and so forth. Many years later I heard her explain to somebody "I once thought Roscoe had something in this Socialism but it turned him against his religion and that was enough for me".

Youth is always cocksure, that is its strength and its weakness. Its strength in that it imparts courage to fight against the injustice that has always been rampant in our society, generation after generation; its weakness in that it leads to intolerance and the brusque and contemptuous brushing aside of old ideas and concepts which, though they may be erroneous, are still solidly held by millions whose support must be enlisted if we are ever to have Socialism. Despite all theories to the contrary, one doesn't enlist a convert by handing him a black eye or blasting, out of hand, the things he holds most sacred.

I was many years learning this. Grandma's attitude should have taught me something but it didn't. As a matter of fact Socialism had nothing to do with my attitude to religion, at least in the early days. For in those days, I had not got around to reading the classical Socialist works — my principal reading was of

various Socialist papers which were careful to take the position that a man's religion is a private matter, a principle to which I adhere today.

I had been reading such books as Huxley's *Lectures*, Tom Paine's *Age of Reason* and the speeches of Robert Ingersoll — these were the source of my skepticism. But the largest factor at that time was the vicious and scurrilous attacks on Socialism and Socialists that came from the pulpit of the Baptist Church in Albert. Rev. Mr. Snelling knew nothing of Socialism except that it was unpopular in that vicinity, so he thundered against it. His diatribes drove me away from the Baptist Church and led to my withdrawal as a member. A few years later this gentleman, as Pastor of a church on Grand Manan Island, found himself in a community that was almost solidly working class, possessed of an instinctive sense of solidarity and a strong leaning towards Socialism. He made something of a reputation for himself as a radical there! His Methodist contemporary, a Mr. Kirby, on the other hand didn't blow his top on Socialism. He was an elderly, calm and pleasant-spoken man who often discussed the question with me and was heard one Sunday morning to remark in his sermon that members of the congregation could greatly benefit their Church by showing some of the fervour the Socialists were showing. So I attended the Methodist Church though my skepticism was fast turning to unbelief. Besides the girl for whom I still had an eye sang in the Methodist Choir!

Were I privileged to live my life over again I would not mix Socialism with anti-religion. Personally I am an unbeliever. I know that I shall not change my convictions on these questions but I have learned to respect the opinions and convictions of others and to work with those who agree with me on the necessity for great economic and social changes without asking them, or caring, what they may believe about religion. I believe that had Socialists adopted this principle and stuck to it we might have changed the face of North America ere this, instead of finding ourselves almost controlled by the American Military and the supporters of World War III. I have long since discarded the idea that men can be converted to this or that idea by shock treatment or that they can be divested of erroneous political ideas by attacking their religious faith. Only the stupid and mechanically-minded hold to such methods, and the state of the Socialist — Communist movement today, particularly in North America and also in some European countries, demonstrates this.

The Maine Central Railway paid me off in silver dollars, a currency that was at that time still in wide circulation, and gave me a pass to Vanceboro and I was on my way home. Threat of doom as a result of consumption did not affect me — I was anxious to lead Albert to Socialism! On the train it was not difficult to find arguments. They raged all night. There was the most complete freedom of speech then and for many years thereafter on American trains. I have travelled considerably in that country and the past few years there are no arguments — few citizens dare lift voice in criticism of the U.S. Administration or policies,

much less a foreigner. To one who has crossed and re-crossed that line again and again for over 50 years the change is very obvious. The militarists and F.B.I. have done their work well — so well that two or three years ago when a reporter took a copy of the Declaration of Independence out on the street asking for signatures he could persuade none to sign!

Since I had been told not to work very hard by the doctor in Portland, my father, who still cherished the idea that I should get an education, persuaded me to go back to school. I was very willing; reading and study was not a heavy task. So I attended the Consolidated School for probably over a year. Long enough to get quite a ways into Caesar's *Commentaries*, Greek and even trigonometry.

By this time the little red school house had been done away with in a considerable number of school sections and the Riverside — Albert Consolidated School was functioning. I returned to school for a period and worked along to about the middle of Grade XI. I wrote essays on Socialism whenever the subject of compositions was left to the student and Mr. Geo. J. Trueman, who was Principal, marked these writings fairly and broad-mindedly. Those were the days when Lloyd George was Chancellor in Britain and his measures of taxation in order to pay Old Age Pensions seemed to me a long step towards Social Justice in a country that I considered steeped in the blood of its own and other peoples. A brave New World was rising! These things were discussed in school and I, with the arrogance and courage of youth, always had my say. I believe Dr. Trueman enjoyed it. He had studied for a year or two in Germany where there was even then a strong Socialist movement and Party with a good representation in the Reichstag. He apparently believed that all subjects should be discussed, even unpopular ones, so he welcomed the verbal bombshells I often tossed into the class.

However, I became very unpopular around the village. Our family had a good reputation as honest, hardworking people. I personally had had a good name as trustworthy, but I noticed that the storekeepers now began to watch when I came into the stores. I believed in an unpopular doctrine — presto, I had become a scoundrel and a disgrace to my deserving parents! Poor old Albert needed new ideas as much as or more than most places I know, but it was constitutionally unable to accept them. Admitted that I was young and in possession of altogether too little wisdom and too much conceit. I attacked their belief in the sacredness of property. These were not wealthy people, a few were well-to-do and they interpreted Socialism to mean that their property, for which they had toiled a lifetime, would go into a pool from which the lazy ne'er-do-well could live at ease. I was really trying to show them that ne'er-do-wells at the head of monopolies were living on the fat of the land at the expense of all of us. A few people became interested and they were not ne'er-do-wells, but on the whole Socialism was just about as dirty a word then as is Communism today.

But the wanderlust was on me — I was obsessed with the idea of travel and I

felt I must spread Socialism. So I sent a small advertisement to *The Sun*, a morning daily in St. John, N.B. asking that any Socialists in the Maritimes get in touch with me. Surprisingly there was quite a response and whenever I could raise the price, I travelled to visit these people and speak in their towns or villages. In 1905 or 1906 I got in touch with the Socialist Party of Canada headquarters in Vancouver, and from then for several years was an official but unpaid organizer of that Party.¹ I began to write for the *Western Clarion* of Vancouver and *Cotton's Weekly*, a left-wing paper in Cowansville, Quebec.

Moncton, New Brunswick, was one of my first targets and I spoke many times there and had quite varied experiences. I had several contacts there. My classified advertisement in the St. John paper had drawn a reply from the family of Mr. William Mushkat, a Moncton merchant. Several members of his family were Socialists. So when an excursion was run from Albert under the auspices of the merchants of Moncton I was on board the packet and held two meetings on the Main Street. I am unable to recall the date but it would be in 1905 I believe. A lot of curious people gathered around and there was no interference from the police.

I returned to Moncton many times. On one occasion Chief Rideout of the City Police sent a policeman to bring me to the City Hall. He informed me that I was obstructing traffic on Main Street and must quit. So rather than get into trouble I scouted and found two vacant lots along the street. I visited the office of the realtors who were offering these lots for sale seeking permission to hold meetings on them. I got only evasive replies and so that evening as usual I opened up on the sidewalk, a cousin, Clarence Hoar, and several others persuading the crowd to keep moving and avoid obstruction. Then a horse race was put on in front of my meeting right on the Main Street of Moncton. But there was no police interference.

However the Chief did send for me again and told me not to speak on the sidewalk again or he would be compelled to arrest and prefer charges against me. I replied, "That is your duty, mine is to speak". He looked at me, flabbergasted, then said, "I think we can find a place for you to speak" and a vacant lot was made available.

Labor Day, 1905, I think, we held a series of meetings in various parts of Moncton. Among others, Wilfrid Gribble, a Socialist Party of Canada organizer from Toronto, as well as a group from St. John, were on hand. I was speaking at a meeting in front of a hotel on Main St. A man interrupted and insisted on an answer to questions. He was told there would be a period for questions but became so insistent that a nearby policeman placed him under arrest

Evidence in the *Western Clarion* suggests Fillmore did not become directly involved with the Socialist Party of Canada until early 1908. Similarly, the description of Labor Day events in Moncton clearly refers not to 1905 but to 1909. See *Western Clarion*, 8 February 1908, 9 October 1909.

and there was no more trouble.

The next morning we appeared in Court to tell what had happened. We were youngsters and very uncompromising. My younger cousin was the first witness and his evidence was not taken because he refused to "kiss the book", that medieval custom that still persists as if to show how superstitious and unprogressive we are despite our boasting of education and culture. This custom should have gone down the drain long ago, but it was not important enough for us to risk the good name of Socialism by cluttering up the minds of the people with the idea that Socialism and anti-religion must go together.

Several of us behaved in the same way and the defendant was in a fair way to being dismissed when Adolph Landry, then representing the International Correspondence Schools of Scranton, Pa., passed a note to Chief Rideout, who was prosecuting. The note called attention to the passage of an amendment to the Canada Evidence Act in 1891, I believe, permitting the taking of a "solemn declaration" in lieu of the oath and giving such declaration the same weight as a statement under oath. The Magistrate, declaring he had never heard of such a thing, did call a 15-minute recess to look the matter up and obviously found it as we were recalled to the stand to tell our story after being warned by "His Honour" that unless we took the real oath he would not feel like accepting our story as true!

Meantime several small locals of the Socialist Party of Canada sprang up — Albert, St. John, Moncton, Newcastle, Fredericton and one or two others I believe. Wilfrid Gribble travelled to these places as well as through Nova Scotia.

This agitational work had its funny moments. My cousin Clarence for instance would often volunteer to set up the preliminaries to a meeting. He would often recite something just to draw together the beginnings of an audience. I shall never forget an evening in Moncton when all his efforts stopped perhaps four people who languidly leaned against trees and looked uninterested. Suddenly he turned to me and implored, "For God's sake take this crowd!"

I well remember some of those missionary expeditions. I was invited by the Miners' Union at Joggins Mines, at the head of the Bay of Fundy, to speak at a meeting of their union local. An excursion boat carrying the Albert Ball Team for a game with the Miners' Team was my transportation. The meeting was long and enthusiastic, in fact the first really sympathetic meeting I had talked to in the Maritimes. And when it was over there was just the smoke of the packet boat in sight well out on the Bay! So we adjourned to the street and resumed the meeting.

Most of the population of that little mining town heard at least a part of the oratory. There were friends and opponents in the audience and the arguments waxed fast and furious but all in good humor. It was my first contact with Nova Scotia miners. I was later to become well acquainted with them and to admire their instinctive solidarity and deplore their short memories. For Nova Scotian

miners in those days took some terrible beatings at the hands of the companies they worked for, the Governments they continued to vote for, and the general public which had no knowledge whatsoever as to their conditions of life and labour and cared less.

Our meetings and arguments went on for hours, until long past midnight, then a sympathizer took me to his home to sleep. I felt that I had been right — that it was only necessary to state the facts and people would flock to adopt the Cooperative Society.

Joggins miners told me where to go in Amherst to contact adherents of the old-country-style Labor Party. The result was a huge meeting one evening on Victoria Square. I spoke from the Band Stand and someone turned on the lights. In the midst of the oration the band arrived for their regular concert and patiently waited fully twenty minutes for the meeting to come to an end! At that time the then Chief of Police of Amherst whose name I think was Pipe or Pipes, was a reader of the *Appeal to Reason*, an old-time American Socialist Paper published in enormous editions in a town in Kansas, and considered himself a Socialist. The name of the mayor I have forgotten, but he also was friendly and I spoke from the same platform with him more than once in the next few years.

Those were the years of Canada's great railway expansion. The Rhodes-Curry Company, which has declined greatly in the past few years and has recently been sold, was at that time in its heyday, building many thousands of freight and passenger cars for the new railways. At each end of the I.C.R. railway station stood a sign in bold lettering "Busy Amherst". One night the lettering was changed to read "Boozy Amherst"! It was a booming town. Factories were being built — some of them never did operate. Robbs, now the Robb Engineering Company, was doing a big business. The town looked forward to being the metropolis of the Maritime Provinces. Alas, "the best laid schemes of mice and men aft gang alee". Amherst long since has lost its boom town nature and, while it is growing as are most places in Canada, that growth is very much slower and perhaps sounder.

At the time of which I write, the Amherst workers were without organization and anxious to achieve it. W.A. Fillmore of Amherst, who had once been financially interested in the Albert Nurseries, at about this time proceeded to plant a nursery at Blair's Lake. I was probably the only young man in the Maritimes who had had considerable nursery training and experience and so in the spring of 1905 or 1906 I believe, I took charge of the planting operations. So I was in Amherst a great deal and that pleased me mightily as I was never happier than when in contact with wage workers and expounding my doctrines.

I worked mightily both as a nurseryman and a would-be labor organizer. I made many solid friends among older men. Among them I remember a number of solid Socialists of that day, Dan MacDonald and George McLeod, tailors. There were others among the tailors whose names to my regret have completely

gone from my memory. There were John Logan and Tom Godfrey, Scotsmen and moulders who, with their wives, were Socialists. When a Car Workers Union was eventually organized John Logan supported me solidly in opposing a color bar in that Union. I once refused point blank to speak to a Union Meeting unless the color bar was dropped. There was an Arthur MacArthur, originally from Albert County, whom I remembered from my boyhood and found to be a staunch supporter. A son, George, still lives in Amherst. All these men and many others, much older than I, have of course long since passed on.

I once dropped into Havelock, N.B., the birthplace of my mother, and held a series of street meetings. These meetings stirred enormous interest. Uncles, aunts, great-uncles and aunts, cousins, etc. lived there and in the vicinity. Long but mostly good-natured arguments went on far into the night. One night in the midst of the meeting it started to rain. The town barber, whose shop was close at hand, sent word for all to come inside and finish the meeting there. The whole idea of Socialism was new in most places and the forces that were a little later to cut loose a barrage of abuse and vilification and make it a dirty word had not yet gotten down to real work. Many times in those days storekeepers offered the use of their front platforms from which to speak.

This was the period when I was becoming deeply interested in Labor and I spent some time in Springhill, Pictou County and Cape Breton as organizer for the Socialist Party of Canada. I was permitted to speak before most of the U.M.W. locals in these places and became quite familiar with the miners' story and grievances. I remember very well several occasions at Springhill during the "long strike" 1909-11 when foreign miners, mostly German and Belgian, arrived to work in the mines, to scab. The Company, with the active help of the Government of Canada, had advertised abroad of the wonderful opportunities in Canada. No mention was made of the fact that the Nova Scotian miners were on strike. European miners were then and are now well organized into militant unions and only under false pretences could these men be induced to come to Canada to scab.

In most cases the Company, with its armies of police as well as the military at its disposal, were able to bring the men from Halifax docks to the mines without the miners being able to contact them. A high fence surrounded the mining property and living quarters were provided inside this fence or "bull pen" as the strikers called it.

But the newcomers hadn't been long in the bull pen before the news leaked to them that they were scabbing. German and Belgian speaking miners were to be found among the strikers and these were mostly Socialists. If my memory serves correctly, the first breaks were made when strikers lined up near the bull pen fence and sang Socialist songs. Recognizing the tunes the men inside the pen came out and practically all of them joined the strikers. A considerable group of them afterwards found jobs in Joggins Mines and elsewhere. I very well

remember interviewing several of these men, German miners, at Joggins and finding they were members of the German Social Democratic Party and the Miners Federation of that country. They had been lured by promises of big pay and had no knowledge at all that they were expected to scab. The company spent a lot of money for a considerable period bringing such men from Europe and derived no benefit at all from these expenditures.

As Secretary of the Maritime Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Canada in 1909 I arranged a tour of the Maritimes for William D. Haywood who travelled across Canada under the Socialist Party auspices. I met Haywood in St. John, N.B. and found that a blunder had been made by the local comrades so that there was no meeting arranged for him that night.

We strolled across King Square towards the head of King Street where the Salvation Army was holding forth. Said Haywood, "Why don't we hold a meeting?" Said I, "As soon as these people are through." As the Army marched away I shouted "Fellow workers" and the meeting was on but not for long. In five minutes all traffic on King Street was jammed where it enters the Square. Pat Killen, the old Irishman who headed the St. John Detective Bureau, or whatever they called it, had nabbed me and ordered me to move on. I replied, "You didn't stop the Salvation Army".

Said Pat, "Are you going to quit or will I have to take you in?" I replied "I'm not quitting", so I was marched across the Square and locked up. That was a rather tough night. After all I wasn't much more than a youngster (18 I think) and the majesty of the law does have scary appearance especially when one is locked in a 6 x 8 cell with the soft side of a narrow plank for a bed. And there were some drunks in that night. They were noisy and maudlin. All in all I got very little sleep. I had not known it before but I found myself a victim of claustrophobia that night.

St. John at that time had the chain gang in operation. Jail prisoners were marched out each morning to do city work. A heavy ball and chain were attached to one ankle to reduce to zero the chances for escape. I didn't fancy this experience but bolstered up my courage before morning to face even this.

The next morning we were taken into Police Court and I sat for perhaps two hours watching the derelicts lined up and tried — one man for giving his wife a black eye — several drunks, etc., and finally my case came up. Old Magistrate Ritchie presided and though he had a tough reputation he was very gentle and patient with me. He listened to my explanation of Socialism, remarked that it had been his impression that only Jews were Socialists and then asked if there was anybody to speak for me. Peter Lynch [?] an active Labor man in the City at once stood up. The upshot was that I was turned loose with a warning.