

# My Story—By a Spy for the Interests

## No. 2—I Meet Palmer—His Plan to Terrorize League Farmers—I Become a League Organizer—The Men Behind Palmer—The "Red Card" Trick

BY RALPH A. MOORE

**B**EFORE leaving Kansas City to work against the Nonpartisan league in Nebraska, the manager, W. H. Ware, instructed me to report to their general agent, J. P. McGrath, at Omaha. He said that McGrath would explain in detail my duties in Nebraska.

Upon arriving in Omaha on April 10, 1918, I called McGrath on the telephone and told him who I was and that I had come to take up the investigation of the League for the Thiel Detective agency. McGrath seemed angry, and said the Kansas City office should have sent me three or four days earlier. He said his clients were very anxious that someone should go to Lincoln at once. He asked me to remain at the station in Omaha and catch an early morning train to Lincoln. I refused, telling him that I had the permission of Manager Ware to remain in Omaha during the day and that I did not intend to go to Lincoln until that evening.

Thereupon McGrath asked me to come to his rooms at the Harley hotel, at Twentieth and Farnham streets. I arrived at the hotel about 10 a. m. and saw McGrath. He told me that, while he did not know the full details of the plans for the investigation, he would introduce me to an attorney who was handling the investigation for the clients of the Thiel agency.

We started from the hotel and went first to the postoffice. On the way McGrath told me the investigation would have been started a month earlier but for the fact that the business men of Omaha who were financing the investigation feared to give the attorney complete charge of the necessary funds. McGrath went on to say that the attorney had approached him a month before with the plans for the investigation. Afterwards, however, arrangements were made whereby the agency was sure of collecting its fee from sources other than the attorney.

McGrath told me that the Business Men's Protective association of Omaha was financing the investigation and that Joe Barker, a wealthy Omaha business man, had promised to see to it that all bills of the Thiel Detective service were paid.

### "INVESTIGATION" PLANS OUTLINED BY PALMER

By this time we had reached the Bee building. We went to room 206, where McGrath introduced me to J. P. Palmer, explaining, as he did so, that Palmer was directing the investigation for our clients. After introducing me, McGrath left the office and I remained in Palmer's office. Palmer then plunged into the plans for the inquiries. He said that certain business men of Lincoln and Omaha were

excited about the farmers of Nebraska organizing themselves into the National Nonpartisan league, and that these farmers intended to get control of the state legislature and that they also intended to control the packing houses, creameries, terminal elevators and banks.

"These damned fool farmers have to be stopped," he almost shouted at me.

Palmer told me that my business would be to get evidence that the officials and organizers of the League were pro-German and disloyal. Palmer said he wanted me to go to Lincoln, Neb., and keep him in daily touch with what the League was doing. He said he wanted the names of all the organizers and the territory in which they were working and, if possible, the names of the towns and hotels where they stayed.

He said he wanted this information sent di-

rectly to him instead of through the Thiel Detective agency, because the information would be useless to him if it was several days old, as his idea was to get up "patriotic mobs" to break up any meetings of the farmers and to chase the League organizers out of the county. He said he didn't want to see any of the organizers hung, but he certainly wanted to make it warm for them.

Palmer suggested that I go to Lincoln, and, if possible, obtain a position as organizer with the League. He said he understood that the League maintained a school for training organizers, charging a \$50 tuition fee. He said he didn't want me to attend this school, but that he wanted me to begin organizing as soon as possible. If I could stay around Lincoln, he said, he would like it, since he thought I could obtain more valuable material through the Lincoln headquarters. He said he would try to arrange an excuse that would permit me to stay in Lincoln most of the time.

Palmer then went on to tell me that I would find the state council of defense deeply interested in putting the League out of business. He then advised me, in case I needed any help in Lincoln, to call on any member of the state council of defense and tell them who I was, as they knew that such an investigation was under way.

### LETTER OF INTRODUCTION TO DEFENSE COUNCIL HEAD

He offered to give me a letter of introduction to someone in Lincoln. He first suggested Herbert Gooch, editor of the Lincoln Star, then ruled against it because "Gooch was rattleheaded." Then he suggested Henry Richmond, a "friend of his he thought he could trust," but changed his mind again and finally wrote a letter introducing me to Mr. Joyce, chairman of the state council of defense, and advised me to call on him as soon as I reached Lincoln.

Palmer stated during the course of the conversation that the business men whom he was representing had plenty of money and were willing to spend it freely if they could get results. We were standing near a window in Palmer's office. He waved his hand toward a distant building and said: "Joe Barker, a very rich man, is greatly interested in this investigation, although he is practically retired from active business."

He went on to say that Barker was anxious to see the League put out of business and was willing to spend a great deal of money to do so. He closed our interview by saying:

"I suppose you know, Moore, that the Omaha Business Men's Protective association is back of this deal to bust up the farmers' organization."

That night, accompanied by my wife, I left Omaha and arrived in Lincoln. The next morning I called on Mr. Joyce and gave him my letter of

### THE "FRAME-UP"



In their efforts to discredit the farmer movement the opposition resorted to many political tricks, but none has been more despicable than the effort to fasten on the movement the charge of pro-Germanism and disloyalty. In these stories by Mr. Moore, the manner in which the League enemies expected to accomplish this plan is told. It was "anything to win," and at the time Americanism was the best camouflage the big interests had to hide their own designs and cast suspicion on the farmers.

On these pages is presented the second in a series of articles by Ralph A. Moore, a private detective, hired to spy on the League in Nebraska. This story in many points is one of the most important in the series. Next week's story will tell of one of the elaborate plans to smash the League that went awry, and will disclose a number of other tricks of the farmers' enemies to wreck their organization. In spite of all this, the farmers "stuck," and they now are busy trying to undo some of the things the politicians at Lincoln did last winter. Next week's story will bring us into the heart of the plots against the League, all directed from the office of Palmer, acting for the business men of Omaha and other cities in the state. With the story will be presented more documents, letters between McGrath and Ware, detailing the progress of the "investigation," as Moore tells his story. The most sensational of these letters are yet to appear. Watch for the third installment of "My Story—By a Spy for the Interests," in next week's Leader.