

COPY

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

Washington, D. C.

March 18, 1937

Mr. William F. White 645 New Federal Bldg.

St. Louis, Missouri

Dear Sir:

As agreed during our conversation March 17th, relative to working conditions as well as the political situation of the firemen of Kansas City, I will attempt to briefly outline the whole affair as it now exists.

First, the department is controlled and regulated politically and at the present time only Democrats are employed and retained.

All members of the department, without exception, are compelled to pay campaign assessments, belong to political clubs of various wards, and also belong to the Jackson County Democratic Club.

Firemen are compelled to poll the entire city before any and all elections, on their own time off. Their wives, sisters and other female relatives are in many instances, compelled to act as judges or clerks at all of the elections. Several wives of the firemen have been convicted at the Federal election trials, and many more will be indicted before the sixteen wards of the city will have been investigated and the trial complete.

All of the above conditions have been forced on the firemen since 1926 or since the adoption of the present charter. Since January 1st, 1929 and continuing to May 1st of each year, the firemen have been coerced into signing, what is familiarly known as a voluntary pay reduction slip, permitting the City Treasurer to deduct 25% from their paychecks, while on the face of this order it appears to be one of a voluntary measure. During the eight years of this procedure several men have been discharged for failure to comply with the request and many others reprimanded. All failing to comply have suffered the extreme penalty.

On January 7th of this year the firemen refused to continue to sign the pay reduction slips, and so stated to the City Manager, as well as other powers connected with the city. Ward bosses of the city immediately summoned members of the fire department to their

offices and warned that failure to sign the pay reduction slips would be sufficient reason for a dismissal from the service. The firemen refused and countered by filing suit to recover moneys deducted from their pay checks over the period of time from January 1929 to and including January, 1937.

The City Manager retaliated by having an ordinance introduced and passed by the city council, reducing the salaries of all city employees for the remaining months of the fiscal year - namely January - 25%, February, March and April - 50%.

The firemen immediately initiated a petition, soliciting 5% of the signatures of the citizens voting in their last election, for an ordinance of restoration of the 1929 Schedule of salaries, by council. They were successful in getting the signatures of 14,950 citizens - 3,500 more than the 5% required. This petition has been filed with the City clerk for verification.

In the event the Council refuses to act or reject the petition requirements, then it becomes necessary for the fire fighters to again solicit the voters for their signatures to the same amount previously obtained, and if successful, will force a special election to settle the controversy.

The action of the firemen in defiance of the autocratic demands made upon them by the various political bosses of the city, has caused them to suffer many inconveniences, and will no doubt, if allowed to continue, cause many more to lose their positions.

There is much more that could be said upon this affair, but don't wish to trouble you with all the details.

This morning I received the information that the Ward Bosses are calling all firemen to their offices and informing them that if they, the firemen, wish to retain their positions on the fire department, they shall sign an agreement with the Ward Boss that they will sever all connections with Local 42, International Association of Fire Fighters, or stand dismissed. This action is the full enforcement of the Yellow Dog Contract, which is in strict violation of all legislation, either state or Federal - protecting all workers in their rights to organize, to select representatives of their own choosing and the rights of collective organizing.

Thanking you for your interest in our behalf, I remain

Sincerely,

FWB/MB

(Signed) Fred W. Baer President