

'POLITICAL RACKET' IS LAID TO CAPONE

Gangster Is Becoming a Power in the Chicago City Hall, According to Rumors.

SAID TO CONTROL UNIONS

Strong Pressure Is Reported in Favor of His Lieutenant for Street Commissioner.

Special to The New York Times.

CHICAGO, April 19 (Saturday).—The Chicago Tribune this morning will say:

Through the corridors of Chicago's City Hall has flown the news that Alphonse (Scarface Al) Capone, seeking new realms of profit, has invaded the stronghold of political patronage, planning to seize public jobs, public contracts, control of budgets and the power that attends it all.

"It is a whispered message that pervades the halls. Aldermen will speak of demands they have received, and of threats that came with them; officials will reveal extensive plans of Capone and his horde to seize control of whole city departments. But they speak only after mentioning their homes and families, and after exacting a promise that they will not be quoted as the tellers.

"Therefore, the chronicling of Capone's present plans for new domain is not done by the customary method of setting down the statements and charges of the principals, but by relating the facts thus secretly imparted.

"Capone, it is told, has discovered upon his return from a Philadelphia prison that the beer and liquor business is no longer such a prospering concern. It has been going the way of earlier pursuits of Chicago gangs—the labor racket, vice and gambling, business racketeering and the like. A new era must come.

"So it is said that Capone decided to bid for political power, and the means to this end, found close by, is the voting strength of labor unions. The gang leader has gained control of several unions and is angling for control of others.

"In this activity there is, first, the wealth of dues and fees collected from the union members, then the tribute exacted from builders and contractors and, finally, the political power exerted through the strength of the union men at the election polls.

Say He Named Aide to Office.

"Daniel Serritella, city sealer, president of the Newsboys' Union, friend of Mayor William Hale Thompson and close henchman of Capone, was selected by the latter, according to the word from the City Hall, to become City Superintendent of Streets and Alleys, with control over an annual budget of \$7,000,000 and over 3,000 jobs, with supervision also over \$5,000,000 spent every year to repair the city streets.

"This was one phase of the Capone campaign.

"The other was the passage of an ordinance to create a bureau of plumbing. This ordinance has been advocated strongly—how strongly has been told by several Aldermen—by the plumbers' union, of which William (Billygoat) Taglia, another lieutenant of Capone's, is the dominant head.

"The plan, as it has been described, has been to have a Capone man appointed commissioner of the Bureau of Plumbing, with power to hire and fire the city plumbers, to create restrictions and rules for building installations, resulting in a czardom over all plumbing work in the city.

"The aldermen have expressed their fears that the right of controlling patronage in these two branches is passing from themselves to a gang leader and his men. And they wonder, if this works out as they fear, will Capone not reach out beyond the street cleaners and the plumbers into the other unions?

"Builders and contractors and manufacturers also have declared, but in the same sotto voca as the Aldermen and with the same fears of exposure to gang reprisal, that the building trades are threatened with a worse reign of gang sabotage than in the days of Mossy Enright and Big Tim Murphy.

Pressure Reported Lifted.

"It appeared tonight that the pressure for the appointment of Serritella as Superintendent of Streets and Alleys has been lifted. The heat of publicity had forced abandonment of the plan, it was reported.

"Richard W. Wolfe, Commissioner of Public Works, who is to appoint the superintendent, and who has been noticed by aldermen and others in frequent conferences with Serritella of late, asserted that there is no basis for the report that Serritella will be named. Mr. Wolfe also denied that the Capone element is behind the plumbing ordinance, but he declined to express favor or disapproval of the ordinance.

"In the Capone lineup for the political campaign should be mentioned also, parenthetically also, the City Hall reports that Danny Stanton, gunman in taxi wars, beer runner and Capone vassal, has usurped power over the City Hall Clerks' Union, and that in the recent primary Stanton, with a crew of gangsters, saw to serving the political interests of candidates favored by the Capone-Serritella entente.

"Capone also has control, through Mike Carrozza, of the street sweepers' unions, and in this manner he has been able to name the laborers hired to clean the city's streets. It was to enlarge this activity, and to gain direct control of the entire department, that Capone sought to force the appointment of Serritella.

"In this manner the gangster would dictate in what wards the streets should be repaired. This has always been regarded as a heavy club over an Alderman's head. If he challenged the administration of the street department, the streets of his ward go to pieces and his constituents send another man to the council.

Strong Pressure Reported.

"The finance committee was to have been the battleground at which the Serritella appointment would be fought. The council, in adopting the budget last January, failed to appropriate for the job of superintendent of streets. It had not been filled since the death of John J. Byrnes.

"Before Commissioner Wolfe could appoint a man it would be necessary for the council, in a supplementary budget, to appropriate for the position. Therefore, the word has gone to many of the Aldermen that Serritella was to be named, and that they would be compelled, in one way or another, to vote for restoration of the job in the budget.

"The methods of the Capone heads of the plumbers' union, used to ob-

tain Aldermanic support for the Plumbing Bureau audience, have contributed to the unrest of the council chamber. One Alderman told with evident fearfulness how a business agent had approached him in a dark corridor.

"I was told to be for the ordinance, and then, by way of showing me the consequences of a vote against it, a pair of hands gripped my throat while the agent told me it'd be too bad if I didn't vote right, said one Alderman.

"In another case an Alderman said the agent had stood with his hand significantly on his hip while he lobbied for the ordinance. Other Aldermen told of receiving direct threats over the telephone.

"It's a new kind of lobbying to us," said one worried councilman, "but please don't quote me—I have a family."

Plumbers Ignore Secretaries.

"The plumbers' union representatives have found a new way to cut through the secretarial breastworks which have always kept intruders out of Commissioner Wolfe's office. It has been noticeable to many of the employes of the office that when these men call they brush the secretaries aside and rattle on Wolfe's door until they get in. Their entrance at one time was marked with pounding on the glass top of the door to the Commissioner's inner office.

"The Civic Federation of Chicago has issued strong condemnation of the plumbing ordinance; on the ground that it would only create a number of new political jobs. The present system of placing city plumbers under the control of the Water Bureau and of the Health Department, to which a number are assigned, is entirely satisfactory, the federation believes.

"A menace also exists in the ordinance's provision for control over the plumbing. One expert pointed out that the plumbing commissioner could have the code revised so that many existing plumbing installations would not conform to the new code, and the commissioner or his aides could then go to owners of large buildings and say:

"You will have to pay us or change all your plumbing installations. Or, in case of a slump in the plumbing trade, the code could be changed to require much new work to be done on old buildings, providing work for plumbers at the expense of citizens.

Ordinance Still Pending.

"The ordinance has been shunted about the City Hall since it was first introduced in a meeting of the Finance Committee by Alderman Oscar Nelson. He didn't go further than to say:

"This was handed to me and I am introducing it here.' After a few meetings with no discussion, the ordinance was referred to Commissioner Wolfe.

"Mr. Wolfe shunted it along to Bernard W. Cullen, then superintendent of the Bureau of Water Pipe Extension. Cullen, a union plumber himself, expressed disapproval of the ordinance.

"In a few days Cullen was named in charges before the Civil Service Board and was promptly suspended by Commissioner Wolfe. The charges, which accused Cullen of certifying an employe on the payroll who had not worked for the time given, were presented to Wolfe by John P. Allen, a division superintendent under Cullen, in the presence of Charles Mulcahy, William O'Brien and B. L. Cruise, who are business agents and officials of the plumbers' union.

"But Wolfe denied the union men had had any hand in the Cullen ouster."