

# BECKER WILL COME TO LEO FRANK'S AID IF DEFENSE CALLS

**Former Master Mechanic,  
Who Figures in Murder  
Note Mystery, Talks to  
New York Reporters of  
Phagan Case.**

## **CLAMOR FOR A VICTIM CONVICTED LEO FRANK SAYS DETECTIVE BURNS**

**Under Similar Conditions,  
Believes Any Other Man  
Would Have Had to Con-  
tend With Same Public  
Sentiment.**

New York, March 17.—(Special.)—Henry Frederick Becker, of 41 Maple avenue, Covington, promises to be an important witness in the defense of Leo M. Frank, the young pencil factory superintendent of Atlanta, who has been convicted of the murder of Mary Phagan, a 16-year-old factory employee, on April 26, 1913.

Becker was the master mechanic at the National Pencil factory of Atlanta, in the basement of which the Phagan girl's body was found, from September, 1908, to December, 1912. Becker's connection with the case centers about the blank paper pads, one of which was used to write the "death notes" found beside the body of the murdered girl.

Mr. Becker was seen at his Irvington home today, and said he was prepared to explain what he knows about the tell-tale paper pads.

### **Becker Shows Signature.**

Becker said that when he worked in Atlanta he signed all of the factory orders. He readily acquiesced when asked to sign his name hurriedly in the fashion in which he said he always signed the factory orders, ending the last letter of his name with a flourish back over the signature.

"It was I who hired Mary Phagan," he said. "That was about a year before I left, or about the last of 1911. While I was there she worked in two different departments, first at a machine on the fourth floor and later directly under my supervision in the metal department on the second floor.

"During the entire time I was there I never knew Mr. Frank to make any advances toward any girl."

Asked if he would identify the signature of the blank, Becker said that he would be glad to have the authorities call on him for this or any testimony he could give regarding Frank's character.

### **Believe Note Carbon Copy.**

Frank's defense contends that the original order, of which sheet the strip on which Conley wrote the murder notes, is said to be a carbon copy, was made out to the Cotton States Belting and Supply company, between September 10 and 15, 1909, by Becker, who at that time was master mechanic at the pencil plant.

Becker subsequently resigned. All the papers that had been accumulated during his administration were thrown in the rubbish pile down in the basement, where friends of Frank believe Conley obtained the sheet of paper on which the murder note was written.

Frank's friends argue that this second sheet of the order No. 1018—which are the figures contained on the murder note—was carried into the basement where Mary Phagan's body was found, with other papers sent there

at the time of Becker's departure from the pencil factory.

## SAYS CALL FOR VICTIM CONVICTED LEO FRANK

Declaring that he is absolutely after the truth and that when he finishes his investigation Atlanta will know beyond a shadow of a doubt who is the guilty party, William J. Burns, the great detective who has taken up an active investigation of the Phagan murder, talked freely to a Constitution reporter last night on the subject of the part that popular prejudice has played in the conviction of Leo M. Frank.

Mr. Burns was asked: "Do you think that prejudice against a Jew has played any considerable part in the Frank case?"

He answered: "Undoubtedly there has been and is in Atlanta prejudice against Frank because of the fact that he is a Jew."

"Do you think that this prejudice exists among the class of level-headed, thinking people?" the reporter asked. "Most certainly not," was Mr. Burns' reply. "Such a qualification as that absolutely eliminates all possibility of such prejudice."

"At the time of the trial," continued the reporter, "do you think that the prejudice against Frank, if there was such, was due to the fact that he was a Jew, or to the fact that the public wanted some man to answer for the murder of Mary Phagan, and for the first two weeks, which was long enough for public sentiment to crystallize, the circumstantial evidence centered on Frank alone?"

### Why Frank Was Convicted.

"I think that the conviction of Frank's guilt which formed in the public mind before his trial, was due entirely to the fact or condition which existed before his trial, which was, namely: There had been a number of murders and homicides in Atlanta for which no one had been made to answer. When the murder of this innocent little girl occurred it was more than a just and sane public could stand for. They immediately demanded the discovery of the murderer of this victim. For the first several weeks before his trial the entire evidence, even though circumstantial, pointed to Leo Frank, and public sentiment naturally crystallized upon him. If any other

man had been the victim of these circumstances, I do not doubt but that he would have been in the same fix as Frank himself. At that time I do not believe that prejudice against a Jew figured to any great extent in the case."

Mr. Burns stated positively that he had discovered new clues and evidence in the Frank case, but declined at this time to disclose them.

He was asked whether they would be made public before the motion extraordinary of the defense for a new trial, and he stated at this stage of the investigation he could not state positively whether they would be revealed or not, but that he was of the opinion that in all probability they would be made public.

"I am in this case to the finish," he said. "I am going to find out the truth of this matter. The Frank case has not only reached a status of national importance, but a state of international importance. For this reason I cannot afford to overlook anything in it. I am going to the bottom of the matter, and when I am done, depend upon it, Atlanta and the world will know who is the murderer of little Mary Phagan."

Mr. Burns stated that he will be in Atlanta until the end of the Frank case, except for one or two important business engagements which might call him out of the city for a day or so at the time.

### Detectives May Clash.

Indications were Tuesday afternoon that there is likely to be a clash between Detective Chief N. A. Lanford and Detective William J. Burns, in their proposed conference.

In talking with a reporter for The Constitution, Lanford was asked if he would reveal to Burns the new evidence which he is said to have accumulated during recent developments of the Leo Frank case.

"I will show Burns everything that has gone before the courts," answered the chief.

"But will you disclose this new evidence you are said to possess?" he was questioned.

"I had rather not say. Mr. Burns and I will compare notes if he meets us on neutral ground."

### Lanford Non-Committal.

"Then, do you mean to say that you will withhold this new evidence?"

"I will not say whether or not we have any new evidence, or whether or not it would be shown Burns. I won't commit myself one way or the other."

A member of Chief Lanford's staff—whose name is withheld—recently stated that Lanford had in his hands an amount of evidence having a direct bearing on the Frank case. Some of it, he declared, was in refutation of newly-discovered evidence recently given to the public by the convicted man's defense.

It is rumored that Detective Burns will seek to view whatever evidence Chief Lanford holds. That such evidence is in existence is evinced by the numerous secret conferences that have taken place of late between Solicitor Hugh Dorsey and Chief Lanford, including a number of the star detectives of police headquarters.

"All that I want from Mr. Burns," said Lanford Tuesday afternoon, "is assurance of mutual co-operation. If he is in need of my assistance, he surely shall have it. However, I can not say anything regarding the new evidence, as I have never yet corroborated the fact that it is in existence."

### Defends Frank's Jury.

As a consequence of the sermons delivered in three Atlanta pulpits Sunday night, asking a new trial for Frank, J. T. Ozburn, one of the twelve jurors who returned the verdict of guilty, has written the following communication to The Constitution:

Editor Constitution: Three men, speaking from as many pulpits in Atlanta on last Sunday, are quoted as charging that the trial of Leo Frank, for the murder of Mary Phagan, was unfair (one of them, if correctly quoted, claiming that in Atlanta it must, of necessity, be so) and demanding that the verdict be set aside.

"As a member of the jury which convicted Frank, I wish to say a few words. Whether or not these men who so bitterly arraign the city of At-

lanta, the judge and the jury, heard the testimony, I do not know, but this I do know:

"The jury heard all the testimony and claim to have sufficient intelligence and honesty to weight the evidence without prejudice and to render the verdict according to the law and the testimony, notwithstanding the opinion of the holier-than-thou gentlemen to the contrary.

"We were not trying 'yellow dogs,' 'sheep-killing dogs,' nor dogs of any other color or character, but a white man charged with a heinous crime, and, speaking for myself, and, as I believe, for every member of the jury, realized the solemnity of the responsibility resting upon us.

"In these charges from the pulpits, reference was made to the 'inflamed condition of the public mind.' The jury, sworn to decide the case according to their understanding of the law and the testimony, were not listening to the 'inflamed condition of the public mind.' The testimony was strongly corroborated by sworn witnesses as well as by circumstantial evidence in every point which influenced the minds of the jury.

"After listening to all the testimony and all the arguments on both sides, and carefully and honestly considering every point, the jury believed, and still believes, that the verdict was righteous and the sentence just.

(Signed) "J. T. OZBURN."

### Two Conferences in Tower.

Detective Burns spent most of his efforts Tuesday in two lengthy interviews with Leo Frank in the prisoner's cell. At one time during the afternoon, he was accompanied by Don C. Seitz, manager of The New York World, who is attending the convention of Southern Newspaper Publishers now in session.

The detective is familiarizing himself intimately with every detail of the case. He spent much of his time Tuesday in conferring with attorneys for the convicted man, especially Luther Z. Rosser, Frank's senior counsel.

Burns held a consultation with W. W. (Boots) Rogers Tuesday afternoon in the office of the Burns agency in the Empire building. Rogers was, at one time, actively engaged on the Phagan mystery in connection with the office of solicitor-general. He drove the car in which the squad of policemen and Constitution reporter went to the scene of the discovery on the morning Mary Phagan's body was found by Newt Lee.

Burns has announced that he will seek an interview with every man connected with the Phagan investigation. Detectives, witnesses, newspaper men, attorneys and all will be made objects of his probe.

The national interest that the Frank case has gained is attracting wide attention among the newspaper readers of Atlanta. The most important publications of the north and east have been "playing" the story during recent days, and the case has become of more widespread importance than any in the history of the south. Much editorial comment has also been noted in the press throughout the nation.