

J. PARNELL THOMAS AND THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON UN-AMERICAN
ACTIVITIES, 1938-1948

Thesis for the Degree of Ph. D.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
Lewis H. Carlson
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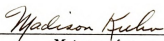
J. Parnell Thomas and the House Committee
on Un-American Activities, 1938-1948.

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ABSTRACT

J. PARNELL THOMAS AND THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES, 1938-1948

by Lewis H. Carlson

The House Committee on Un-American Activities has reflected the philosophies of its leading members more than it has those of Congress, the administration, or even the public itself. It is the purpose of this paper to examine the relationship of one such member, J. Parnell Thomas, to the committee he served for eleven years.

In many ways J. Parnell Thomas exemplified the committee itself. To his admirers he was patriotic, loyal, and uncompromising in his unceasing efforts to expose un-American activities; but to his detractors he was reactionary, tyrannical, and often motivated more by his narrow prejudices than by any sincere desire to uncover subversive behavior. In addition, with his long years on the committee and his immutable antipathy for the New Deal, he provides an effective example of the political ends to which one could turn such an investigative committee. This paper has attempted to treat J. Parnell Thomas not as a man but as a fitting symbol of a committee that has been perhaps the most controversial in our history.

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Lewis H. Carlson

This study has been handled in a chronological fashion. The pre-committee Thomas has been but briefly described and then only as this has contributed to an understanding of the later man. Most of the chapters have dealt with the active work of Thomas and the committee, and for this the many volumes of the public testimony and the comprehensive newspaper coverage have proved most valuable. In addition, both the committee and Thomas were often the subjects of heated debates on the floor of the House.

From the very outset of the old Dies committee, as the special committee was popularly called, Thomas was active in some of its more publicized investigations. In 1938 he brought the committee its first real publicity with his one-man investigation of the Federal Theater Project. In the following year he again made headlines with his resolution for the impeachment of Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins for her apparent refusal to deport certain aliens whom the committee had found guilty of subversive behavior. During the war years Thomas and the committee turned their attention to the threat of espionage and sabotage, and they vigorously criticized the Federal Government for not taking the necessary protective measures.

In 1947, two years after the committee was made permanent, Thomas was appointed chairman. Under his direction the committee investigated Communist inroads into organized labor, higher education, government agencies, atomic energy, and the motion-picture industry. The latter hearings brought

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the committee and its chairman their most spectacular national coverage.

In the last analysis, it was the awesome power commanded by the committee and some of its members that seemed of greatest significance. To criticize them was to invite an attack on one's own patriotism, and certainly the vast majority of the Congressmen refused to challenge the committee they had created. Equally alarming was the opportunity the committee afforded a member such as Thomas to discredit personal enemies. Besides the Communists, his particular aversions were organized labor, New Deal "bureaucrats," and "fuzzy-minded" liberals, all of whom, he considered, in one way or another, to be a threat to his America. This meant that all too often those coming under his attention were not accused of actual subversive behavior, but of holding different opinions. Nor was the committee itself very judicious when it came to making this distinction.







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A THESIS

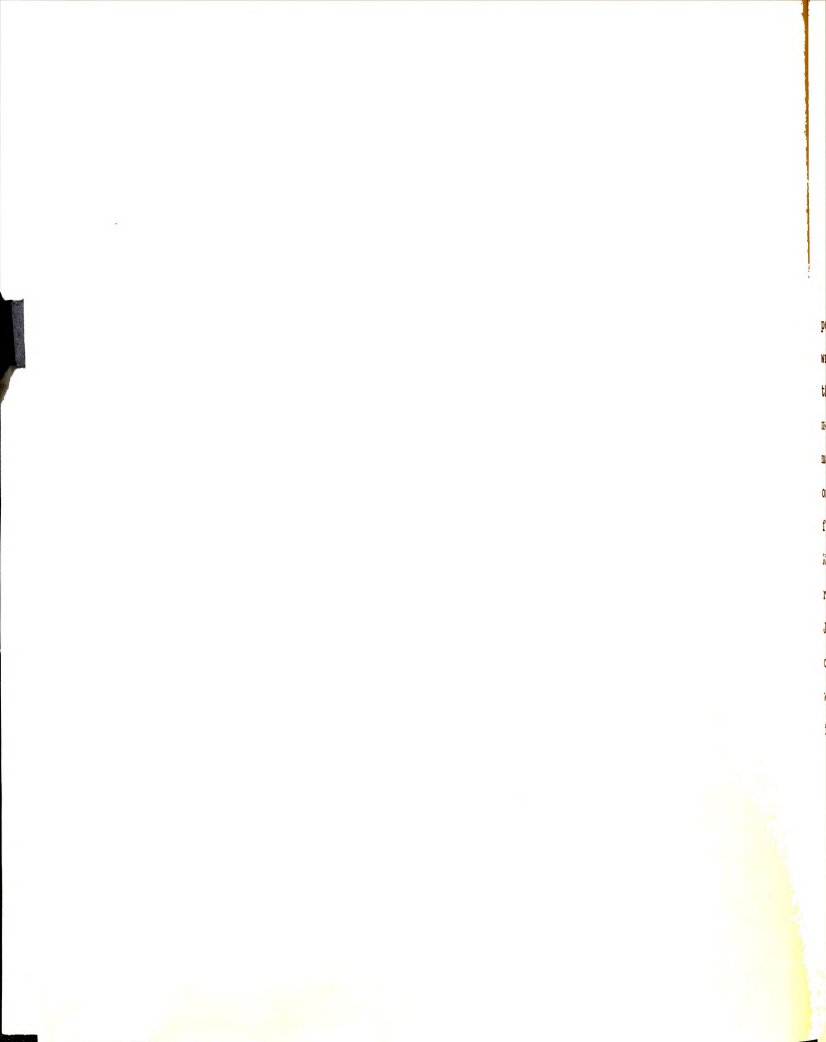
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CHAPTER I

J. PARNELL THOMAS

The House Committee on Un-American Activities has reflected the philosophies of its leading members more than it has those of Congress, the administration, or even the public itself. As a special committee it was dominated for seven years by its chairman, Martin Dies; but after 1945, when it gained permanent status, the committee came under the leadership of J. Parnell Thomas. He was the one member who played an active role on both the special and the standing committees. He not only served as a prominent member on the original Dies committee but later brought the permanent committee its greatest publicity when he chaired it through the flamboyant Hollywood hearings in 1947.

He was born John Parnell Feeney in Jersey City, where his father, a Democrat and the police commissioner, moved almost exclusively in Irish Catholic circles. In 1905, when his son was only nine, the elder Feeney died, and the mother moved the family to Allendale, New Jersey, a small village near New York, which the later Congressman once described as "the typical American community of some 2000 people where everybody knows everybody else."

In Allendale the young boy came increasingly under

the influence of his mother's family. The conservative Thomas family was of old New England stock and could trace its lineage back to General Nathaniel Greene of the Revolutionary War and to Noah Webster, the great lexicographer. Certainly this "great American family," as he later called it, did much to mold the young boy in his formative years.

Though the son rejected most of his paternal inheritance, including name, religion, and political party, he could never deny that he retained his father's great love of politics and the willingness to play them in a rough-and-ready manner that was reminiscent of urban-Irish politics around the turn of the century. His own first "political" success came in the eighth grade when he was elected class president, an honor which came twice more to him in high school.

From high school he went to the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Finance. There he early exhibited his inability to tolerate the views of others that might differ from his own. He later admitted, "I was never a very good student, but I could always tell a trouble-maker," and he delighted in recalling the shaving of the heads of three pacifists and the throwing of them into the fish pond after they had heckled a speech on preparedness.¹ After two years at Wharton, where his competitive drive made him a third-string quarterback but a leader in campus politics,

¹Personal interview with the author, Sept. 8, 1966; cited throughout as Personal Interview.

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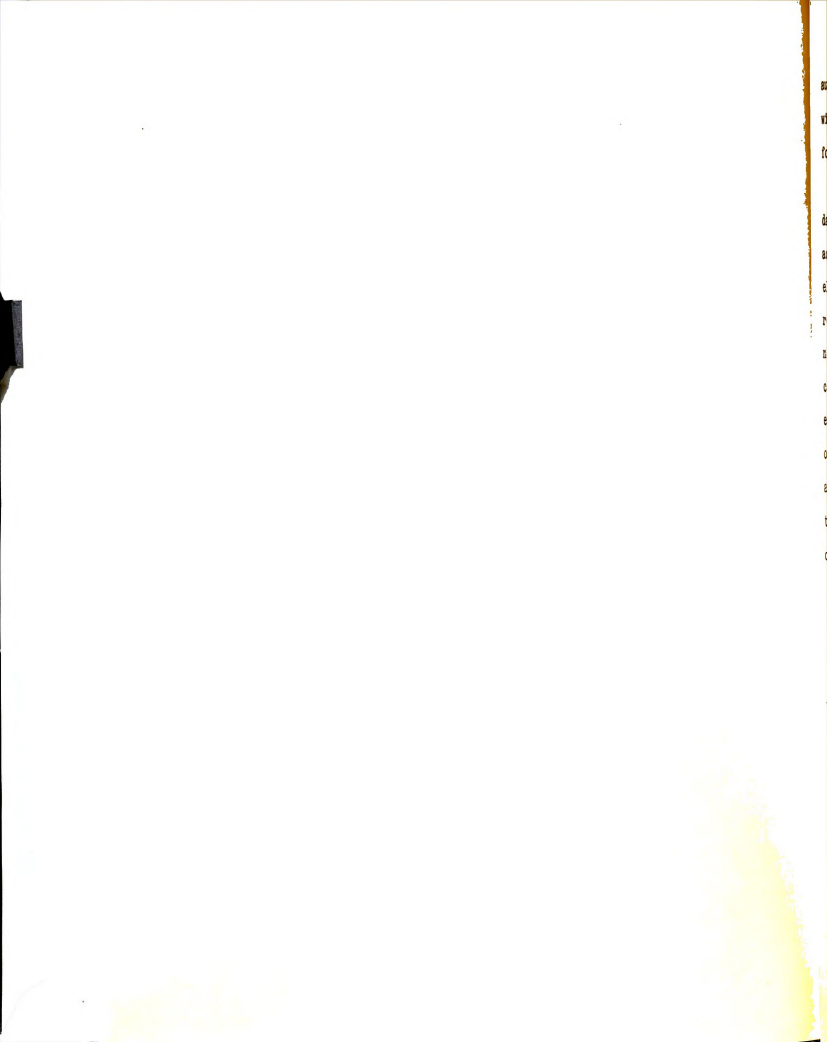
John Parnell Feeney entered New York University Law School. This was in 1916, but his formal schooling ended one year later when he left to join the army.

His years in service also helped shape the later man. He became active in counter-espionage work, headed a school in military intelligence, and rose to the rank of captain. He also gained an undying respect for the armed forces. His military experience would later show up both in his investigative work on the House Committee on Un-American Activities and in his service on the House Committee on Military Affairs from which he would lead the fight against civilian control of atomic energy.

After the war John Parnell started as a \$12.50 a week bond salesman with the Paine Webber Company, a long-established Wall Street investment house. He rose quickly, became manager of the bond department within a few years, and remained with the company until well into his Congressional career. He was also influenced by his Wall Street experience, especially in his later emphasis on business-like efficiency in government and in his antipathy toward the demands of organized labor.

This too was the time when he formally changed his name to J. Parnell Thomas. In his statement of intent he wrote, "Your petitioner believes he can get recognition and business under the family name of Thomas that he could not get under the name of Feeney."² Thomas later informed the

²Washington Post, Nov. 9, 1947



author that his father's death effectively ended his ties with that side of the family; hence it was quite natural for him to take on his mother's family name.³

In the late Twenties he was elected to the Allendale Council and then to the mayorship. After his two terms as mayor a lull occurred in his office holding until his election to the state assembly, but his interest in politics remained intact. In the spring of 1934 he gained considerable notice when he publicly labeled a prospective senatorial candidate's attacks on banking as "un-American."⁴ His early use of the word "un-American" is noteworthy in view of his later application of the term to so many individuals and ideas with which he could not agree. Also for the first time he spelled out just who or what was needed in public office:

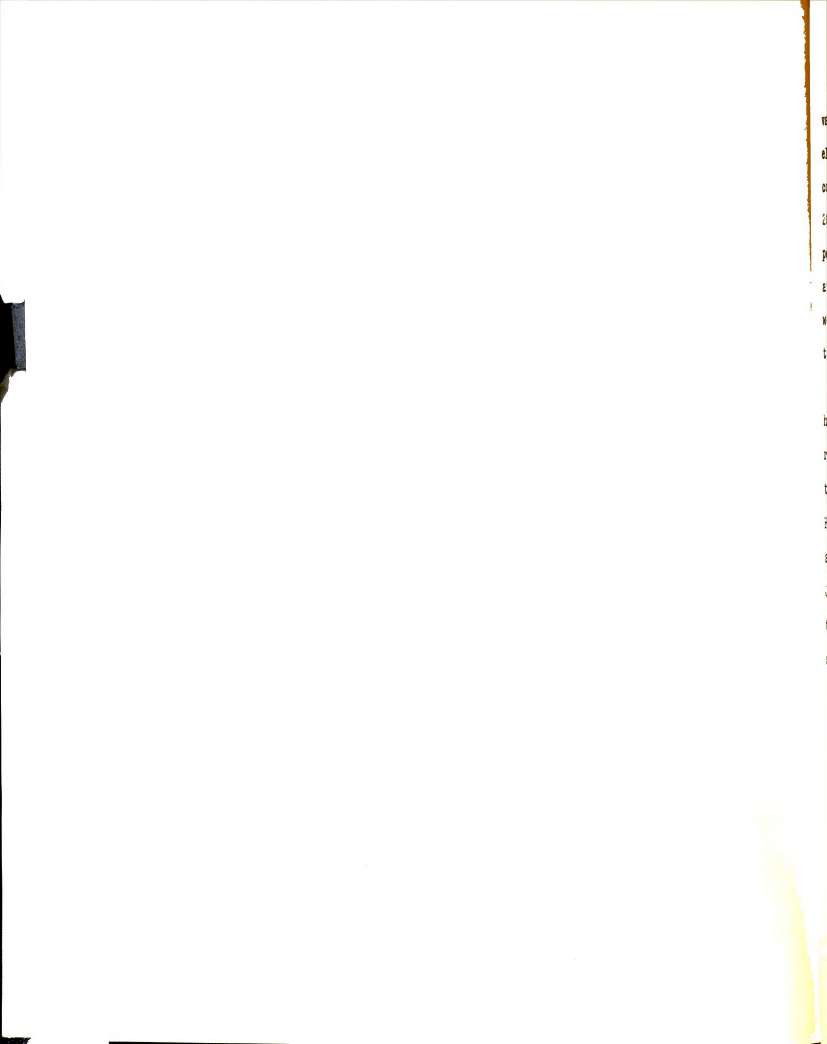
I say we need less politics in business, but we do need more business in politics. We need more economy, fewer professional politicians and more businessmen in office.⁵

Though the words had been borrowed from the decade before, they would continue to serve as the Thomas creed throughout his political life. It was no surprise that the New Deal and the organized labor which supported it would be such anathema to the New Jersey bond salesman.

³Personal Interview.

⁴Bergen County Evening Record (Hackensack, N.J.), Mar. 13, 1934; cited throughout as The Record.

⁵Ibid.



In 1935 J. Parnell Thomas made a rather shaky advance in his climb up the political ladder. In a special election for the state assembly, with sixteen candidates competing for some five vacancies, he achieved a narrow 200-vote majority for the fifth seat. But Thomas the politician was on his way, and until his ill-fated comeback attempt in 1954, when he was defeated in the primaries, he would not again have to suffer through such a closely contested campaign.

Already in this early campaign, controversy surrounded his political ethics. Some of his opponents accused him of realizing an undue profit from the sale of certain bonds to the state. Thomas refused to answer his critics though the Hackensack Evening Record editorialized, "One who has made such a point of economy and honesty in public office as has J. Parnell Thomas, owes it, if not to the public, certainly to himself, to explain his position when threatened by so serious an accusation."⁶

Assemblyman Thomas spent only a short time in the state legislature, but his knack for commanding headlines became evident as did his ability for reacting violently to ideas which he considered inimical to his own. Shortly after taking his seat, Thomas called for the impeachment of Governor Harold G. Hoffman because of the latter's sales tax theories.⁷ A short time later he not only reached

⁶Ibid., Sept. 3, 1935.

⁷Newsweek, Feb. 6, 1939, 17.

newspapers as far away as Chicago, but he also explored the political advantages of painting one's enemies with a Red brush.⁸

"The Legion of the Disinherited," as they were called in the New Jersey papers, was a rather straggly appearing group of malcontents who had literally entrenched themselves in the Assembly chambers in April of 1936. They were demonstrating against a recently passed law which turned the administration of direct relief back to the municipalities. While the disgruntled members complained about losing their seats to such a motley crowd, Assemblyman Thomas took advantage of the situation to launch an investigation. He found that the march on the Assembly had been instigated by the Workers Alliance of America, an organization which had been working for several years among the unemployed of the depression; however, Thomas discovered that two of the leaders were members of the Communist party, and one of them had even been the party candidate for the governorship of Ohio. Such were the facts that allowed the freshman legislator to draw the following conclusion in an open letter to his governor:

This demonstration is Communist inspired. It is an open revolt against the state government by forces which seek to overthrow the United States government. I call upon you to use your authority to throw them out! Or, if they are to be treated as guests of the state, let's do the job properly. Feed them caviar! Feed them chocolate eclairs.⁹

⁸Chicago Tribune, Apr. 26, 1936.

⁹Ibid.



Years later, Willard Edwards, a feature writer for the Chicago Tribune, called this the start of the Thomas campaign against Communists;¹⁰ but Thomas laughingly dismissed the incident during his interview with the author.¹¹

Perhaps the above affair raised his stock with his party for one month later the forty-one year old Thomas was picked by the Republican State Committee to try for the Seventh District Congressional seat left vacant by the late Randolph Perkins.¹² And in the fall he won the first of six successive terms in the House of Representatives.

There was little doubt that the new Congressman would be a vigorous opponent of the New Deal administration. In the spring of 1936 he had informed a group of New Jersey farmers that "the New Deal has become the world's biggest and most stupid speculation in agricultural products. The New Deal agricultural program is a fanatical scheme concocted by crackpots who are socialistic dreamers."¹³

Shortly after his November victory he startled guests at a New Jersey Chamber of Commerce dinner on the possibilities of bipartisan government. After listening to speeches by New Jersey Democrats and Republicans about how the two parties cooperated, he arose and declared, "I've heard more pure bunk here tonight than I have heard

¹⁰ Ibid., Apr. 27, 1947.

¹¹ Personal Interview.

¹² New York Times, May 27, 1936.

¹³ The Record, Apr. 20, 1936.



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in all my days in Congress."¹⁴ Though "all his days in Congress" did not then amount to much, the message seemed clear enough--for him compromise with the opposing faction would not only be an impossibility but undesirable in light of his own partisan view of what America needed in government.

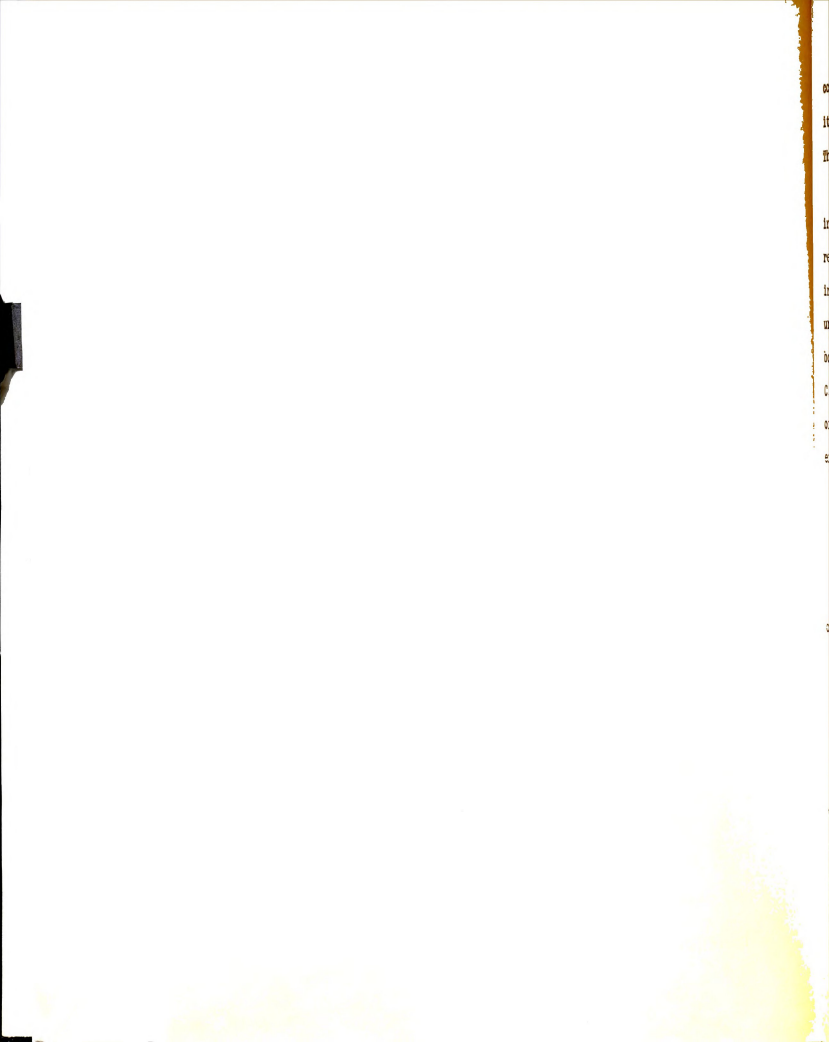
It was not until well into his first year in Congress that he explored the possibility of placing a Red label on his political enemies; in fact, in his first few months he refused to acknowledge the threat of internal communism. In a spirited April debate on a proposal to investigate Communist activities, Congressman Thomas appeared completely disinterested. His only contribution was facetiously to ask one of the would-be investigators if, under the terms of this resolution, they should not investigate the soldiers who had recently paraded through Washington dressed in Scottish kilts and playing bagpipes as un-American.¹⁵

In a public speech a month later, he announced the "Five Grave Problems Confronting the Nation."¹⁶ An unbalanced budget, public ownership of TVA, the Supreme Court packing incident, Miss Perkins and labor unrest, and Federal relief comprised the five. There was no mention of communism as one of our "grave problems." It appeared the issue of

¹⁴ Ibid., Nov. 30, 1936.

¹⁵ U.S., Congressional Record, 75th Cong., 1st Sess., Apr. 8, 1937, 3287; cited throughout as CR: 75-1, CR: 76-2, etc.

¹⁶ Address at Rochelle Park, New Jersey, as cited in CR: 75-1, Appendix, May 20, 1937, 1243.



communism did not seem so important to the Congressman until it could be connected to one or more of the above five. This was accomplished in the summer of 1937.

In July Thomas hit out at Communist control over industrial unions and their leadership. This would be a recurring theme for him, and many of the later committee investigations would be ordered in this direction. He urged American labor to support the A.F. of L. and to boycott the recently separated C.I.O. He insisted that the C.I.O. had forfeited its right to represent labor because of its exploitation of the working man and the close ties existing between the union president and communism:

It must be obvious to every right-thinking laboring man by this time that John L. Lewis is working in close cooperation with the Communist party in a deliberate attempt to disrupt industry and achieve his objectives through terrorism, bloodshed and coercive methods.¹⁷

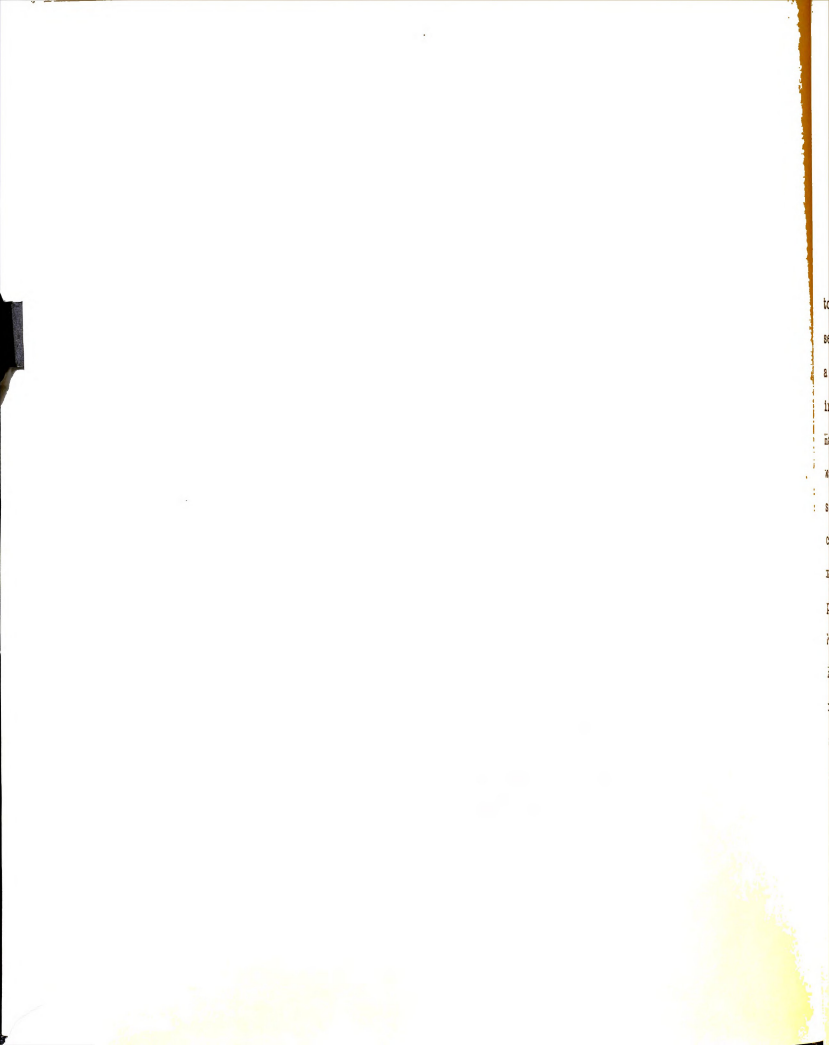
A few weeks later he extended the Red menace into other areas of American life including the administration:

Communism to me, Mr. Speaker, is the greatest threat we have in this country. It is alive in almost every state in the Union. It is eating into our government and into our institutions, as a termite eats into a piece of wood. Most of our economic unrest is caused by it.¹⁸

J. Parnell Thomas had his weapon. All that remained was for the Committee on Un-American Activities to give him the opportunity to aim it more directly at his acknowledged enemies.

¹⁷The Record, July 17, 1937.

¹⁸CR: 75-3, Appendix, July 28, 1937, 1398.



CHAPTER II

THE DIES COMMITTEE

Committees to investigate disloyalty were not new to Congress. As early as 1919 the Senate, frightened by a series of bombings during our first "Red Scare," had initiated a special committee of inquiry.¹ The first such committee in the House was proposed in 1927, but it was not until Hamilton Fish's committee in 1930 that such a resolution was finally passed.² However, it died with the end of the session and not until 1934 did the second such committee come into existence. Hitler's rise to power had disturbed many, and the house called for an investigation of fascist propaganda activities in the United States.³ Although John McCormack of Massachusetts was appointed chairman, it was Representative Samuel Dickstein of New York who conducted most of the hearings. This committee was a short-lived, soberly judicious committee, but it did influence the forming of the Committee on Un-American Activities.

Meanwhile, Hamilton Fish maintained a running fire on communism. When he published the names of Federal em-

¹ CR: 65-3, Feb. 3, 1919, 2606.

² CR: 71-1, May 22, 1930, 9396.

³ CR: 73-2, Jan. 3, 1934, 4938.



ployees who he claimed were aiding Communist veterans' organizations, he started a practice which was to have many repercussions when later applied by Martin Dies and J. Parnell Thomas.⁴

Representative Dickstein was also seeking another committee, but he seemingly lacked the support of his colleagues.⁵ Dies himself later wrote that Vice-President John Garner, Speaker William Bankhead, and Majority Leader Sam Rayburn had asked him to submit his resolution because "they knew that as a member of the powerful Rules committee, my resolution would be preferred over Dickstein's, and by custom I would be named chairman."⁶

The actual Dies resolution was patterned very closely after the McCormack committee resolution. It called for the creation of a special committee of seven members to investigate "the extent, character, and objects of un-American propaganda activities in the United States;" the diffusion of this propaganda that was "instigated from foreign countries or of a domestic origin;" and "all other questions in relation thereto that would aid Congress in any necessary remedial legislation."⁷ This language would serve unchanged

⁴ CR: 74-1, Jan. 28, 1935, 1089.

⁵ The fact that Dickstein was Jewish caused some Congressmen to feel that he was not the most judicious choice to head a committee investigating Nazi activities.

⁶ Martin Dies, Martin Dies Story (New York: Book-mailer, 1963), 60.

⁷ CR: 75-3, May 10, 1938, 6562.



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as the directive upon which the work of the Committee on Un-American Activities would be based.

The debate in the House was heated and prolonged. Some Congressmen, thinking that the new committee would simply extend the McCormack-Dickstein investigations of Nazi and fascist activities, were not at all happy when Dies declared his intentions to hunt Communists as well. The future chairman later wrote that as a result "the President, Bankhead, and Rayburn got my appropriations cut from \$100,000 to \$25,000."⁸

Also of note, in view of later developments, was the objective, dispassionate image which Martin Dies projected as he admirably defined the limits in which he expected the committee to function:

Let me say...that I believe all depends on the way the committee is handled. I can conceive that a committee constituted or composed of men whose object is to gain publicity, or whose object it is to arouse hatred against some race or creed, or to do things of that sort, might do more harm than good. On the other hand, investigations have a useful purpose.... I am not in a position to say whether we can legislate effectively in reference to this matter, but I do know that exposure in a democracy of subversive activities is the most effective weapon that we have in our possession. Always we must keep in mind that in any legislative attempt to prevent un-American activities, we might jeopardize fundamental rights far more important than the objective we seek, but when these activities are exposed, when the light of day is brought to bear upon them, we can trust public sentiment in this country to do the rest.⁹

Support for the resolution was also unquestionably

⁸ Martin Dies Story, 60.

⁹ CR: 75-3, May 26, 1938, 7570.



won by Dies' statement that the investigation would last but seven months and by his acceptance of an amendment directing the committee to report to the House by January 3, 1939, or earlier.¹⁰ Actually the House was establishing an investigating committee which almost three decades later would still be very much in the public eye.¹¹

In addition to Dies, four Democrats and two Republicans were appointed to the committee.¹² Of these seven, four were to last the duration of the special committee; and these members (Dies, Thomas, Noah Mason, and Joe Starnes) not only were the heart of the committee, but they also tended to become increasingly hostile to the administration. One critic described them as "virtually a Republican anti-New Deal campaign committee;"¹³ however, two of the four were Democrats, a fact that only seemed to lend credence to their attacks on the government.

Thomas and the Committee

J. Parnell Thomas later informed the author that shortly before the Committee on Un-American Activities was approved, he had asked Republican Minority Leader Bertrand

¹⁰ Ibid., 7586.

¹¹ The actual vote for adoption of the Dies resolution was 191 to 41; ibid.

¹² CR: 75-3, June 7, 1938, 8392. The members were Arthur D. Healey (D-Mass.), Harold Mosier (D-Ill.), John Dempsey (D-N.M.), Joe Starnes (D-Ala.), Noah Mason (R-Ill.), J. Parnell Thomas (R-N.J.), and Martin Dies (D-Tex.).

¹³ William Gellerman, Martin Dies (New York: John Day, 1944), 69.



Snell to include him in its membership.¹⁴ This interest in un-American activities represented a change of heart for Thomas, and he admitted as much on the house floor, explaining that the increasing threat of domestic subversives had forced the change.¹⁵ Robert Stripling, the long-time chief counsel of the committee, also described Thomas' original opposition to the committee. He later wrote that Thomas changed his mind after he became familiar with German-American Bund activities at New Jersey's Camp Nordland.¹⁶ There was also the possibility that Thomas now realized the opportunities the committee would afford for connecting the administration to the "un-American" forces which would soon be investigated. Thomas himself gave a hint of this in the final debate on the Dies resolution:

I hope that this committee will not devote all its time to nazi-ism (sic). We have another problem in this country which is more acute and far reaching than even the Nazi problem, and that is the issue of communism. The Communists outnumber the Nazis at least five to one. They are right in our government. They control certain WPA projects, certain departments in the OPA.¹⁷

The fact that Thomas had made little attempt to disguise his intentions was noted by Representative Gerald Boileau in a rather prophetic statement:

¹⁴ Personal Interview.

¹⁵ CR: 75-3, May 26, 1938, 7577.

¹⁶ Robert Stripling, The Red Plot Against America (Drexel Hill, Penn.: Bell Publishing Co., 1949), 21.

¹⁷ CR: 75-3, May 26, 1938, 7577.



I do not know whether the gentleman from New Jersey is going to be a member of the committee or not, but if he is you will have from him an effort to investigate the New Deal, as he claims it to be un-American.¹⁸

The creation of the Dies committee, as it would be popularly called, caused little stir in public circles. Dies announced that several weeks would be required for field investigations to acquire data,¹⁹ and the committee spent its first two months out of the headlines.

It was Representative Thomas who won the committee its first major publicity when he attacked the New York Federal Theater Project as a vehicle for Communist and New Deal propaganda. As early as March, 1933, well before the debate on the forming of a committee, he had called for an investigation of "the dissemination of propaganda being carried out by departments in our government,"²⁰ and he had concluded that there were "at least 270 government employees engaged in preparing propaganda for the New Deal at the taxpayer's expense with salaries exceeding \$602,000....It now takes each year about 1,760 railroad cars to haul this free mail out of Washington, and most of it is nothing more than New Deal propaganda."²¹ However, Thomas had not yet accused the administration and the Communists of any concerted

¹⁸ Ibid., 7578.

¹⁹ Times, June 19, 1938.

²⁰ CR: 75-3, Appendix, Mar. 2, 1933, 837.

²¹ Times, Mar. 9, 1938; see also the Tribune for Apr. 11, 1938 and May 9, 1933.



effort--the New York Theater Project would give him that opportunity.

In July, shortly before he began his one-man preliminary investigation of the Theater Project, Thomas made an invidious comparison which well set the stage for what was to come: "Our government is in this propaganda business to an astounding extent. It is so huge that it is already rivaling the notorious dictatorships of Germany and Italy and the communist government of Russia in the dissemination of governmental propaganda."²²

After a series of informal New York hearings, however, Thomas left no doubt as to which foreign government the administration was trying to emulate:

It is apparent from the startling evidence thus far that the Federal Theater Project not only is serving as a branch of the Communist organization, but also is one more link in the vast and unparalleled New Deal propaganda machine.²³

In particular, he accused Mrs. Hallie Flanagan, the National Director of the Theater Project, of "authorizing only those productions containing Communist or New Deal theories," and he called for her to appear before the whole committee.²⁴

By August, Thomas had completed his three-week preliminary investigation and was ready to take his findings before the committee in Washington, but not before he first made public his own conclusions:

²² Tribune, July 20, 1938.

²³ Times, July 27, 1938.

²⁴ Ibid., August 10, 1938.



I have evidence that would prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that this project is almost completely dominated by Communists; that many unemployed actors are barred unless they first join the Workers Alliance, a front organization for Communists, and that the agency is a patronage vehicle to supply jobs for Communists.²⁵

The committee Thomas had made his mark. He had started the year attacking the New Deal as a vast propaganda machine. He had started his committee career investigating alleged Communist activity in a government theater project. What could be more politically telling than to bring these two together.

The Dies committee began its formal hearings on August 12, and shortly thereafter Thomas got his chance to place his theater investigation before the committee. The principle witness was Miss Hazel Huffman, a self-styled investigator of the WPA, who testified on the large number of Communists in the Federal Theater Project and on the pressures put on other members to join the Workers Alliance.²⁶

She was followed by other individuals who were connected in one way or another with the Project. The treatment of these sympathetic witnesses would become typical in the long years of the committee. They were allowed the greatest latitude in their remarks, seldom challenged, and almost always accepted as competent judges of the subversive activities they were describing. Thomas could often

²⁵ Ibid., Aug. 10, 1938.

²⁶ U.S. Congress, House, 75th Cong., 3rd Sess., Special Committee to Investigate Un-American Activities and Propaganda in the U.S., Hearings, Vol. 1, Aug. 19, 1938, 775-829; hereafter cited as H-1, H-2, etc., according to the referred volume.



take advantage of such witnesses by steering their testimony along anti-New Deal lines. An example of this occurred when he questioned one J. B. Matthews, a recent fellow-traveler who was destined to become the chief investigator for the committee:

Mr. Thomas: Mr. Matthews, do you mean to say that the program...of the New Deal party was in any way planned or recommended by the Communists?

Mr. Matthews: Congressman, I would not say that. But it is clear, I think, from the examination of Communist literature at the moment that the immediate interests of certain administration measures and the Communist party coincide.

Mr. Thomas: Are not many of the acts now being advocated or now being enacted by the government of the United States similar to the steps which led to dictators in Soviet Russia, Germany, and Italy?

Mr. Matthews: Well, now, Mr. Chairman, that is calling for a pure conclusion.

Mr. Starnes: I think so. This committee is not concerned in the least in partisanship.

Mr. Thomas: This is not partisanship. This is un-American activity.²⁷

In December Mrs. Hallie Flanagan was called upon to testify in defense of the Federal Theater Project. The National Director proved to be a vastly different witness than most of those who had previously testified before the committee. She was intelligent, witty, and unafraid of those confronting her, and, as a result, the committee too responded differently. Unlike those hostile to the Project, Mrs. Flanagan was largely restricted to answering the questions posed by the committee.

Even before she was allowed to read her prepared statement, Thomas insisted that the committee "find something

²⁷H-1, Aug. 21, 1938, 890.



out about Mrs. Flanagan's history."²⁸ This turned out to be a thinly veiled, though unsuccessful, attempt to show that subversive elements had recommended her appointment to Harry Hopkins. When in her actual testimony Mrs. Flanagan was cut short, she requested an opportunity to continue at a later date; this was denied her.

It is interesting to contrast Mrs. Flanagan's testimony with that of Miss Huffman when the latter again appeared to resume her charges. Miss Huffman was allowed to make an uninterrupted four-page introduction, even though much of this seemed to contain hearsay and opinionated evidence.²⁹ Only Representative John Dempsey, in one of his rare appearances at the hearings, saw fit to challenge her testimony. Dempsey emphasized that the committee was "supposed to investigate un-American activities, not any supposed propaganda messages in plays as almost all plays have some message or other."³⁰ He further pointed out that of the over 1000 plays produced by the Federal Theater Project, only twenty-six were criticized. But it was to no avail; the Federal Theater Project, like its companion, the Federal Writers Project, was doomed.

The committee's first report to Congress in January, 1939, left no doubt as to which of the witnesses the committee was willing to believe:

²⁸ H-4, Dec. 6, 1938, 2864.

²⁹ Ibid., Dec. 8, 1938, 2987-2991.

³⁰ Ibid., 2995.



From the testimony we heard, we are convinced that a rather large number of the employees in the Federal Theater Project are either members of the Communist party, or are sympathetic with the Communist party. It is also clear that certain employees felt under compulsion to join the Workers Alliance in order to retain their jobs.³¹

Without explaining how the committee arrived at its figures, the report further stated that 103 out of 300 members of the Federal Writers Project were Communists, and that Communists had been using these projects to disseminate class hatred ideas.

The committee had taken its stand, though much of the evidence seemed unreliable in light of its willingness to accept at face value the testimony of its sympathetic witnesses. Nevertheless, in June, 1939, when Congress sent its 1940 Relief Bill to the White House, the Federal Theater Project was excluded, thus ending the four-year career of an organization that had brought entertainment to some 30,000,000 people.³²

Just how many Communists had infiltrated the project could not have been known, nor could their influence have been accurately assessed. The significant thing was that the committee, without a great deal of real evidence, was able to persuade Congress that this element in the Project far outweighed any positive aspects of its work and thereby

³¹"Investigations of Un-American Activities and Propaganda," Report of the Special Committee on Un-American Activities, Jan. 3, 1939. Miscellaneous House Reports, 76th Cong., 1st Sess., 31.

³²Times, July 1, 1939.



was instrumental in bringing about its destruction. And J. Parnell Thomas had experienced his first real victory over the administration.

Frances Perkins

Congressman Thomas did not confine his attacks on Communists and the New Deal simply to the public hearings. During a lull in committee activities he took to the airways once again to call the Federal Theater Project a "veritable hotbed of un-American activity."³³ In October he extended his charges. While still labeling the New Deal as a "Communist tool," he pointed to "the prevalence of communism in labor unions, in our schools, and even in some of our churches."³⁴ Officially he was representing himself with such views, but undoubtedly many listeners took it for granted that such allegations were based on committee findings. Thomas was not alone in this practice. Other committee members, and even some of the investigators, were later criticized for taking such liberties with their committee affiliations.

It was not until Thomas called for the impeachment of Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins that he really gained public notice. A 1903 act had given the Department of Labor the jurisdiction, supervision, and control over the immigration of aliens into the United States. In 1918 an additional

³³Ibid., Sept. 13, 1938.

³⁴Ibid., Oct. 15, 1938.



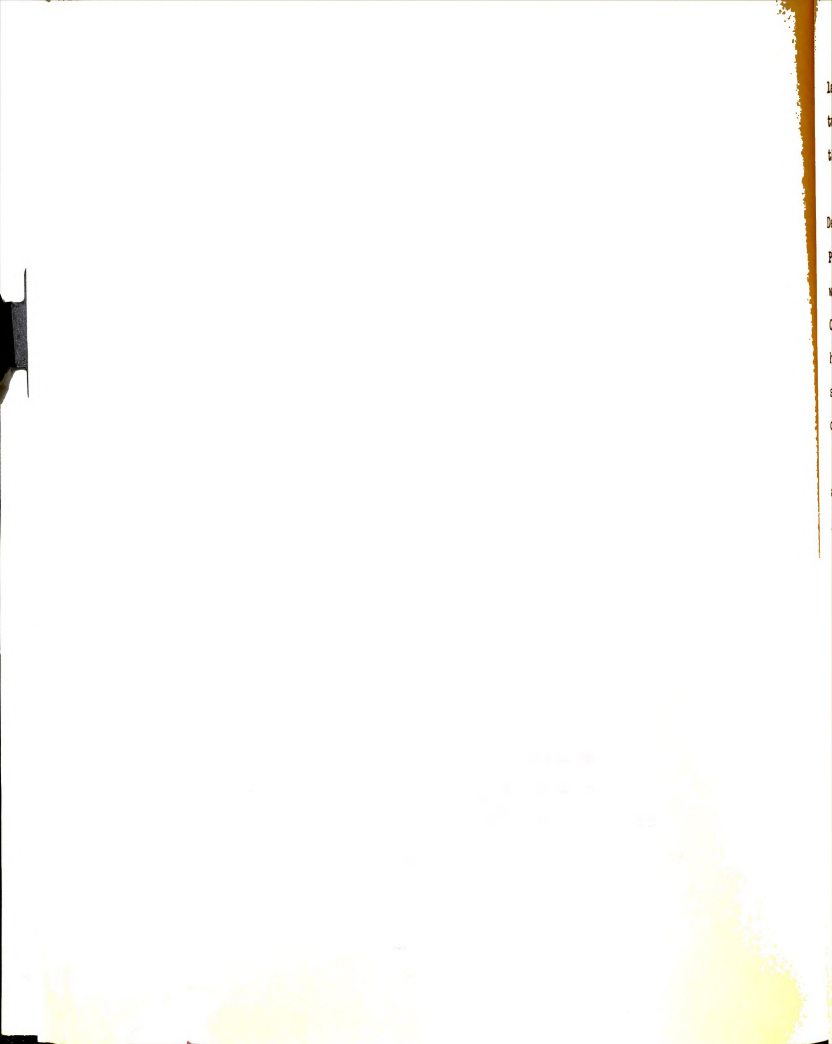
law called for the deportation of radical aliens. Taking advantage of this legislation, Thomas and the committee continually badgered Secretary Perkins to take stronger measures against questionable aliens.

Harry Bridges provided the cause célèbre. Bridges, an Australian, had long been criticized for his radical labor union activities on the West Coast. As early as 1934, patriotic organizations had complained about him to the Labor Department. These calls for action continued until 1938, when his case came before Secretary Perkins. However, she refused to take any deportation action until the Federal Courts had time to rule on another similar case. It was this delay, coupled with the Secretary's known labor sympathies, that proved so exasperating to her detractors.

Only three days after the Dies committee had opened its formal hearings, one of its investigators, Edward E. Sullivan, publicly stated that Bridges had received aid and advice from "official government sources."³⁵ This statement was not made in the formal hearings; nevertheless, Dies allowed it to be published though he admitted he could not vouch for Sullivan's accuracy.³⁶ In the fall, however, the chairman followed up the Sullivan accusation. On September 7 he insisted that Miss Perkins appear before the committee as "people are curious to know how many similar cases there are where the Labor Department has failed to enforce the

³⁵Ibid., Aug. 15, 1938; Tribune, Aug. 15, 1938.

³⁶H-1, Aug. 16, 1938, 285.



law with preference to radical and criminal aliens."³⁷ And two days later Dies made the first impeachment threats against the Secretary.³⁸

Nothing further was stated about impeachment until December, when Thomas personally took up the case. Frances Perkins had been one of his "Five Great Threats" to the welfare of the country, and, in unmistakable language, the Congressman insisted that unless action were taken quickly, he would start the necessary proceedings in Congress: "For some unknown reason Harry Bridges is the blond-haired boy of the Labor Department and I'm sick of it."³⁹

On January 24 he made good his threat and introduced a motion of impeachment against Secretary Perkins, James L. Houghteling, Commissioner of Immigration, and Gerald D. Reilly, Solicitor of the Department of Labor. Among other things in his forty-four-page summary, Thomas stated that they had "failed, neglected, and refused to enforce the foregoing and other immigration laws of the United States; and have defrauded the United States by coddling and protecting from deportation certain aliens illegally within the United States in violation of the statutes in such cases made and provided."⁴⁰

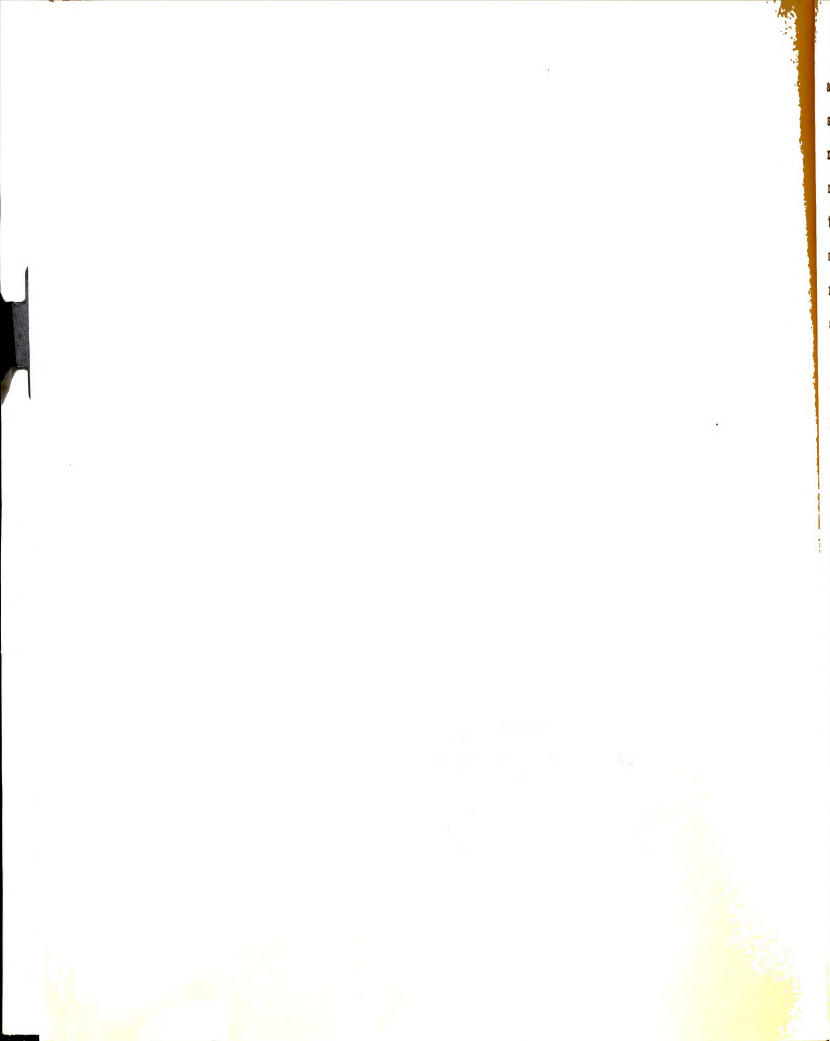
This resolution naturally produced considerable

³⁷Times, Sept. 7, 1938.

³⁸Ibid., Sept. 9, 1938.

³⁹Ibid., Dec. 8, 1938.

⁴⁰House Resolution 67, CR: 76-1, Jan. 24, 1939,



agitation on the House floor. Representative Dickstein, the same Congressman who had so diligently appealed for the renewal of his own investigating committee, now called for the removal from the committee of all members who had pushed for the impeachment.⁴¹ In addition, Thomas had introduced his motion at the same time that the House was considering the renewal of the committee; hence the debate was particularly spirited.⁴²

His motives in introducing the impeachment resolution were probably varied. There seemed little doubt that his hatred for the New Deal had by now convinced him that it was indeed overrun with Reds, and Miss Perkins had showed little inclination to prosecute Bridges and other controversial aliens. There was also the possibility, explored in the house debate, that Thomas hoped to bring the committee into the public eye at the critical moment when it faced a renewal fight. A contemporary article in Newsweek quoted Thomas as having doubted that "we can expect very much from the impeachment proceedings...but I hope that the Dies committee will get considerable publicity."⁴³

Whatever his motives Thomas waged a furious campaign against Secretary Perkins and her aides. In a radio speech in late February he implored his listeners to write their Congressmen "that you want a complete investigation

⁴¹ Ibid., 735.

⁴² Ibid., Feb. 3, 1939, 1098-1129.

⁴³ Newsweek, Feb. 6, 1939, 17.



of the Labor Department and to be sure and let them know also that you are unequivocally opposed to the encroachment of communism in our American institutions."⁴⁴

In March Thomas made it clear that he thought the administration had been bought out by labor:

Who is this alien? This is the alien whose influence with Frances Perkins and the New Deal administration is more powerful than that of the American Legion, the V.F.W., and other patriotic organizations. Why may I ask? Could it be the \$500,000 received by the New Deal party in 1936 from a certain labor organization? Did they then become 500,000 reasons why the laws of the United States should not be enforced against Harry Bridges, the Western chief of the organization which contributed the \$500,000?⁴⁵

The Judiciary committee, however, had already reported that there was insufficient evidence to warrant any impeachment proceedings by the House.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Thomas' work had not fallen entirely on deaf ears. A minority report, signed by the ten Republican members of the committee, stated that "the accused have been lenient and indulgent to Harry Bridges in the conduct of his deportation case to an unprecedented extent. The record before us...cannot escape our severe condemnation and censure."⁴⁷ And the headline of the Chicago Tribune read, "Impeachment Move Against Perkins Killed--Minority Blasts Leniency for Bridges."⁴⁸

⁴⁴Radio speech at Newark, New Jersey; quoted in CR: 76-1, Appendix, Feb. 27, 1939, 749.

⁴⁵CR: 76-1, Appendix, Mar. 29, 1939, 2398.

⁴⁶CR: 76-1, Mar. 25, 1939, 3283.

⁴⁷Ibid., 3289.

⁴⁸Tribune, Mar. 25, 1939.



Like several of Thomas and the committee's later victims, Miss Perkins was officially cleared, but her reputation was not. Writing some seven years later she described her anguish and discomfort, recalling that her primary solace had come when President Roosevelt encouraged her not "to pay any attention to him [Thomas]." ⁴⁹ But it was becoming increasingly difficult not "to pay attention" to the Representative from New Jersey now that he had experienced the power of the bold accusation and its political potential.

The First Year in Retrospect

Looking back on the committee's first year, one is impressed by its ever-increasing impact on the American scene. By the time of its first report in January, 1939, a definite polarization of opinion had developed. The radical Left and many liberals roundly condemned everything about Mr. Dies and his committee; on the other hand, many conservatives accepted the committee as one of the greatest hopes for preserving their kind of America. Other more moderate voices concluded that though the need for such an investigation seemed evident, the questionable methods of the committee largely negated any possible accomplishments.

But what of J. Parnell Thomas? As a participating individual it is much more difficult to single out his own particular impact, though he had certainly made clear where his real interests lay. Of more significance was the fact

⁴⁹ Frances Perkins, The Roosevelt I Knew (New York: Viking Press, 1946), 319.



that in the succeeding years the committee's critics often saw in him the very essence of what they perceived the committee to be; hence the Left labeled him as a publicity-seeking, anti-New Deal, Red witch hunter whose sole motivation seemed to be political expediency. However, the Right found him a patriotic hero, a man who was willing to suffer public ridicule and personal discomfort to keep up the fight against the un-American forces that seemed to pervade the land. Where the actual truth lay was, of course, not nearly so significant as to where it resided in the minds of the people involved. It is thus worthwhile to examine the various reactions to the early committee, for they would change very little in succeeding years and almost not at all when applied to the later Thomas. In addition, even a cursory look at the more popular expressions of opinion greatly adds to one's understanding of the publicity-gaining powers of an investigating committee.

As it was several months before the Dies committee began its formal hearings, little notice was taken of its initial announcement. True, the New Republic anticipated that "if the principal energies of Mr. Dies are not given over to hounding Communists, it will be a miracle,"⁵⁰ but for the most part the extreme organs of political opinion were strangely quiet.

With the August hearings, however, the committee began to receive a great deal of public exposure, and by

⁵⁰ New Republic, June 15, 1933, 158.



the end of the year its work was often front-page news.

The Nation now joined the New Republic in the most vehement attacks on the committee. In language geared for battle, the committee was catalogued as seeking "to gain the admiring plaudits of the timorous old ladies of both sexes who look under the bed every night for a Bolshevik with a bomb."⁵¹ Another, and more significant, charge was that the press seemed much more willing to feature unproved accusations than it was to print their rebuttal, a charge that would continue to follow the committee throughout its public career. Naturally the former made better copy, but many felt that by this very service the press was aiding and extending the life of the committee.⁵²

There was also the question whether publicity itself was not the foremost aim of the committee. Martin Dies had acknowledged that the committee needed publicity to keep going,⁵³ and in this the committee was extremely successful. A critical article in the Public Opinion Quarterly labeled the committee's attempt to get as much and as favorable publicity as possible a success, at least in "quantity if not quality," and it cited the fact that recent polls showed at least three-fourths of the American

⁵¹ Ibid., Aug. 31, 1938, 90.

⁵² Ibid. See also the Nation, June 3, 1937, 631, and the Christian Century, Dec. 7, 1938, 1491.

⁵³ Martin Dies Story, 60.

people supported Dies and his committee.⁵⁴ The fact that the New York Times devoted 500 column inches to the work of the committee in September and October alone gives a fair indication of the increasing coverage given to the committee.⁵⁵

In America not only does the press influence public opinion, but the reverse is also true. Newspapers that perhaps wished to be more judicious could not entirely ignore the public's feelings, nor could they keep such good copy off their front pages, despite the frequent admonishings from periodicals not so dependent upon a broad public appeal. The Washington Post, which delighted in ridiculing the committee in its early going, took a more circumspect view when the committee came up for renewal. An August editorial labeled the committee's work as "Poppycock."⁵⁶ In December the Post, though not an ardent supporter of the New Deal administration, asked the committee if it had noticed the headline, "Red Predominates Mrs. Roosevelt's Winter Wardrobe."⁵⁷ However, the Post continued to provide extensive coverage, and a January editorial stated that the committee's first report was a "document of great interest and potential value...the evidence assembled shows that a

⁵⁴ D.A. Saunders, "The Dies Committee, " Public Opinion Quarterly, April, 1939, 238.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 224.

⁵⁶ Post, Aug. 24, 1938.

⁵⁷ Ibid., Dec. 9, 1939.



probe of this kind was not only needed but long overdue."⁵⁸ Had the Post changed its mind? Not really. It still criticized the committee's methods and some of its members, but it had come to acknowledge the country's desire for just such an investigation.

This can be more clearly demonstrated when we point to the fact that the House voted for the committee's renewal by an overwhelming 344 to 35 count.⁵⁹ Did this ten to one ratio really depict how the Representatives felt about the committee? It is doubtful, but again the fear of public opinion had proved decisive. A New York Times editorial illuminated the problem when it stated, "Legislators admitted privately that they cannot afford, for political reasons, to vote against its continuance."⁶⁰ Such knowledge was a tremendous weapon in the hands of a Martin Dies or a J. Parnell Thomas.

The committee's admirers, by their very enthusiasm, contributed significantly to its overall appeal. After a slow start the Chicago Tribune became most dutiful in reporting the committee's activities. In addition, its technique of handling this news further explained the committee's popularity. The Tribune, like the committee itself, usually accepted the testimony of sympathetic witnesses without question. As a result some of the headlines implied that

⁵⁸ Ibid., Jan. 5, 1939.

⁵⁹ CR: 76-1, Feb. 3, 1939, 1128.

⁶⁰ Times, Jan. 8, 1939.



the committee had proved even some of the wildest allegations of the witnesses. Banner headlines such as "Links Perkins Aid to Plot to Keep Red in U.S.,"⁶¹ or "Communist Tie with New Deal Is Told at Quiz,"⁶² were bound to influence the readers. Likewise, the Tribune's editorials sought the sensational quote to further build their own case against the New Deal, as in the following example spoken by J. Parnell Thomas:

The New Deal masterminds have pawned themselves out to the Communist strategists until now they are so far out on a limb it is practically impossible for them to get back.⁶³

Even more adulatory was the National Republic and its editor, Walter S. Steele. In August, Steele had appeared before the committee "to represent 114 patriotic, fraternal, and civic societies."⁶⁴ In addition, he and his magazine provided material aid for the committee by decorating the walls of its Washington chambers with countless examples of Communist propaganda.⁶⁵

In June of the first year another spokesman from the far Right, Father Coughlin's Social Justice, noted that "Dies' particular peeve is the Nazis."⁶⁶ But by September

⁶¹ Tribune, Aug. 15, 1938.

⁶² Ibid., Aug. 16, 1938.

⁶³ Tribune, Oct. 17, 1938.

⁶⁴ National Republic, Feb., 1939.

⁶⁵ For a picture of this interesting display, see Life, Sept. 5, 1938, 12-13.

⁶⁶ Social Justice, June 20, 1938, 7.



Coughlin had atoned for his error by making Martin Dies his "Man of the week."⁶⁷ Thus the popular Detroit priest was also willing to swing his considerable influence behind the committee, and by 1940 the good Father granted Chairman Dies his blessing for the presidential nomination.

The conservative Catholic America praised the committee's work but expressed fears that it would be terminated "by anti-American politicians at the bidding of Communists."⁶⁸ However, not all Catholic periodicals were impressed, and the Commonweal criticized the committee for the "ineffectual and barbarous way in which it encouraged the country to solve the Communist question."⁶⁹

Thus by early 1939 the committee not only had its Congressional vote of confidence, but it had also won the decisive support of the American people. That this was no accident has been duly noted. Publicity, both planned and otherwise, had amply served the committee's needs. Likewise, J. Parnell Thomas had begun to implant himself on the minds of many Americans as a spirited defender of national ideals and an uncompromising opponent of the New Deal administration. Yet without the House Committee on Un-American Activities, this would scarcely have been possible.

⁶⁷ Ibid., Sept. 12, 1938, 20.

⁶⁸ America, Sept. 10, 1938, 540.

⁶⁹ Commonweal, Nov. 4, 1938, 30.



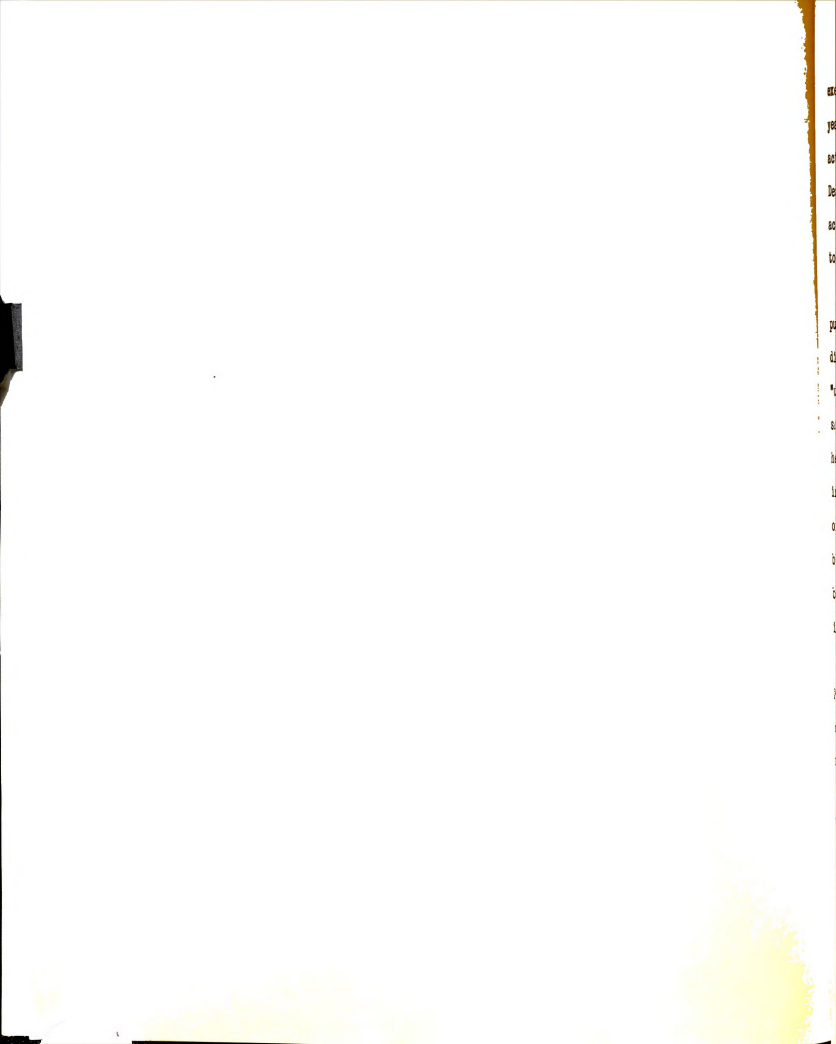
CHAPTER III

THE "LINK THEORY" TAKES SHAPE

The year 1939 saw the committee gain a degree of confidence and national recognition which must have exceeded even the most optimistic hopes of its ardent members. About three-fourths of the hearings dealt with the Red peril, and not even the threat of a general European war could push the committee completely off the front pages.

This too was a year when J. Parnell Thomas gained increasing public attention for his often promised exposures of the political and social ties between the Communist party and the New Deal. Though his use of the committee to exploit this alleged link would bring him into sharp disagreement with his fellow committee members, he remained relentlessly on the attack. Nor did the New Jersey Congressman restrict himself solely to committee activities but utilized the floor of Congress and numerous public appearances to maintain his continuous flow of criticism on the Roosevelt team.

On March 20 Thomas introduced a House Resolution calling for a committee of seven to investigate the question of publicity and the dissemination of propaganda by the



executive departments of the government.¹ In the preceding year he had often asked for such an investigation, but no action had been taken.² The usual tack was to accuse the New Deal of trying to perpetuate itself through its propaganda activities. But again in 1939 the Democrat-dominated House took little interest in his accusations.

A few days later, when he took his case to the public in a radio broadcast, Thomas moved his attack in a different direction. He asked what could be done about "un-American groups" in our midst and concluded that we should ship them back "from whence they came." But to do this he insisted that "we must first look for a definite change in the attitude of our present Secretary of Labor and a few of her associates."³ This was striking an old note--to blame Frances Perkins and her Department for such behavior--but in the years to come his criticism would broaden to include many other government agencies.

Thomas took advantage of another opportunity in this March address. Hitler's militant Third Reich had aroused considerable negative comment in this country, and Thomas now experimented with linking the New Deal to this unpopular cause: "We want none of Stalin's New Deal for Russia; We

¹H. Res. 134, CR: 76-1, Mar. 20, 1939, 3013.

²CR: 75-3, Appendix, Mar. 2, 1938, 889; CR: 75-3, June 1, 1938, 2294; New York Times, Mar. 9, 1938.

³Radio address, as cited in CR: 76-1, Appendix, Mar. 24, 1939, 1176.



want none of Hitler's New Deal for Germany."⁴ His terminology was, of course, significant as he tried to give a "New Deal" label to both of these unpopular foreign governments; however, his summarizing statement did little to clarify just who or what did belong in America:

And if I judge the people of this nation rightly, they'll not tolerate very long any "ism" except Americanism. Further, we intend to preserve America for Americans who believe in the American way.⁵

Public Hearings, 1939

The first public hearings in 1939 commenced in late May with testimony on the so-called Jewish conspiracy and the countervailing anti-Semitic plot. The committee found little evidence on the former, but several witnesses proved willing to discuss their anti-Semitic prejudices. In addition, the committee started hearing testimony which would lead to its successful exposure of Fritz Kuhn and his German-American Bund.

Though Thomas had taken little interest in the previous hearings on fascist activities, his cross-examination seemed able and judicious. He obviously had no sympathy for the avowed fascists or Nazis, and he especially chastised them for their anti-Semitic mouthings.⁶ Nor did he show any inclination to follow up his earlier allegation that Hitler's program was also a sort of "New Deal."

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ H-5, May 31, 1939, 3591.



It is interesting to speculate why Thomas would have no use for individuals or political movements which also held the Reds in such absolute contempt. Clearly he considered the fascists and Nazis to be un-American, but the fact that he saw them as no active threat to his America would perhaps explain why he could approach such investigations with greater detachment and objectivity. On the other hand, if one accepts the premise that Thomas was greatly motivated in his investigative prejudices by political expediency, one might better conclude that for him communism was not so much an international movement that had to be countered with any allies available, but a convenient domestic threat which he could use to exploit his hatred of the New Deal. And in spite of a few feeble attempts to the contrary, it was much easier to convince the public that the government was heading in the direction of communism rather than fascism.

These spring hearings were of short duration, and the committee recessed for the summer on the first of June. But Committeeman Thomas did not rest, as he resumed his attacks on the administration from the floor of Congress. His new declaration of governmental "pinkness" centered around the appointment of Archibald MacLeish as Librarian of Congress. MacLeish's sin was a double one. He had often been seen in the company of Communists or fellow travelers, and he had belonged to, or acknowledged, several organizations of questionable allegiance. Not only did this seem to

indicate MacLeish's guilt, but his appointment was cited as another example of the administration's soft line on communism:

MacLeish is one of the leading fellow travelers of the Communist party. This appointment once more raises the vital and alarming issue of Communist influence on appointments emanating from the White House.⁷

Thomas cited several Communist-front organizations to which "fellow traveler" MacLeish allegedly either belonged or gave support, ranging all the way from the League of American Writers to the Bureau to Aid Spanish Democracy. Speaker Rayburn interrupted to ask Thomas to define "fellow traveler," to which he replied, "A man who is absolutely sympathetic with the Communist cause, but for various reasons does not care to be a party member."⁸ Nor was he much more explicit when Rayburn pursued the matter to ask if MacLeish was actually a Communist. Thomas begged the question by asking the Speaker if he did not agree that the administration was placing people in key positions who were either members of the Communist party or fellow travelers. Rayburn denied this.⁹

A week later Thomas expanded his remarks in a fashion which again made it clear that in his eyes, at least, a man could be effectively judged by his associates:

To a large extent we may know a man by the company he keeps....MacLeish has not only been frequently

⁷CR: 76-1, June 7, 1939, 6781.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., 6783.



in the company of the Communist leaders in this country, he has accepted official position in the United Front organizations which they have set up for the purpose of propagandizing their particular brand of totalitarian revolution in this country.¹⁰

Thomas proceeded to present such names as Erskine Caldwell, Malcolm Cowley, and Paul deKruif as "well known fellow travelers" with whom MacLeish had frequently associated. The fact that these men were fellow writers with whom MacLeish might naturally be expected to associate was not acknowledged. Nor did anyone indicate that these individuals had ever been found guilty of any subversion by any official government agency but only by J. Parnell Thomas and a few of his fellow committee members. To complete MacLeish's guilt, it was pointed out that he had written for the New Masses, had publicly defended the Spanish Loyalists, and had once even introduced Earl Browder to an audience.¹¹ Again Speaker Rayburn asked Thomas if he wished to call MacLeish a Communist but to no avail. Congressmen Thomas had also not clarified what un-American measures MacLeish might introduce from behind his desk at the library, a position not normally considered politically influential.

When the committee resumed its public hearings on August 13, Thomas' casual remarks to the press brought him into conflict with some of the committee members. His prediction that the committee had ample information to "kill off the Communist party in this country, " and his promise

¹⁰ Ibid., Appendix, June 15, 1939, 2613.

¹¹ Ibid.



that this "startling evidence" would soon be formally presented, did not bring an immediate response from the committee.¹² But when he insisted that "the present testimony is just a curtain-raiser for sensational evidence linking the New Deal with Communism,"¹³ he earned a sharp rebuke from Chairman Dies:

Neither Thomas nor any other member of the committee has authority to predict what the future evidence will show. So far as I am able, I am going to keep politics¹⁴ out of the hearings and keep them strictly nonpartisan.

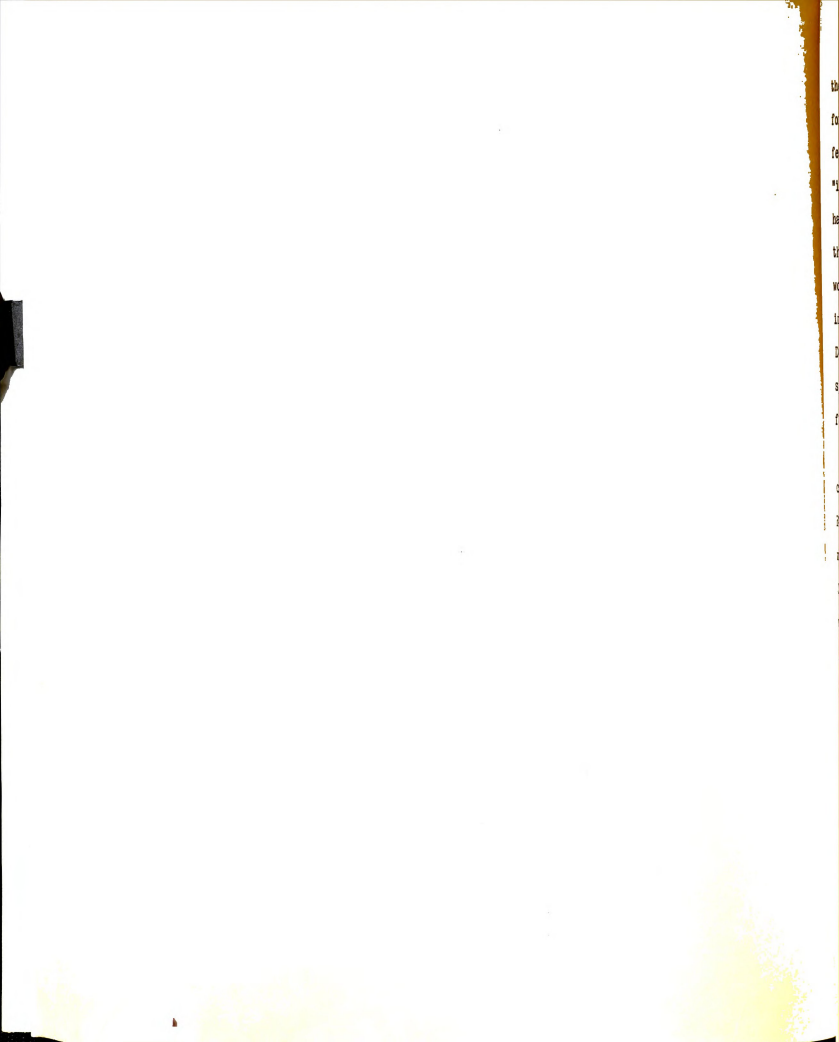
Such an assertion of nonpartisanship sounded a bit strange emanating from the chairman's lips. Perhaps he still felt enough loyalty to his party to refuse to let a Republican embarrass it. More likely, however, was the fact that Dies wanted his committee to avoid the charges of irresponsibility which might well have resulted from his subordinate's rash promises.

Thomas was not to be discouraged, and when the committee reopened its hearings in September, he lost little time in steering the testimony along anti-administration lines. Earl Browder, the first admitted Communist to appear before the committee, gave him his chance to further develop his "link" theory. Browder readily admitted that several of

¹²Times, Aug. 13, 1939; Tribune, Aug. 13, 1939.

¹³Times, Aug. 21, 1939.

¹⁴Ibid. Thomas also antagonized another committee member, Jerry Voorhis, by interpreting his request for a nine-day postponement of the August hearings as an effort on the part of the administration to sabotage the committee; see the Times, Aug. 16, 1939.



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the cited liberal organizations were "transmission belts" for the Communist party. Again using association as a manifestation of guilt, Thomas indicated that several New Dealers, "including Ickes, Wallace, the President, and Mrs. Roosevelt," had addressed messages to many of these organizations. He then concluded that this list showed that the New Deal was working "hand in glove with the Communist party."¹⁵ Such an imputation brought an angry retort from Committeeman John Dempsey who labeled Thomas' words "a cheap political speech." Chairman Dies too requested that Thomas confine himself "to the subject under consideration."¹⁶

Once again the disapproving comments of Thomas' colleagues had little effect on him. When a certain Oliver Kenneth Goff took the stand the following month, Thomas once more used the witness to reflect his own political feelings. Goff had been a member of the Young Communist League, but when he faced the committee he was on an excursion to the Right which would eventually win him the partnership of the fascist-leaning Gerald L. K. Smith in the Forties and a seat on the National Council of the "Minutemen" two decades later.¹⁷ As an ex-Communist at twenty-five, Goff proved very willing to give the committee the benefit of his experience in the movement, and he gave the names of many of his former

¹⁵ H-7, Sept. 6, 1939, 4484.

¹⁶ Ibid. See also the Tribune, Sept. 7, 1939.

¹⁷ Goff's present activities were described in Bill Turner's "The Minutemen," Ramparts, Jan., 1967, 69.



associates. When these extended into government circles, Committeeman Thomas was forced to interrupt:

Mr. Thomas: I think that it is a shame that any major political party should be allowed to be guided by communism in this country, the way some of them have in the past few years.

Mr. Voorhis: Of course, Mr. Chairman, there are only two major political parties.

Mr. Thomas: One major political party is divided, and if you want to know whom I mean, I am talking about the New Deal.

Mr. Voorhis: I do not think either the New Deal or the Democratic party has been guided by communism.

Mr. Thomas: It has been pretty plain here; the testimony has been astounding.¹⁸

A short time later Thomas made his charges more specific when he criticized the Justice Department for its failure to act on Earl Browder's admitted passport frauds.¹⁹ His attack on Attorney General Frank Murphy reached such proportions that again Chairman Dies labeled his words "most inappropriate" and added that the chair condemned "the action of any member of this committee to inject partisanship into these hearings."²⁰

The attendance record of Thomas during the 1939 hearings was noteworthy. Of some fifty-five hearings that were held from August to the end of the session in November, he was there less than half the time, a fact that lent added support to the premise that he was often more interested in using his position on the committee to embarrass the administration than to uncover actual subversives. His

¹⁸H-7, Oct. 9, 1939, 5685.

¹⁹Times, Oct. 23, 1939.

²⁰Ibid., Oct. 24, 1939; Tribune, Oct. 24, 1939.



attendance record, however, improved considerably when he became chairman.

Committee Renewal, 1940

As the committee drew its 1939 hearings to a close, the question of renewal again loomed important. Representative Thomas prepared for the critics by stating that anyone who would "smear" the committee must be sympathetic to the aims of foreign "isms."²¹ This brought a stinging rebuke from Committeeman Jerry Voorhis who declared that when the indefinite continuation of one Congressional committee became the test of a man's patriotism, dangerous grounds had been reached. "Because a person disapproves of some of the methods of the Dies committee," he concluded, "it does not mean that he is in favor of subversive activities, or against the decent presentation of facts concerning them."²²

The moderate hand of Voorhis also appeared in the second annual report which was released in January of 1940. Evidently the fact that Dies was sick allowed Voorhis and Dempsey to have a great deal more to say about what went into the report. Particularly noteworthy was a definition of un-American activities which seemed to indicate that the committee might become more exact in its investigations:

²¹ St. Louis Post Dispatch, Nov. 28, 1939.

²² Ibid. The words of Voorhis were to take on added significance when Richard Nixon employed similar tactics to unseat him from Congress in 1946.



By un-American activities we mean organizations or groups existing in the United States which are directed, controlled, or subsidized by foreign governments or agencies which seek to change the policies and form of the government of the United States in accordance with the wishes of such foreign governments.²³

An itemized summary of the report pointed out that the Communist party in the United States was only a branch of the party in the Soviet Union. Some eleven organizations were branded as Communist fronts. The CIO was exonerated as a whole with the declaration that the great majority of its members, including the president, were not Communists or their sympathizers. It also gave evidence on the German-American Bund, together with the links uniting the Bund to other groups in this country.²⁴

The New York Times called the report "an astonishingly able and balanced document."²⁵ The report was indeed factual, and nowhere did it contain the exposure of New Deal subversion that Thomas had earlier promised; in fact, there was no mention of government employees or smearing of innocent people. The New Jersey Representative must have been disappointed by the report which one able critic of the committee labeled as "probably the most valuable and outstanding piece of work it ever produced."²⁶

²³ U.S. Congress, House, 76th Cong., 3rd Sess., Report No. 1476, "Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the U.S.," Jan. 3, 1940, 2.

²⁴ Ibid., 4-9.

²⁵ Times, Jan. 5, 1940.

²⁶ August Raymond Ogden, The Dies Committee (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1945), 179.



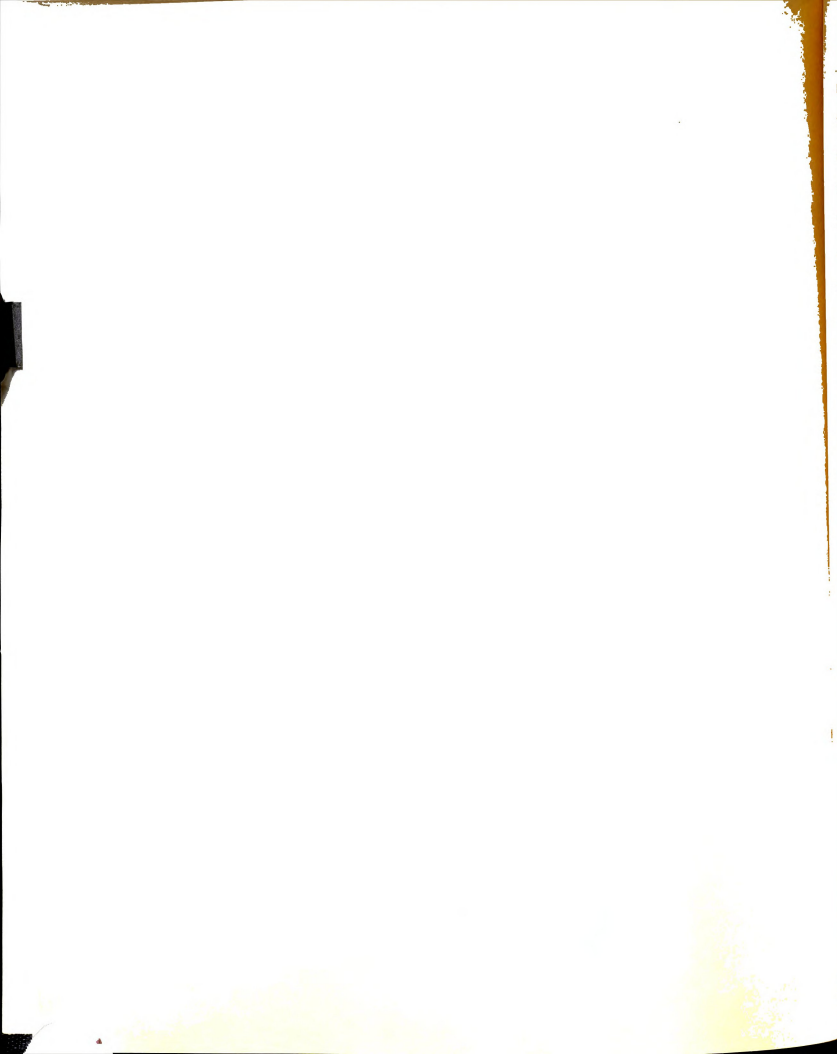
A report of such a cold and balanced nature did not bring headlines, nor did it seem to have much of a mitigating effect on the American public who saw the Red menace as an ever-increasing threat. A January Gallop Poll reported that 70% of the people interviewed thought it more important to investigate communism than nazism.²⁷ This seemed even more remarkable in view of the fact that Poland had already been ravaged and England and France were then at war with Nazi Germany. Once again it was the glaring headline, with its bold, sweeping accusations, which seemed to make the greatest impression on the reading public; and J. Parnell Thomas was a master at taking advantage of this kind of opportunity.

The January debate on committee renewal was much more heated than the final vote would indicate. Several of the Representatives were quick to point out that the very American way of life the committee was trying so hard to protect was being endangered by its questionable methods. The old Nazi chaser, Samuel Dickstein, undoubtedly still bitter over not being appointed to the committee, predictably criticized the committee for over-emphasizing the Red threat. Thomas rather tactlessly responded that the committee would be happy to have Dickstein turn over any materials on fascist activity as long as he did not accompany them.²⁸

In the course of the debate Jerry Vocrhis proposed

²⁷ Times, Jan. 5, 1940.

²⁸ CR: 76-3, Jan. 16, 1940, 398.



some notable amendments which might have done much to counter the charges that the committee's chief function was publicity seeking. Voorhis insisted that there be no public utterances without proof and without the accord of the entire committee. The California Representative could well have had Thomas in mind though he certainly was not the only one who had allowed news to "slip" to the press while giving the impression that the information had been substantiated in closed hearings. Unfortunately, however, the Voorhis amendments never got out of the Rules Committee.²⁹

Several of the Democrats tried to point out that the committee was being used for political purposes by the Republicans. Representative Kent L. Keller of Illinois commented on the effectiveness of the committee as a political tool by stating that every Republican had voted for its continuance.³⁰ But Keller had to accept the fact that the majority of the members on the committee were Democrats, including its powerful chairman.

California's Lee E. Geyer, dropping party labels, brought a more telling accusation when he insisted that the Dies committee had timed its appearance in certain cities to coincide with the holding of National Labor Relations board elections or with the settlement of serious labor disputes. He further charged that "the objectives of the Dies committee are to spread mutual distrust and fear among the

²⁹Ibid., Jan. 23, 1940, 573.

³⁰Ibid.



common people of America, to create in the popular mind a war hysteria and to set neighbor against neighbor in a hunt for heretical thoughts." Geyer concluded by charging that it was "just not safe to speak out against the Dies committee anymore."³¹

In addition to their personal opinions, some of the Congressmen cited editorials from several of the leading newspapers to show that they too were becoming increasingly critical of the committee and its work. The New York Herald Tribune, an open critic of the Roosevelt administration, editorialized, "The country should be warned against the danger of spying a Communist under every bush."³² A few days later the same paper asked if William Allen White, whom the committee had described as an ill-directed liberal, was really "dense enough to become a 'stooge' of Stalin? There must be a catch somewhere. The catch, we believe, appears in the assumption that because Communists ally themselves with a liberal cause they necessarily capture it."³³ On the same tack, the New York Times concluded, "It is now possible to be a Communist without knowing it,"³⁴ and Walter Lippmann called it "a kind of committee for public safety."³⁵ But the most humorous criticism came from Heywood

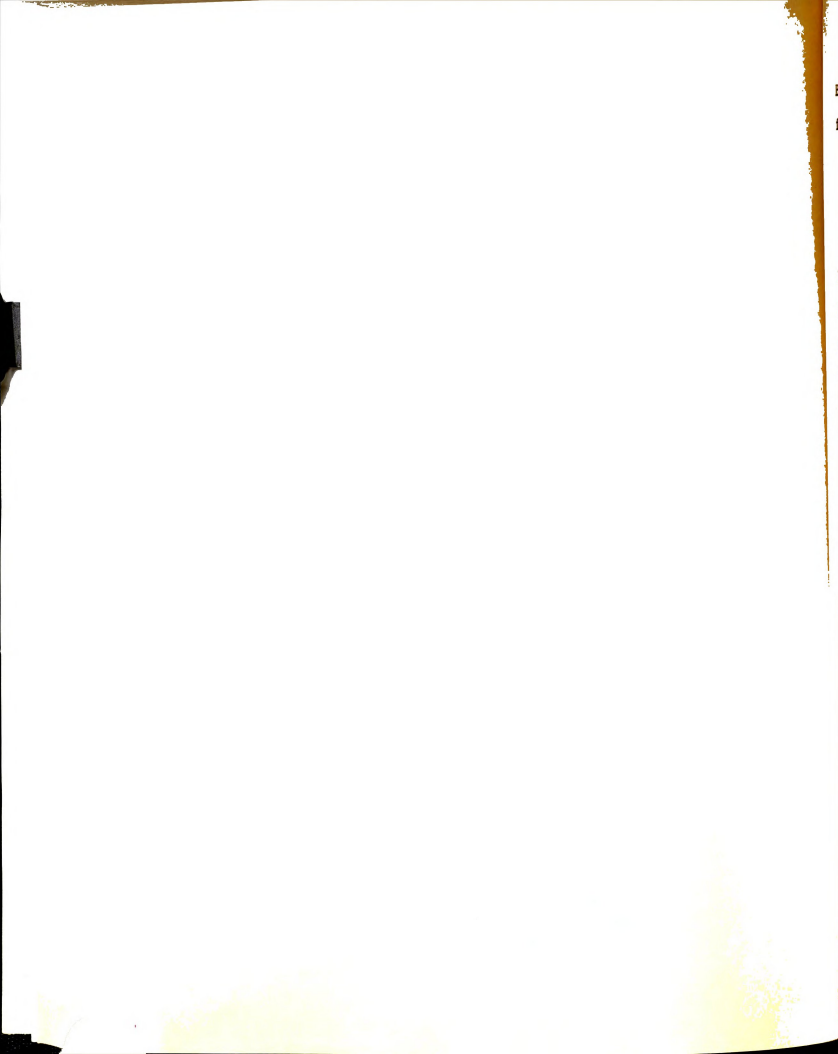
³¹ CR: 76-3, Jan. 23, 1940, 579-580.

³² As quoted in CR: 76-3, Jan. 23, 1940, 596.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.



Braun who chided the committee for overly encouraging its friendly witnesses:

Instead the more florid romancers were egged on as they seemed to be drawing to the end of the chapter. Martin Dies and his men seemed like eager infants in their disposition to say, 'Don't stop now, Granny. Tell us another story. Tell us the one about the ogre who ate up the Sunday-school superintendent.'³⁶

In view of the public opinion polls, however, it seemed that editorials counseling moderation had much less effect on the reading public than did the front-page headlines that all too often announced the unproved accusations of the committee.

In the face of such criticism it was again Representative Thomas who sprang to the committee's defense, dramatically insisting, "It may yet be written in the history of this country that an investigation committee set up by this House did more than any other single factor to save this country from the illusions and the terrors of totalitarian government."³⁷ Unfortunately he had again ignored the point of the criticism--that the committee through its methods was destroying the very liberties it was pledged to defend.

In any case, the final vote for continuing the committee was an overwhelming 344 to 21;³⁸ however, the amount of money given it was reduced to \$75,000. Perhaps some of

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ CR: 76-3, Jan. 25, 1940, 604-605.



the Congressmen, not having the courage of their convictions, felt this was a safer way to curtail committee activities.

Spring Hearings, 1940

Two days after the Committee on Un-American Activities received its Congressional vote of confidence, J. Parnell Thomas again put public pressure on his fellow committee members. He announced that the committee was planning an investigation of Hollywood,³⁹ but not until a month later, and after two days of executive hearings, did the committee acknowledge this plan of action.⁴⁰

In the meantime, the surprise appearance of William Dudley Pelley, the elusive leader of the pro-fascist, anti-Semitic Silver Shirt organization, moved the committee in a different direction. The committee had earlier tried to locate Pelley, and at that time Thomas had asked that he be subpoenaed; but Chairman Dies had resisted, explaining that the experience of the committee indicated that witnesses like Pelley did not want to tell the truth and revealed nothing on the stand.⁴¹

Pelley, with his enthusiastic praise of the committee and its members, proved to be a rather embarrassing witness.⁴² He claimed that his Silver Legion was founded

³⁹Times, Jan. 27, 1940.

⁴⁰Ibid., Feb. 28, 1940.

⁴¹H-6, Aug. 23, 1939, 4216

⁴²For the complete testimony of Pelley, see H-12, Feb. 7, 8, & 10, 1940, 7201-7333.



to "propagandize exactly the same principles that Mr. Dies and this committee are engaged in prosecuting right now... if its work continues and goes on the Silver Shirt Legion stops."⁴³ He further testified that the Federal Bureau of Investigation "more or less" approved his work, but when he commended the impeachment proceedings against Secretary of Labor Perkins, Thomas quickly retorted, "while you may approve that act of mine, I have yet to approve one of yours."⁴⁴ Once again the Congressman had proved unwilling to enlist allies from the racist or pro-Hitler ranks.

Thomas was anything but moderate when he went on the radio some two weeks later for a Washington birthday address. He insisted that the subversive movements were on the run; but, perhaps realizing that this would preclude the need for the committee, he amended his remarks with a warning for "no one to jump to the conclusion, however, that the emissaries of Stalin and Hitler have gone out of business here or that the work of the Dies committee is finished."⁴⁵

In the same speech he censored Attorney General Robert Jackson for endorsing a peace march sponsored by the veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, a group of Spanish Civil War volunteers. As Earl Browder had testified that sixty percent of these individuals were members of the Com-

⁴³H-12, Feb. 7, 1940, 7207.

⁴⁴Ibid., 7213.

⁴⁵Radio address as reported in CH: 76-3, Appendix, Feb. 26, 1940, 1005-1006.



munist party, Thomas concluded that Jackson "has disqualified himself to prosecute those who had illegally recruited these Communist soldiers whose parade he publicly endorsed."⁴⁶

The First Lady also came under attack for entertaining members of the American Student Union at the same time they were witnesses before the committee.⁴⁷ Actually, Mrs. Roosevelt had attended the November 1939 hearings concerning the American Student Union, but Thomas had taken no notice of it at the time; in fact, he had not even bothered to attend these hearings, though Mrs. Roosevelt did come back a second day in an obvious show of support for the student organization.⁴⁸

When the regular public hearings for 1940 began on March 25, Dies announced that the committee would have the names of 100,000 Communists who worked here for the USSR and sent American secrets to her.⁴⁹ A parade of Communist party officials took the stand, but when they refused to supply the promised names, the chairman initiated contempt proceedings.⁵⁰

Once again Committeeman Thomas took almost no interest in these particular hearings. Barely did he interject a

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ H-11, Nov. 30 and Dec. 1, 1939.

⁴⁹ Times, Mar. 27, 1940.

⁵⁰ CH: 76-3, Mar. 29, 1940, 3694-3695; CH: 76-3, Apr. 2, 1940, 3856-3857.



comment. One can often go 50 to 100 pages without seeing any mention of him. Seemingly the structure and membership roles of the Communist party held little interest for him, unless he could point this information in the direction of the administration.⁵¹

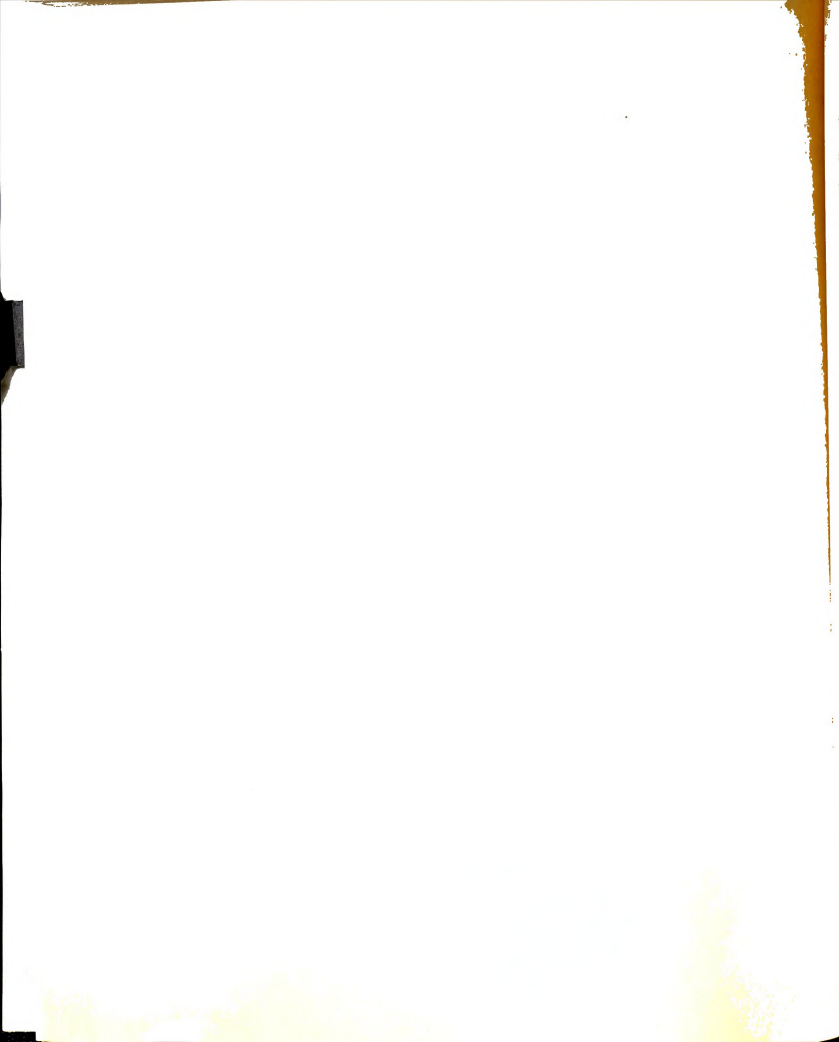
His interest did increase when Representative Dickstein finally got his chance to present his evidence against fascist and Nazi groups on April 2. Though little new information was introduced, Thomas took notice when Dickstein mentioned a certain Captain Rubley, one of Pelley's former Silver Shirts, who also had been a reserve officer in the Michigan National Guard. Thomas questioned whether the Department of Justice had been notified and if action had been taken.⁵² But he seemed to have drawn a blank, for when Rubley himself testified on April 4, he asked no questions.⁵³ Once again it appeared that his real interest lay more in embarrassing the government than in uncovering any actual subversive activities in which the Captain might have indulged. This became even more apparent when testimony to the effect that the Silver Shirts had actually ordered the guns for an attempted overthrow of the government was passed unheeded by Thomas and the rest of the committee.⁵⁴

⁵¹H-12 & H-13, 7335-8113.

⁵²H-12, Apr. 2, 1940, 7537.

⁵³Ibid., Apr. 4, 1940, 7629-7664.

⁵⁴Ibid., Apr. 2, 1940, 7539.



The hearing on April 12 was entirely taken up with testimony on the recruiting of Americans for Loyalist Spain and on the conditions in Spain itself during the Civil War.⁵⁵ Exactly what the committee was trying to accomplish was not clear, and it did not return to this subject in future hearings. The witnesses were mostly parents of boys who had been reported missing in Spain.

One of the fathers provided a good example of this type of cooperative witness. His son had enlisted in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and had been killed, perhaps by the Loyalists themselves, or so his father thought. When the father blamed Attorney General Robert Jackson for not investigating this particular incident and for refusing to serve indictments on those who had helped recruit American boys, he struck a responsive note in Thomas:

I have yet to see a scintilla of cooperation from the Department of Justice, particularly the present Attorney General....This matter of quashing those indictments is just typical of the kind of things he stands for and does, and I am getting sick of it.⁵⁶

On April 22, the day before the committee opened its hearings on the alleged spread of Communist activity in the American labor movement, Thomas made a speech to the National Institute for Commercial and Trade Organization Executives on the evils of government interference in business:

We've been softened by un-American groups. We have too many laws that hamstring business. The

⁵⁵H-13, Apr. 13, 1940, 7727-7840.

⁵⁶Testimony of Maxwell M. Wallach, H-13, Apr. 13, 1940, 7735.



National Labor Relations Board and similar bodies have created a bottleneck in industry.⁵⁷

He proceeded to link certain government officials to Communist-front organizations, leaving the implication that perhaps the administration was anti-business because of the Red elements within its own midst.⁵⁸

Back in Washington the committee was listening to a series of witnesses on Communist infiltration of the labor unions. Most simply replied yes or no to the prepared questions of Chief Investigator J. B. Matthews. One witness, however, bitter over his expulsion from one of the local unions of the American Communications Association, told of the vast influence in this maritime union.⁵⁹

Fred M. Howe, as so often happened with this kind of informing witness, was allowed the greatest latitude in his remarks. He rambled far afield, making extensive and descriptive accusations which were scarcely supported by any real evidence. Sometimes his "speeches" ran a whole uninterrupted page. Even statements to the effect that the union was ninety-nine percent Communist controlled went completely unchallenged.

Thomas took advantage of this line of testimony to ask the witness if the Federal Communications Commission had "taken any action in regard to these Communists who are

⁵⁷Tribune, Apr. 23, 1940.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹H-13, Apr. 24, 1940, 7957-8005.



radio operators in our ships."⁶⁰ He was gratified to find that one of the alleged Communists, a Mervyn Rathborne, had recently been appointed by President Roosevelt to the Board of the National Youth Administration;⁶¹ in fact, Thomas became too enthusiastic with his findings and had to be toned down by Chairman Dies. This marked the first real challenge to Howe's roving remarks in over thirty pages of testimony:

Mr. Thomas: here is a man who was appointed to aid in the development of the youth of this country, and you have had any amount of testimony that this man Rathborne is a Communist. It is just another flirtation of the New Deal with communism

Mr. Dies: Well, that is a question that the witness, as I understand, cannot say on his personal knowledge that Rathborne is a member of the Communist party. He is merely stating his conclusions based upon circumstances, is that right?

Mr. Howe: Well, I have never seen his membership card, naturally. Rathborne is said to hold--

Mr. Dies: Well, the only reason that you have for saying or believing that Rathborne is a member of the Communist party is the fact that after 1935 he ceased to attack the party, ceased to criticize the party, and his publication followed the Communist line, is that right?

Mr. Howe: Yes, he followed the party line himself.

Mr. Dies: And in addition to that you state that another reason that you think he is a member of the Communist party is that in a trial of some officer in the union he defended him. That would be entirely possible for a man to do without being a Communist himself, would it not?

Mr. Howe: It would seem that way, out when you know the Communists it is quite unthinkable.

Mr. Thomas: And there is an additional reason.

Mr. Dies: I think when a witness says that a certain man is a Communist that there ought to be some tangible proof to support that statement.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 7970.

⁶¹ Ibid., 7987.



Mr. Thomas: I would like to have the witness repeat the last reason which he gave, and that is about the reading of the Declaration of Independence from Earl Browder's book on communism. That is enough proof for me.⁶²

That such testimony provided at best but a tenuous link between Rathborne and communism seemed very obvious when Committeeman Joseph Casey arrived at the hearing and promptly gave Howe's testimony a searing cross-examination.⁶³

In view of the fact that Casey did effectively point up the weaknesses of Howe's testimony, and remembering the earlier premise that accusations made better headlines than denials or pleas for moderation, it is interesting to sample the press coverage given to a witness such as Howe. The Washington Post's front-page banner stated, "Communists Rule Ship Radio Union, Dies Witness Says."⁶⁴ The article itself, though not sympathetic to the committee, nevertheless gave most of its space to howe's allegations and almost nothing to Casey's cross-examination. Nor was it until the very end of the article that Rathborne's denial was printed.

Though not front page news in the New York Times, its headline "Swears Reds Hold Ship Radio Posts" was still typical.⁶⁵ here too it was only after howe's testimony had been extensively covered that the rebuttal of Casey and Rathborne appeared. And, as might be expected, the Chicago

⁶² Ibid., 7988.

⁶³ Ibid., 7998-8001.

⁶⁴ Post, Apr. 25, 1940.

⁶⁵ Times, Apr. 25, 1940.



Tribune did not see fit to print Rathborne's denial at all.⁶⁶
 The Post and the Times could hardly be classified as pro-committee, and both were known for their responsible reporting; thus when even such papers as these emphasized the sweeping incrimination over the accused's refutation, Thomas and the committee had all the advantages.

After a ten-day recess Peter J. Innes, a former member of the National Maritime Union, took the stand.⁶⁷
 Innes testified as to the close Communist ties of Harry Bridges and Mervyn Rathborne. Thomas tried to exploit the fact that the witness had seen Bridges and Edwin Smith of the National Labor Relations Board together at a meeting in Baltimore in which Bridges had sought the approval of the Labor Board for some union elections:

Mr. Thomas: I would like to ask a question. From what you saw that night, did it appear to you that Mr. Smith and Harry Bridges were on intimate terms?

Mr. Innes: Very intimate because they walked up and shook hands with one another and went off in the car.

Mr. Thomas: Did they call each other by their first names, like 'Harry' and 'Ed'?

Mr. Innes: Well, that I can't tell you.

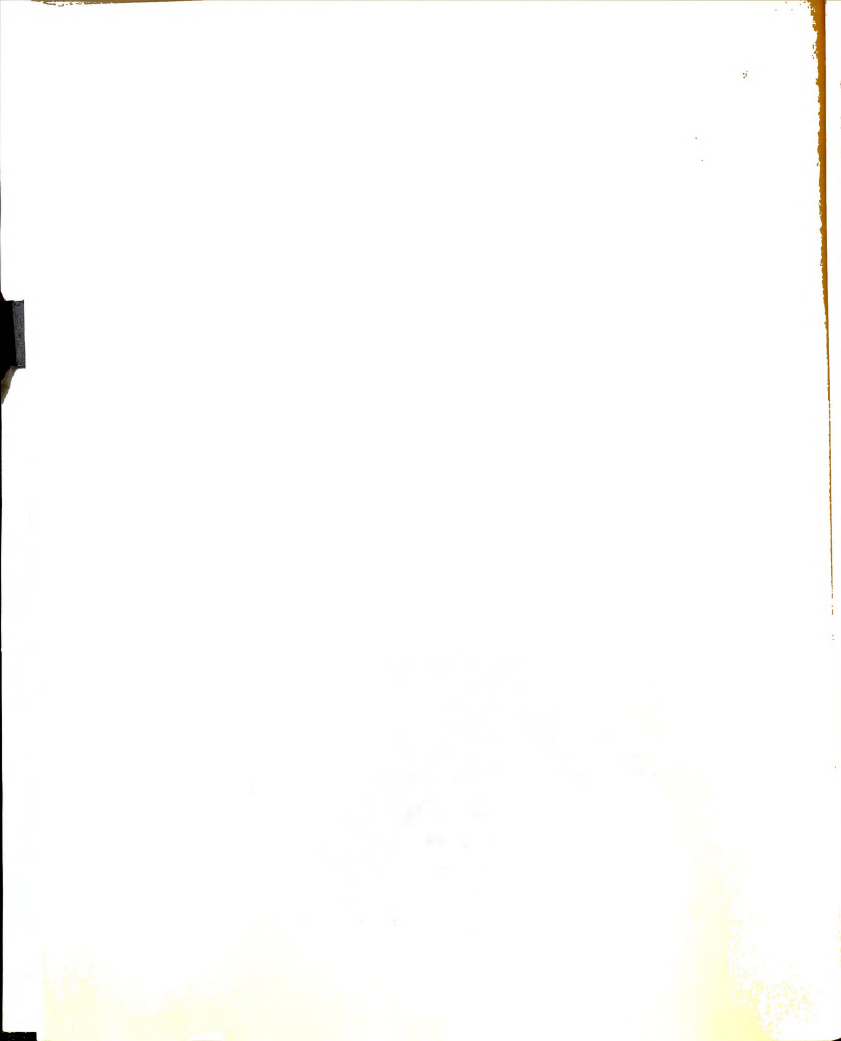
Mr. Thomas: But they did seem to be on intimate terms.⁶⁸

Thomas seemed convinced that if he could show any friendly ties between Bridges and Smith, he would have forged another link in the chain binding the New Deal to communism. Nor could he be dissuaded when Dies interrupted to point out

⁶⁶ Tribune, Apr. 25, 1940.

⁶⁷ H-13, May 6, 1940, 8037-8091.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 8061.

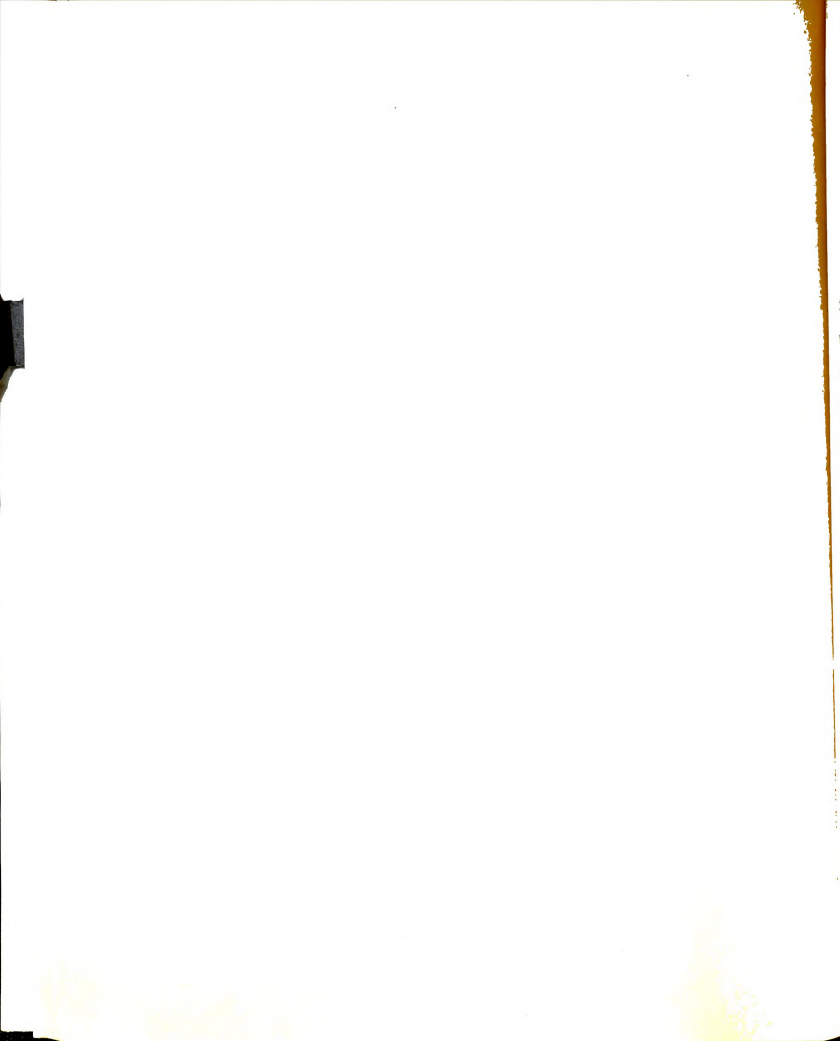


that "the fact that Mr. Smith knew Mr. Bridges is not important. He would naturally know all the labor leaders, and Mr. Bridges was in charge of one of the largest unions in the country."⁶⁹ Thomas then asked the witness if Bridges had ever made any statements about the Department of Labor and his deportation case. His implication was obvious when he asked if Bridges had intimated "that he would be able to get out of it all right?"⁷⁰ But even the normally cooperative Innes was unable to answer that question in the affirmative.

As these spring hearings drew to a close, the Thomas plan of action had become painfully evident. The New Jersey Representative seemed convinced that if his accusations were voiced loud and often enough, someone, sooner or later, would listen to them; and the fact that his fellow committeemen sought to curtail him, deterred him not at all.

⁶⁹Ibid. See also the Times, May 7, 1940.

⁷⁰H-13, May 6, 1940, 8080.



CHAPTER IV

THE DIES COMMITTEE MEETS THE THREAT OF WAR

The early 1940 hearings had been disorganized, irregular, and of little real significance. The committee's work obviously left a great deal to be desired, and even its most ardent supporters must have been apprehensive about its continued existence. But with the German invasion of the Lowlands in May, 1940, the committee was to breathe new life. The world's attention was focused on Europe, and Dies modified the work of the committee to meet the changing situation. Now it would be the constant threat of foreign agents and sabotage that would worry J. Parnell Thomas and Chairman Dies.¹

Espionage and Sabotage, 1940

Through its forthcoming public hearings, the committee clearly hoped to alert the country to the increased threat of espionage now that Europe was at war. The first witness to testify on the subject was Nicholas Dozenberg, a former agent for Soviet Military Intelligence. The Dozenberg case had already come to the attention of J. Par-

¹ On May 17 Dies made a speech in the House calling for a very active enforcement of our laws against the threat of espionage; CR: 76-3, May 17, 1940, 6295.



nell Thomas when a few weeks before he had accused the Attorney General of blocking Dozenberg's proposed testimony before the committee.² Thomas insisted that Dozenberg was the "key to the most startling exposures ever to come before the House Committee on Un-American Activities...and if not turned over soon, it will give the appearance of one more case of sabotage of the Dies committee by a New Deal agency, the Department of Justice."³ Yet when Dozenberg gave his testimony, not a question was asked by Thomas.

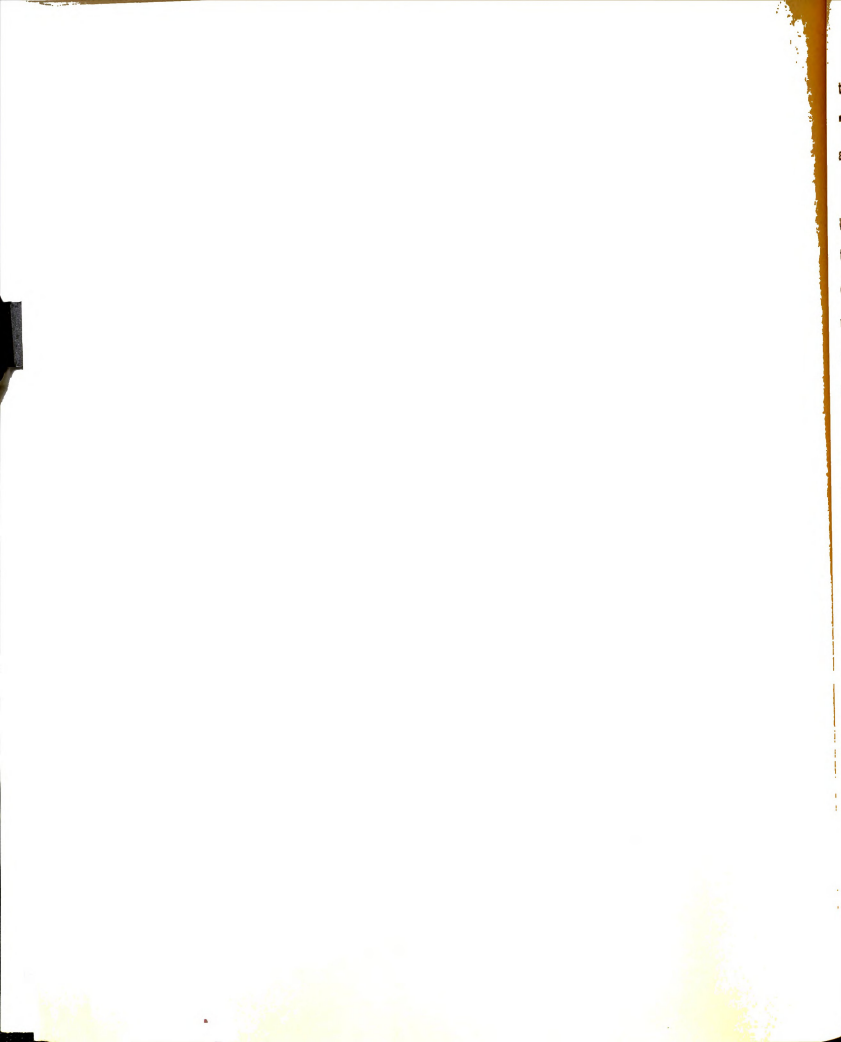
Dozenberg admitted having been a Communist for some eight years during the 1920's, and he freely answered questions until asked about his activities as a secret Soviet agent. At this point he asked to be heard in executive session and Dies readily agreed.⁴ Though this further testimony was taken behind closed doors, there was nothing secret about Dies' disclosure of the results. The chairman announced that there was no question but that the Soviet Government had a well-organized spy system in the United States with agents so secret that they were scarcely known to one another, and who reported to a central council.⁵ Dies did not mention that Dozenberg's contact with the Communists had come some fifteen years before; nevertheless,

²Times, Mar. 23, 1940.

³Ibid.

⁴H-13, May 21, 1940, 8137-8161.

⁵The Times, Post and Tribune, May 22, 1940, all gave considerable space to the conclusions Dies had drawn from Dozenberg's confidential testimony.



this evidence was of a significant nature, though hardly the "most startling exposure" ever to come before the committee, as Thomas had promised.

Two days later Martin Dies asked for an additional \$100,000 appropriation for his committee. In addition to the disclosures of the Dozenberg inquiry, the chairman claimed that he was "swamped with new leads," including one which indicated that under German direction a number of camouflaged air bases had been built in Mexico just south of the Rio Grande.⁶

As the European struggle moved closer to threatening American interests, Thomas reevaluated the advantages of our neutrality. As late as May, 1939, he had insisted that the United States should avoid all "foreign entanglements," and he warned that the government was trying to involve us in overseas adventures.⁷ He had earlier made his position clear in the House when he inserted an anti-war editorial from a Catholic weekly into the appendix of the Congressional Record. The article was entitled "The American People Do Not Want war," and Thomas explained that it "would give to the membership of the Congress the attitude of our people relative to war."⁸

Sometime between May, 1939, and spring of the following year, Thomas experienced a change of heart. The

⁶ CR: 76-3, May 23, 1940, 6766.

⁷ Times, May 8, 1939.

⁸ The Tablet, as cited in CR: 76-1, Appendix, Apr. 3, 1939, 1271.



signing in August of the Russo-German Nonaggression Pact was undoubtedly significant in his decision, as perhaps was the increasing importance of his role on the Committee on Military Affairs. Then too the fact that the mood of the country seemed to have changed was certainly not lost on J. Parnell Thomas. In any case, by May, 1940, he was calling for us to "do everything possible to improve our defenses" and to rush our military readiness.⁹ His own explanation for his conversion seemed rather unimaginative for one who usually foresaw the dangers confronting the country:

The House of Lords also changed horses in midstream, and believe me, the stream over there is a lot deeper than it is here. I think we should do it here, too.¹⁰

Once he had changed his views, Thomas lost no time in publicizing them with the characteristic fervor of a recent convert. Now, instead of the administration trying to push us into war, as he had claimed one short year before, he accused government officials of dragging their feet on our military preparation.¹¹

With his new stand on foreign policy, Thomas had to alter his view of the internal threat of our domestic Communists. In a fiery radio speech he attached a Red label to any group that might oppose the war effort, and he accused the government of having given such organizations

⁹CR: 76-3, May 24, 1940.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.



undue encouragement.¹² Now too the emphasis switched to the espionage work of the Communists rather than their political infiltration; however, the administration was as guilty as ever; in fact, he accused it of aiding the very saboteurs who were seeking to destroy us:

The fifth column in the United States has flourished under New Deal rule. It has literally fed at the same trough. In some respects it is synonymous to the New Deal, so the surest way to remove the fifth column from our shores is to remove the New Deal from the seat of government.¹³

The Congressman's wording was particularly significant. Now it was no longer just communism that had flourished under New Deal auspices but the "fifth column." J. Parnell Thomas had come a long way toward establishing the New Deal as a traitorous movement.

Thomas must have realized that the issue of patriotism was an excellent one in a wartime atmosphere, and in espousing one's nationalism the Representative had few peers. Even J. Edgar Hoover suffered as Thomas publicly criticized the Federal Director for declining to attend a conference that he had called for the New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania law enforcement officials to coordinate their anti-fifth column fight;¹⁴ for by this time, if not before, Thomas was genuinely convinced of the Communist threat to American

¹² New York City Radio Address as reported in CR: 76-3, Appendix, June 10, 1940, 3738-3739.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Times, July 5, 1940.



security.

A series of power plant explosions provided him with his next opportunity to admonish the administration. Again he accused the government of having been lax in controlling elements interested in sabotage, and now he could remind the public that the Dies committee had vainly "warned time and time again of aliens employed in key industries."¹⁵

A few weeks later Thomas made a rather frightening request when he demanded that the nation be "free to single out and remove from danger spots all the potential saboteurs, without waiting to gather criminal evidence against them after their deeds are done and the evidence is obliterated."¹⁶ He did not explain, however, how one was to determine "potential saboteurs" except to volunteer the services of the Dies committee to any company wishing to check on its employees--evidently as a sort of "Committee for Public Safety."¹⁷ At the bottom of the trouble, Thomas found a government agency, and he blamed Attorney General Jackson and the Department of Justice for a "hush-hush" attitude in dealing with investigations of political saboteurs.¹⁸

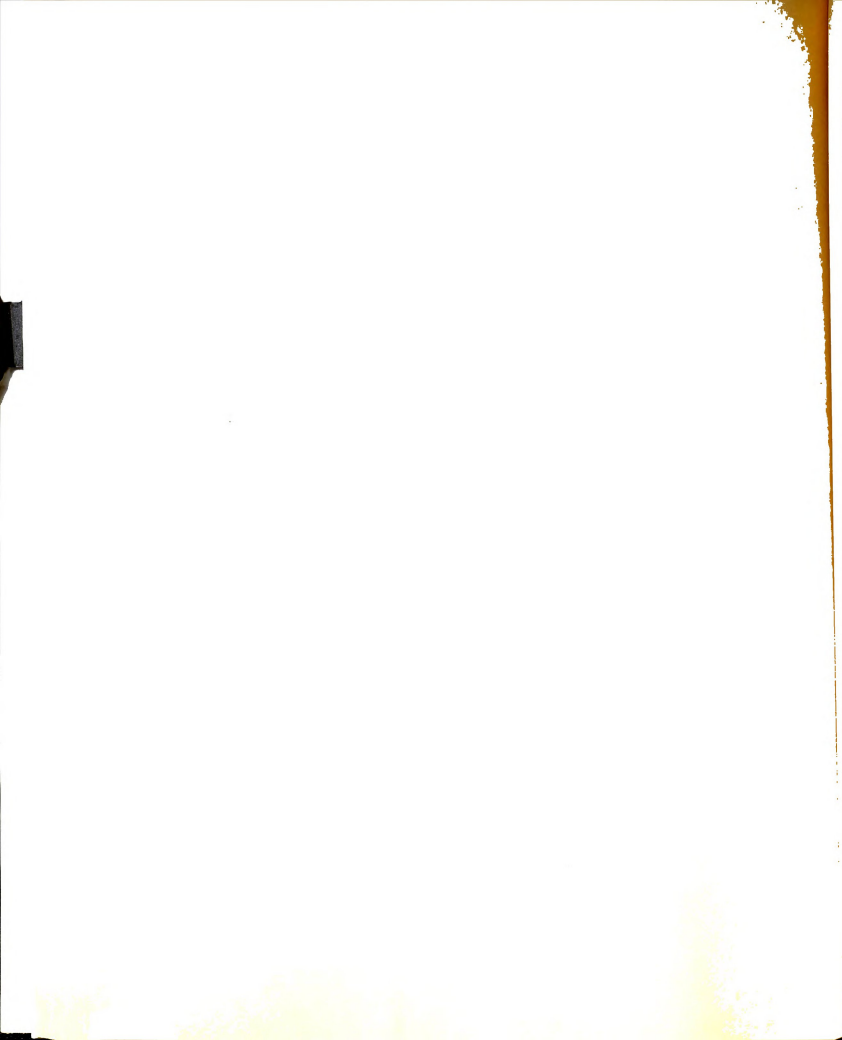
In December he included the National Labor Relations board, as a government agency which was encouraging "widespread, crippling sabotage" because of its refusal "to adopt

¹⁵Times, Nov. 13, 1940.

¹⁶Ibid., Nov. 23, 1940.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.



a hard-hitting policy of law enforcement." These charges were made in a magazine article which included both Nazis and Communists as potential saboteurs.¹⁹ Since the Berlin-Moscow Pact it had become much easier to lump these un-American elements together, though Thomas seemed a bit reluctant to do so:

Then the American agents of these two former foes began to operate in concert. But I fear that in recent months the emphasis of investigation has snifted rather too suddenly away from the Communist problem.²⁰

Reminiscent of the frenzied days of World War I, Thomas called for the workers themselves to ferret out the saboteurs; nor did the subject of civil liberties unduly trouble him:

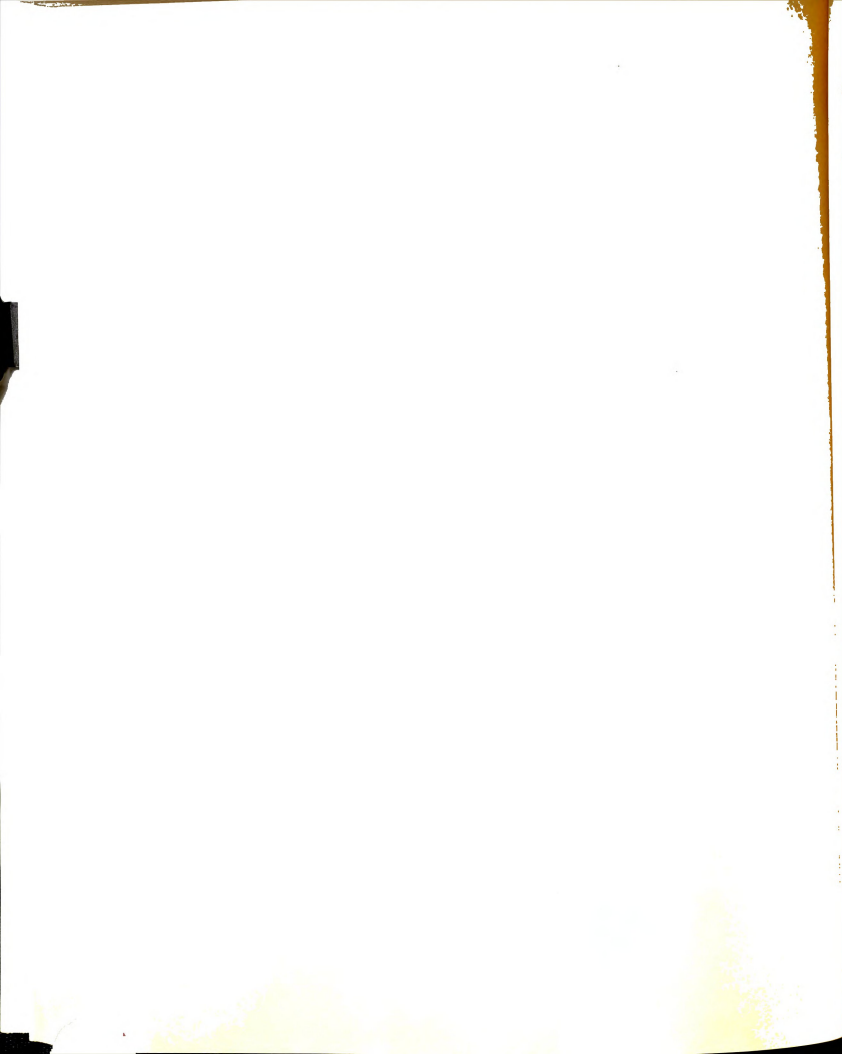
When we balance the Civil Liberties of a few who might be unjustly suspected against the very lives of helpless workers, who may be blown to bits in industrial explosions, we can easily find the answer.²¹

He was not very convincing, however, on how one determined whether certain blasts were sabotage or not. Though official reports tended to differ, Thomas was sure he knew when sabotage had been committed. The Hercules munitions explosion at Kenvil, New Jersey, was a case in point, as he insisted that it had to be the work of enemy agents because the workers said it was and because fifty

¹⁹ Factory magazine, as reprinted in the CR: 77-1, Appendix, Jan. 6, 1941, 60-63.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.



aliens worked there.²²

Thomas also leveled a charge of treason against many of the labor leaders in these same industries, and he called for action against those individuals involved in strikes which crippled the production of armaments.²³ In a telegram, released first to the press, he urged the Secretary of Labor to order an immediate roundup, on charges of treason, of all labor officials whose Communist affiliations had been disclosed by the House Committee on Un-American Activities.²⁴ This was Thomas speaking as an individual, but it was clearly implied that the committee would support him in any of these allegations.

Committee Renewal, 1941

The committee faced its annual battle for renewal in January of 1941. Though there was little doubt about granting the committee another year, Chairman Dies did have difficulty in getting the House to take the needed action. He had introduced such a resolution on January 6, but the House had largely ignored it.²⁵ Finally, in February, Joe Starnes called for the resolution.²⁶ Thomas seethed under the delay, which he interpreted as one more example of

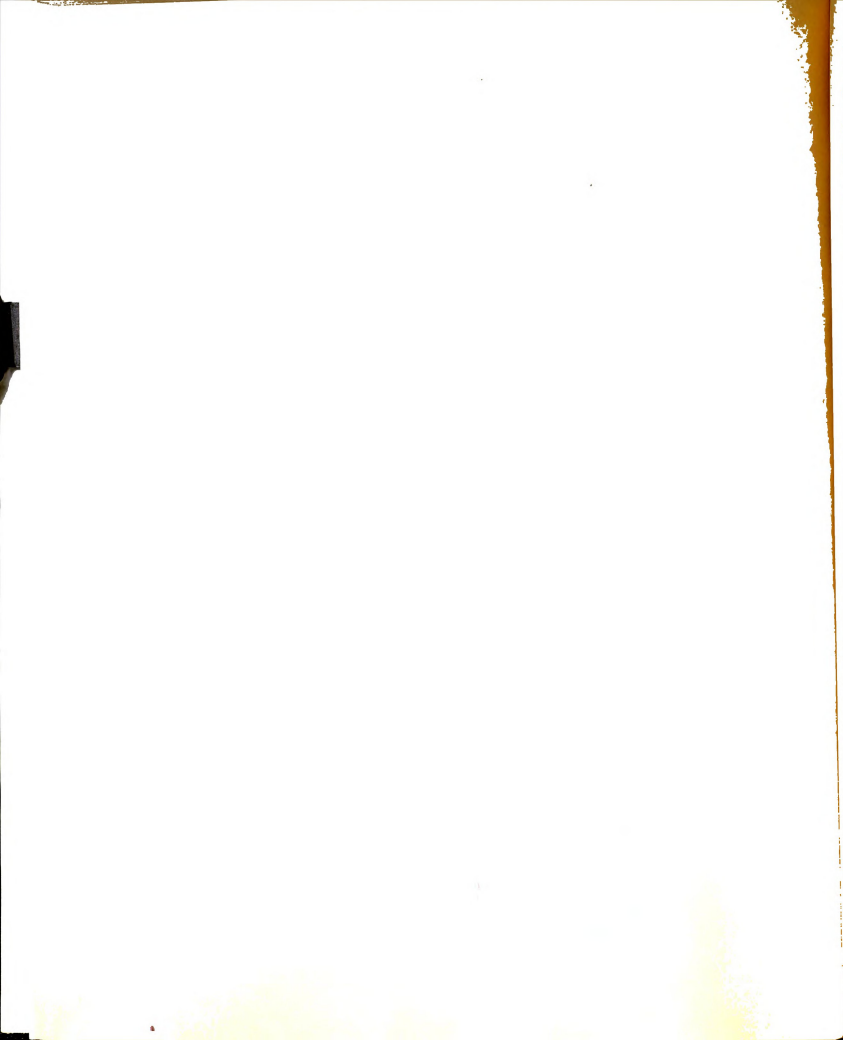
²² Ibid.

²³ Tribune, May 15, 1941.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ CR: 77-1, Jan. 6, 1941, 49.

²⁶ Ibid., Feb. 3, 1941, 520-521.



administrative iniquity. He explained that fifth column interests were profiting from this delay, and anyone who would oppose the committee was simply furthering the work of these "minions of Hitler and Stalin."²⁷ The fact that Congress had considered the defense effort a more immediate problem than the work of the committee was openly challenged by Thomas:

No phase of national defense is more important than that of exposing the work of the fifth columnists. The committee's files are bulging with information which the Congress and the country should have at the earliest possible moment...and the administration, knowing very well that it can't abolish the Dies committee, does the next most desirable thing from its standpoint. It delays the continuation of the committee.²⁸

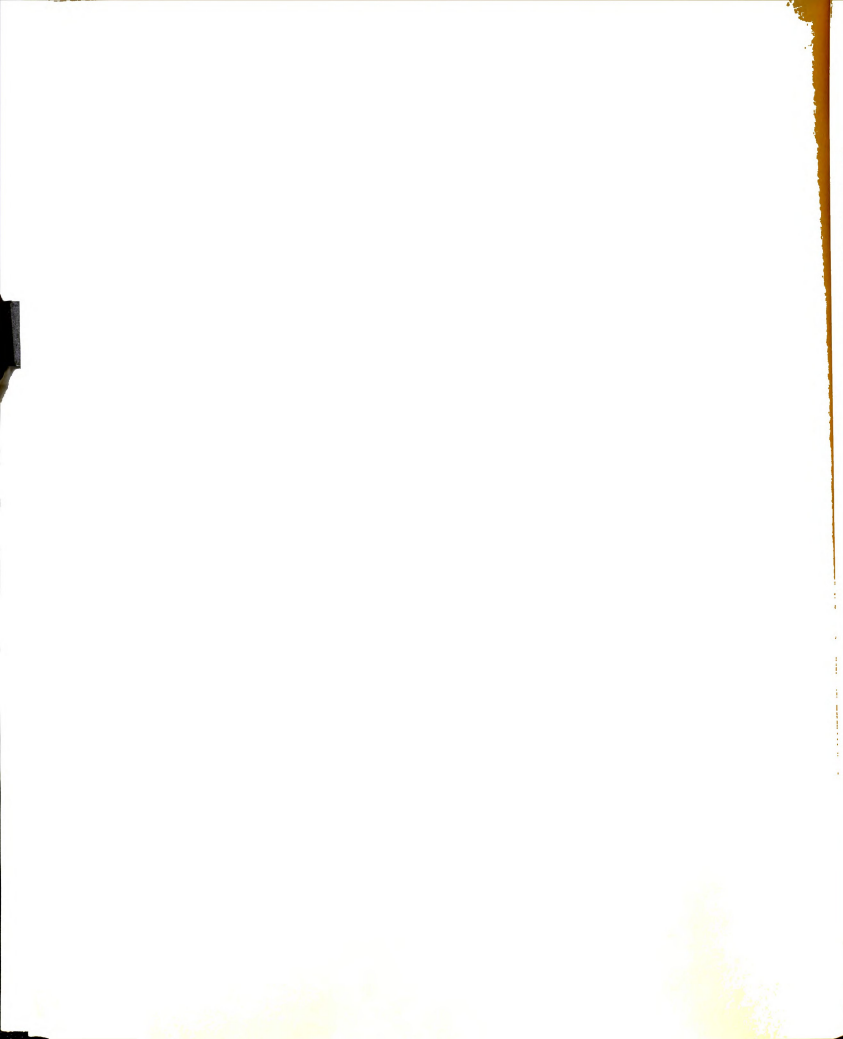
Thomas included his customary attack on the Attorney General for giving "active and open support to Communist fifth column organizations."²⁹ Again it was significant that the questionable organizations were no longer transmission belts or Communist-front organizations, but fifth column groups. He finished with a warning which seemed to imply that it was only the Dies committee that could keep up with these changing faces of communism:

The whole country needs the Dies committee to protect it against the administration's indifference toward the menace of communism. For the fact is obvious that the administration does not yet comprehend the whole truth about communism and its

²⁷ Ibid., Feb. 5, 1941, 572.

²⁸ Ibid., Appendix, Feb. 5, 1941, 422.

²⁹ Ibid.



wholesale penetration of the Federal Government.³⁰

The House too seemed more impressed with the need for the committee, and a few days later it approved its renewal by an overwhelming 354 to 6 vote. The committee was extended until April 1, 1942, and \$150,000 was appropriated for its use.³¹ This vote marked the height of the special committee's popularity in the House. The real scare of war and espionage undoubtedly did a great deal to convince the members of the importance and necessity of its investigations.

Thomas celebrated the vote of confidence by returning to his attacks on labor leaders in general and Miss Perkins in particular. In April he accused Lee Pressman, General Counsel of the CIO, and Joseph Curran, leader of the CIO maritime unions, of planning a general strike to cripple the defense effort if Harry Bridges were deported.³² This was followed by his recurring call for the impeachment of Secretary of Labor Perkins, to which he added the name of Sidney Hillman, the Associate Director of the Office of Production Management. The charge too was the usual one of "coddling" certain questionable labor leaders.³³

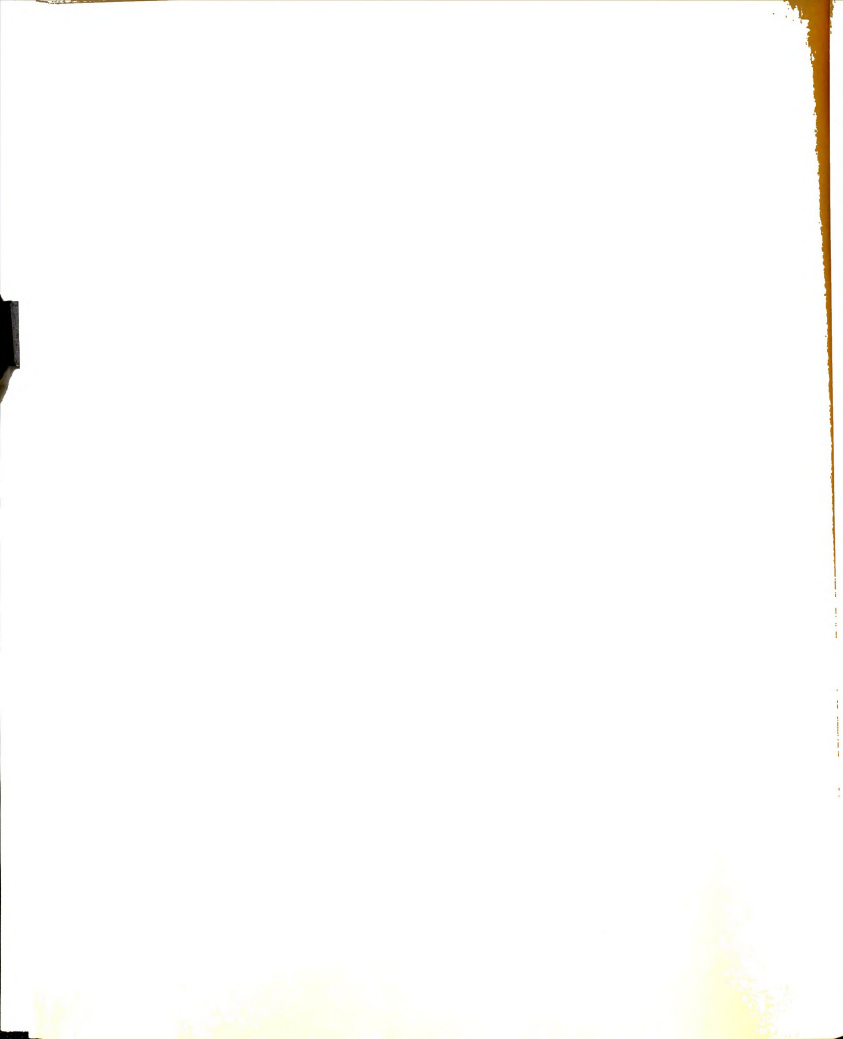
A couple of weeks later Thomas predicted that

³⁰Ibid., 423.

³¹CR: 77-1, Feb. 11, 1941, 899.

³²Times, Apr. 9, 1941.

³³Ibid.



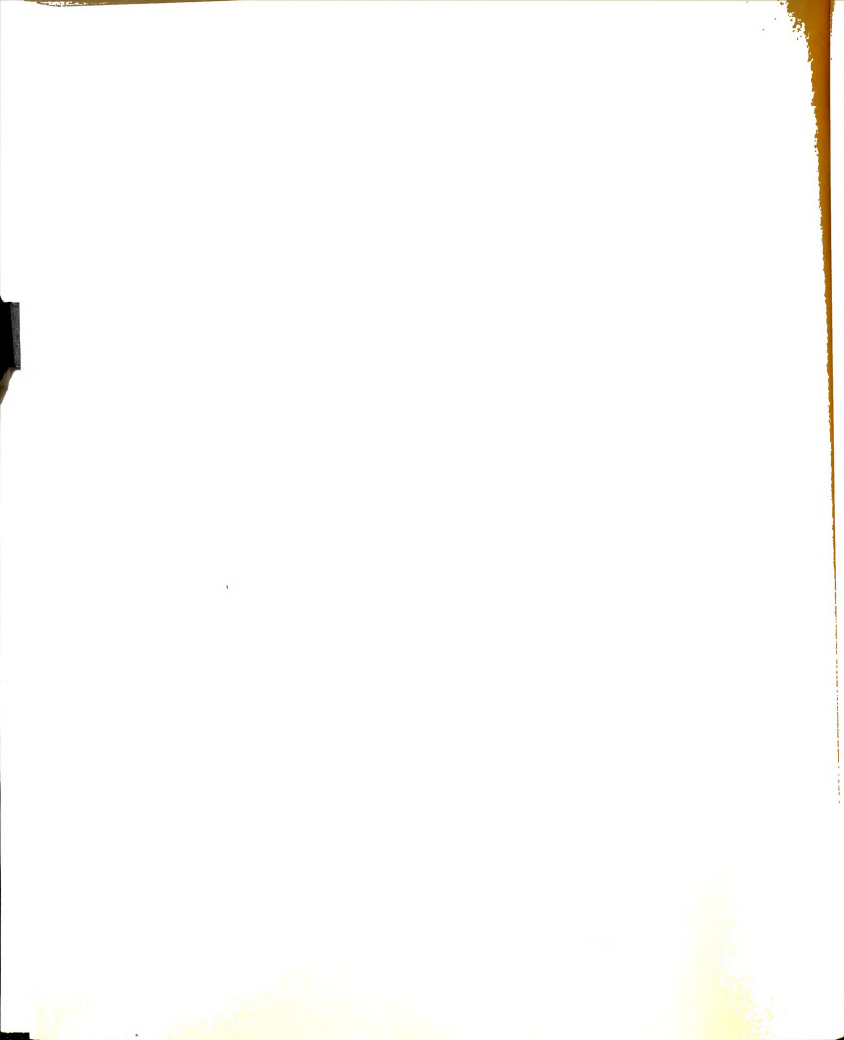
the "biggest story in some time" would come out in a few weeks at a public hearing of the Dies committee in New York.³⁴ Again no details were given--only his enthusiastic promise of great exposures. A hint of what was planned seemed evident a short time later when he sent a public wire to the President demanding an immediate roundup on treason charges of all "Communist labor leaders fomenting discord in the ranks of labor."³⁵ However, when public hearings began a few days later, neither Thomas nor his "biggest story" was in evidence; in fact, neither Thomas nor Chairman Dies attended any of the only eight days of public hearings which the committee held during 1941.

What had happened to the House Committee on Un-American Activities? August Raymond Ogden concluded that "somewhere between the fall of France and 7 December 1941 the committee, as far as the public record indicates, had disappeared. Its place had been taken by a one-man agency.... The information gathered by the investigators was utilized by the Chairman who, to all intents and purposes, had become the committee."³⁶ In addition, Dies spent part of the year away on an unsuccessful campaign for a vacant Senate seat, and Thomas became increasingly interested in his work on the Committee on Military Affairs.

³⁴ Speech before the American Defense Society, as reported in the Times, Apr. 27, 1941.

³⁵ Times, May 15, 1941.

³⁶ Ogden, 249.



Thomas and Military Affairs, 1941

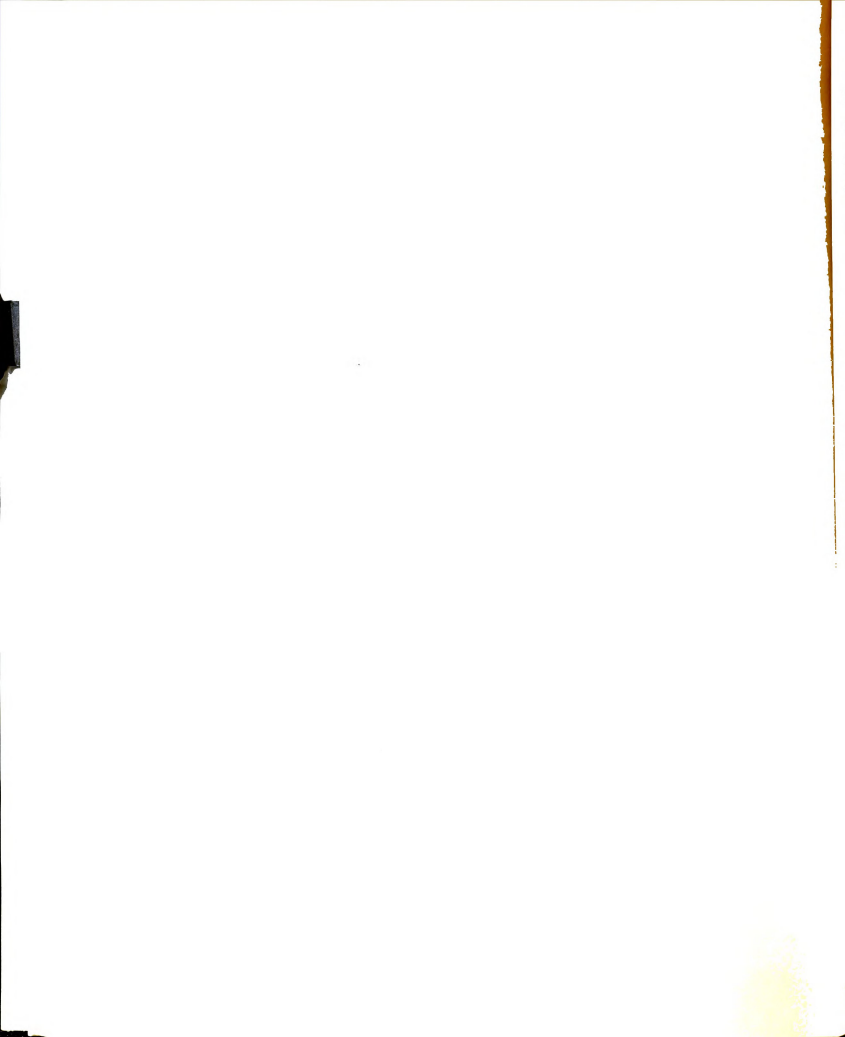
Though Committeeman Thomas attended none of the 1941 public hearings, he did not neglect his mission. His membership on the increasingly important Committee on Military Affairs allowed him to explore new fields of un-American behavior. His work here too predictably centered around investigative activities, though this time he was investigating our military preparedness in case of an attack. Thomas found the same enemy, but now he was starting to probe army camps as well as labor strikes and munitions factories.

After a four-day tour of Eastern army camps, Thomas commented that members of un-American groups were making "marked inroads" into places where there was some of the army's most secret equipment.³⁷ He then followed with the announcement that he expected "to have the full report ready next Monday, and whether the Secretary of War or anyone else likes it, it is going to be made public."³⁸

The "full report" came on June 3 in the form of another public wire, this one to Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson. But it proved to be disappointing with its further vague claims about subversive agents who "could wreck the

³⁷Thomas' obvious implication that the army seemed incapable of handling this new menace within its own ranks is interesting in light of his later insistence that only the military could take the security measures necessary to handle the peacetime control of atomic energy; see below, pages 204-208.

³⁸Times, May 28, 1941.



entire defense of the New York area."³⁹ The only cited evidence was the case of one questionable civilian employee at Fort Monmouth, who, according to Thomas, had escaped being discharged because of "red tape" in the War Department and the Civil Service Commission.⁴⁰

Summer found Thomas faced with a new problem. Germany had launched her massive attack on the Soviet Union, and the Congressman warned that this might drive the Soviet Union and the United States toward a closer understanding:

The Communists will use the new situation as a means of entrenching themselves more securely than ever before in government and in labor unions. They will now begin to shout that they are full-fledged patriots of unquestionable loyalty to the United States.⁴¹

The same day he submitted a speech to the Congressional Record which warned against relaxing our vigilance against Communist saboteurs, but he made no attempt to explain why Russia, now at war with Germany, would want to commit sabotage in a country that was materially helping her to defeat her enemy.⁴²

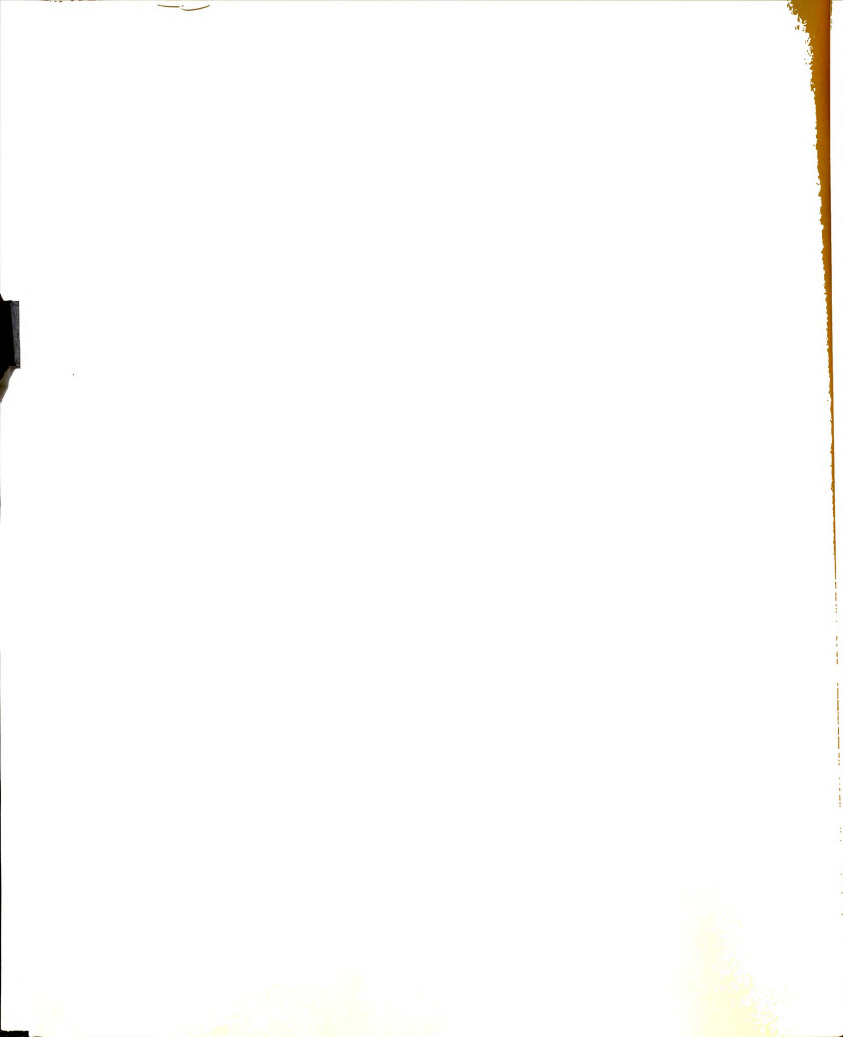
In the fall he insisted that our aid to Russia was simply "an excuse for a flirtation on the part of our government and its officials with the revolutionary theories of

³⁹ Ibid., June 3, 1941.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., July 9, 1941.

⁴² CR: 77-1, Appendix, July 9, 1941, 3339.



the Comintern."⁴³ The idea that perhaps the administration had come to consider Germany as our immediate enemy and was now willing to contribute to her defeat was a possibility that he continued to ignore.

As America increased its involvement in the war, Thomas sharpened his attacks on the government and its war preparations. He warned that our air defenses were so bad that "American cities along the Atlantic seaboard must necessarily expect token air raids if our relations with Germany continue to grow worse."⁴⁴ However, when the government did try to expedite its war effort in the Congressman's own backyard, he labeled the effort fascistic.⁴⁵ The case in point concerned the struck New Jersey Bendix Plant of Air Associates which the army took over when a settlement was not forthcoming. Especially irritating to Thomas was the War Department's insistence that the private owners make some managerial dismissals before the plant would be returned to private control:

This is the beginning of an era of fascism in America, and I will make a national issue out of this situation, as I threatened to do when I was informed the other day that the War Department intended to use coercion in this case.⁴⁶

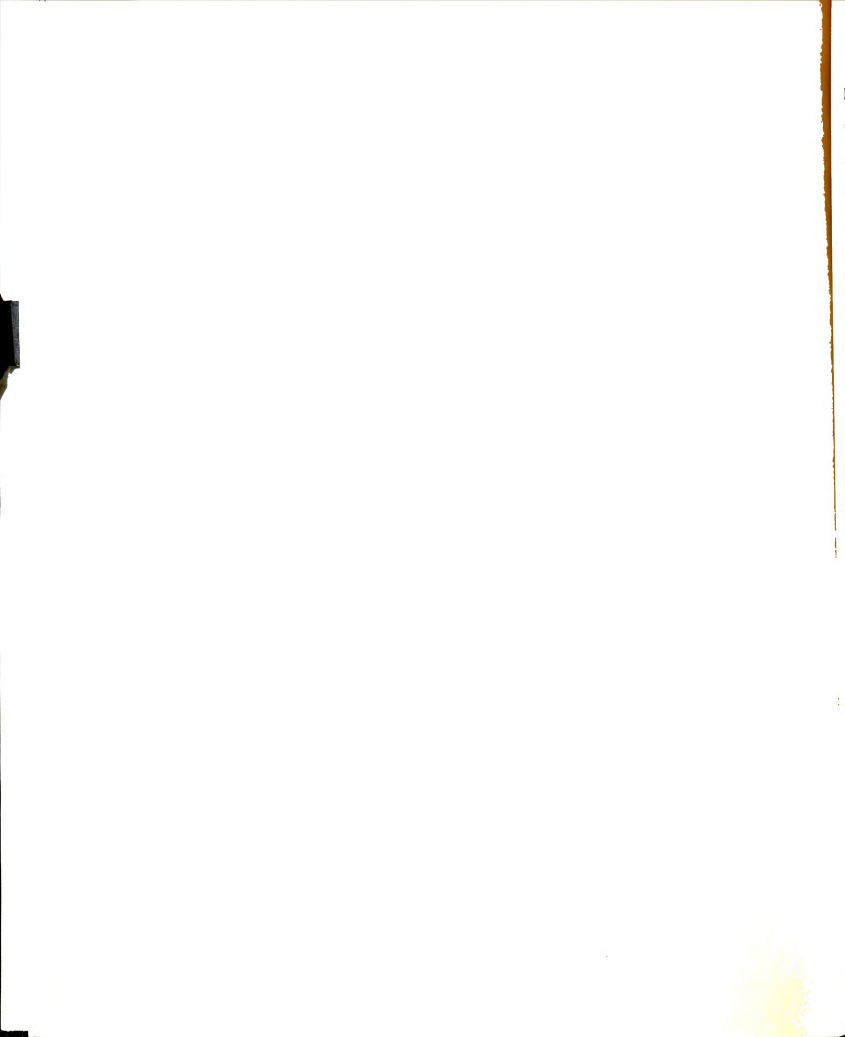
In the next breath he changed his labels and called the whole affair "a part of the government's socialization

⁴³ Ibid., Oct. 2, 1941, 4507.

⁴⁴ Times, Oct. 21, 1941.

⁴⁵ Ibid., Nov. 19, 1941.

⁴⁶ Ibid., Nov. 20, 1941.



program which calls for the destruction of all private ownership and management," and he concluded with his promise to turn the whole case over to the Dies committee.⁴⁷ Evidently it was something quite different when it was recalcitrant management holding up the war effort rather than striking labor--the former was fundamental Americanism in the eyes of J. Parnell Thomas, but the latter just a step in the New Deal's march toward foreign socialism.

In the year and a half before Pearl Harbor the House Committee on Un-American Activities had held few public hearings, and Representative Thomas had not actively participated in these; in fact, the committee itself had all but disappeared as a matter of public record since chairman Dies more and more went outside the official committee to wage his own personal crusade against un-American behavior. This too was the Thomas method, though he now also had the advantage of his position on the Military Affairs Committee. Yet the results and the victims did not change, again indicating that it was not so much the vehicle itself that was important, but only how it could be exploited for personal and political advantage that interested such men as Martin Dies and J. Parnell Thomas.

⁴⁷ Ibid.



CHAPTER V

THE WAR YEARS AND THE END OF THE DIES COMMITTEE

After 1938 the number of public hearings conducted by the committee declined each year until August, 1941, when such hearings virtually ceased for the duration of the war. The few hearings held were conducted by subcommittees and usually behind closed doors, and the news releases were carefully edited by those members still active on the Committee on Un-American Activities. The House Appropriations Committee might well have asked how the Dies committee was spending its money.

Throughout the war years the committee's annual appropriation continued around the \$100,000 mark, though there was almost no record of any concerted public activity.¹ Robert Stripling, the longtime chief investigator and counsel for the committee, later gave a good, if unwitting, indication of the committee's nonpublic expenditures. In his book, The Red Plot Against America, Stripling wrote that in its first ten years the committee expanded "to many rooms, to agencies in leading United States cities, a staff of seventy-

¹The following were the Congressional appropriations for the Dies committee: 1938, \$25,000; 1939, \$100,000; 1940, \$110,000; 1941, \$150,000; 1942, \$110,000; 1943, \$82,500; 1944, \$75,000.



five, and 600 filing cases containing more than 1,000,000 names, records, dossiers, and data pertaining to subversion."²

The fact that over 1,000,000 Americans had earned a place in the committee's files was indeed remarkable, if not frightening. Stripling had been earlier quoted as having stated that "every card in the file is based on a document."³ The compiling of these cards and the constant surveillance of more than 1,000,000 Americans would certainly have taxed the financial and human resources of the committee.

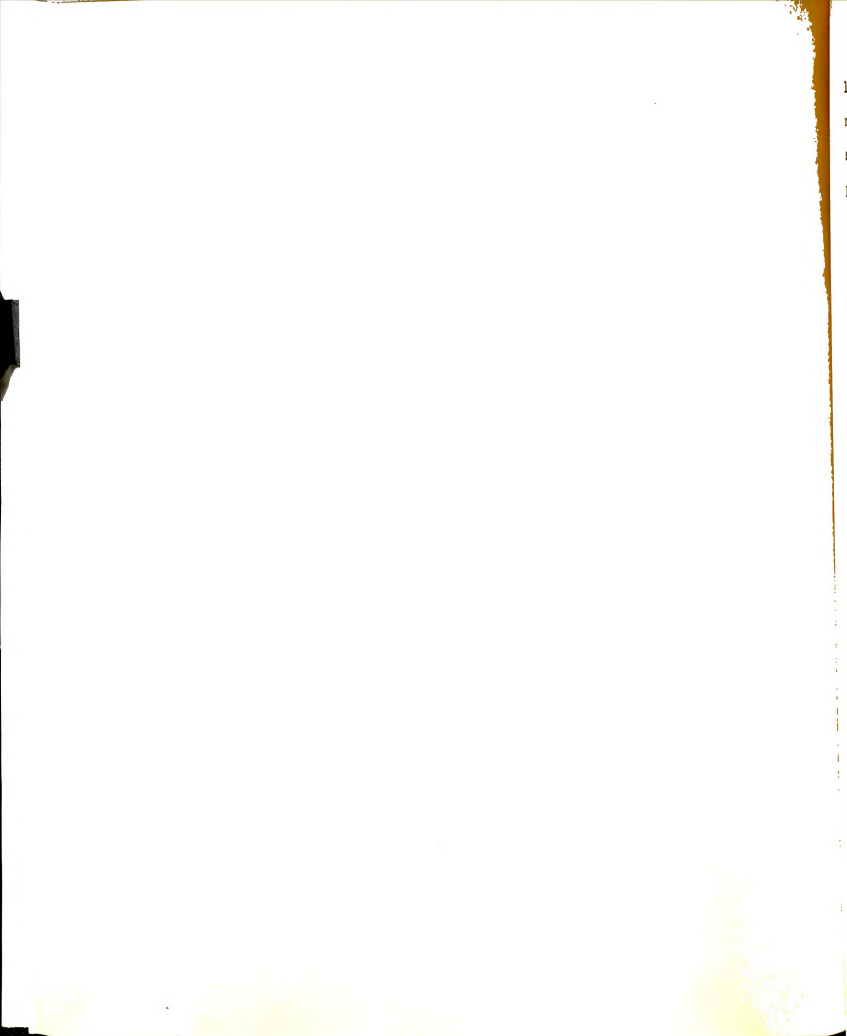
In 1966 J. Farnell Thomas offered me an interesting example of the committee's systematic watchfulness in the case of Eleanor Roosevelt. He confided that the committee knew everything about the First Lady's activities--from the names of all who attended her White House dinners to the license numbers of each car which parked before her Greenwich Village apartment.⁴

However, the primary functions of the staff were not always clear. Certainly it was responsible for compiling and maintaining the committee's voluminous files; in addition, it laid the ground work for many of the investigations. Unquestionably Chief Investigator J. B. Hatchews' broad experience in the Communist movement provided the Dies committee with many of the leads it later explored; and Thomas

²(Drexel Hill, Penn.: Bell Publishing Co., 1949), 23.

³Washington Post, Aug. 27, 1948.

⁴Personal Interview.



later admitted that as chairman he turned over all preliminary work to Stripling and his aides.⁵ In any case, it would seem that the staff and its activities used up a considerable proportion of the committee's annual appropriation.

Committee Renewal, 1942

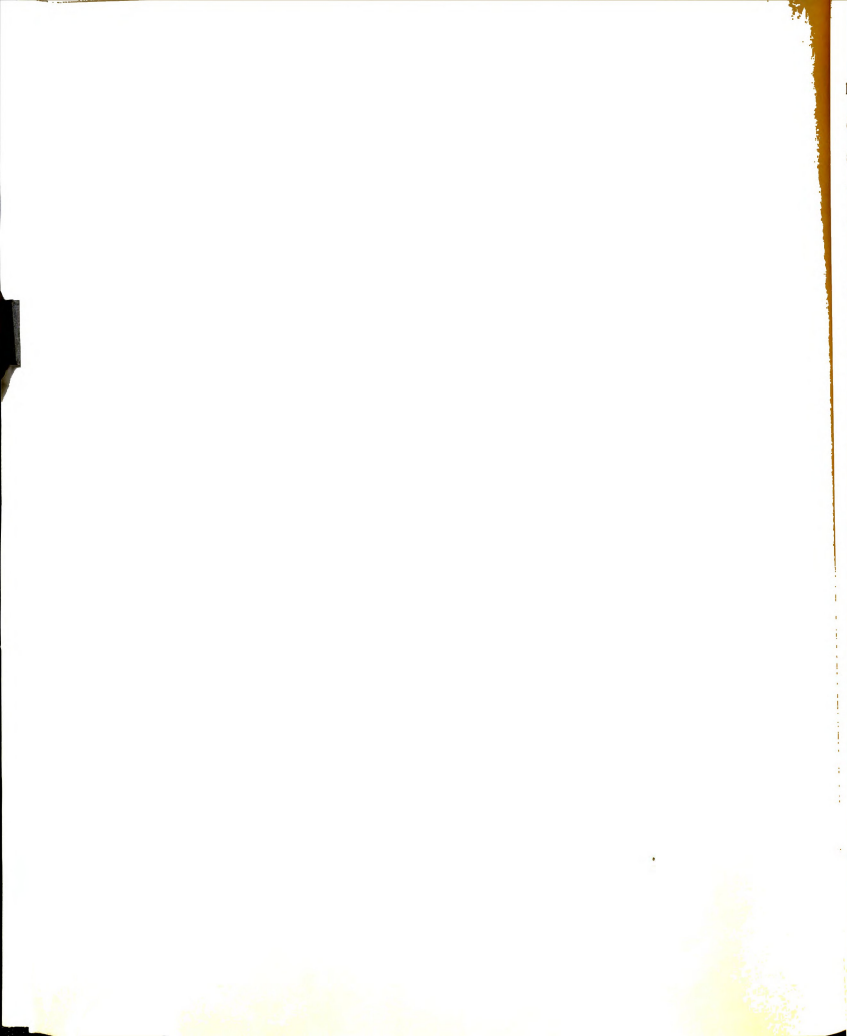
When the committee came up for renewal in March, 1942, it met with more than its usual amount of criticism. Early in the year Martin Dies had made a controversial speech in the House, and repercussions carried over into the March renewal debate. In this January address the chairman had concluded that his committee might very well have prevented Pearl Harbor if the administration had not blocked its investigation:

Last September our committee subpoenaed a number of witnesses to appear in Washington to expose Japanese fifth-column activities in the United States. The Secretary of State, the Department of Justice, and the President strenuously opposed the exposure of these activities....I now regret that I called off the hearings. If those hearings had gone ahead on schedule I am convinced that the Pearl Harbor tragedy never would have occurred, because we would have made public the plans of the Japanese to seize control of the Pacific.⁶

Little had been said about the Japanese threat by Dies or his committee before the actual bombing of Pearl Harbor; in fact, the chairman was reminded by Representative Samuel A. Weiss that as late as October 24, 1941, he

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ CR: 77-2, Jan. 28, 1942, 800-802; see also the New York Times and Chicago Tribune for Jan. 29, 1942.



had told the New Orleans Association of Commerce that "the Japanese policy was just a bluff--and not too good a bluff at that. A lot of Americans like myself would like to see them bring their coal burners out for a good licking, but they won't."⁷

Early in February Dies announced that a "Yellow Paper" would soon be forthcoming which would show just how the committee could have prevented Pearl Harbor;⁸ however, when it appeared some two weeks later, it proved disappointing. As Committeeman Jerry Voorhis noted, there was nothing to show that a Japanese attack would take place on December 7 on Pearl harbor or to predict when or where such an attack might be made.⁹

The releasing of the "Yellow Paper" corresponded to hearings before the Committee on Rules on a resolution for continuing the Committee on Un-American Activities. In this debate Vito Marcantonio, the American Labor Party Congressman from New York, and a long-time opponent of the Dies committee, made the most telling point. He argued that if Dies had information which he had not given to the proper officials, he was then guilty of something approaching

⁷CR: 77-2, Mar. 11, 1942, 2296.

⁸Tribune, Feb. 5, 1942.

⁹U.S. Congress, House Special Committee on Un-American Activities, Appendix, Part 6, Report on Japanese Activities (wash., 1942); see also the Times and Tribune, Feb. 28, 1942.



treason.¹⁰

As far as J. Parnell Thomas and the other committee members were concerned, Dies seemed to be acting alone. There had been no hearings on Pearl Harbor, and, according to Jerry Voorhis, the other members of the committee had not been briefed on the chairman's plans. In any case, Thomas seemed far removed from the Pearl Harbor controversy in the first months of 1942.

In January he had declared that the country was in great need of "a good five-cent war song...a good, peppy, marching song, something with plenty of zip, ginger, and fire."¹¹ And in the next month he singled out General Douglas MacArthur as deserving of the Congressional Medal of Honor for his courageous action in the Battle of Bataan.¹² But when the actual debate for committee renewal reached the House floor in March, Thomas was there to defend Dies and the committee.

Representative Adolph Sabath of Illinois began the House discussion with the observation that the \$385,000 the committee had spent in its four years of existence was more than any other special committee in the history of the House; yet little in the way of positive legislation had

¹⁰U.S. Congress, House, 77th Cong., 2nd Sess., Hearings before the Committee on Rules, House of Representatives, Feb. 10 & 11, 1942.

¹¹Times, Jan. 29, 1942.

¹²CR: 77-2, Appendix, Feb. 5, 1942, 392; see also the Times, Feb. 6, 1942.



been proposed by the committee. In addition, Sabath claimed that the committee was frustrating national unity with its vehement attacks on our ally Russia.¹³

Thomas answered with a lengthy listing of committee accomplishments and the assurance that even more would have been done "except for obstacles placed before the committee by the Federal Government."¹⁴ He also introduced a new danger, that of Franco's Falangists, whom he called "the new agents here of the Axis Powers."¹⁵ In view of his earlier attacks on the volunteers who had fought against the fascists in the Spanish Civil War, this represented a change of heart for Thomas. He concluded with the avowal that "the Dies committee may turn out to be the last remaining safeguard against the dictatorship of the proletariat in America. A vote for the Dies committee today may be a vote to save our own hide tomorrow."¹⁶

Thomas expanded his remarks in the appendix of the Congressional Record later the same day. He insisted that "thousands of Communists and Communist fellow travelers have infiltrated into our government agencies. Our committee has a very detailed record of these proponents of the dictatorship of the proletariat."¹⁷ These "highly paid"

¹³ CR: 77-2, Mar. 11, 1942, 2282-2283.

¹⁴ Ibid., 2292.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., Appendix, Mar. 11, 1942, 953.



employees turned out to be a wife and husband working in the Office of Price Administration; an employee of the Federal Communications Commission, Goodwin Watson; and Malcolm Cowley, an \$8,000-a-year man in the Office of Facts and Figures.¹⁸ Again no details were given on how these individuals were using their respective offices to overthrow the government, though Thomas had often assured the public that this was the function of everyone in the employ of the Communists.

When the renewal resolution was called to a vote, it passed by a 331 to 46 margin.¹⁹ This was 38 more in opposition than in 1941, but an examination of these votes showed that they still belonged almost exclusively to Northern Democrats.

TABLE 1
VOTES TO RENEW THE HOUSE
COMMITTEE ON UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES

Year	Against Renewal				For Renewal
	Democrats	Republicans	Others	Total	
1939	33	1	1	35	344
1940	20		1	21	344
1941	5		1	6	354
1942	41	3	2	46	331
1943	77	14	3	94	302

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ CR: 77-2, Mar. 11, 1942.



Executive Hearings, 1942

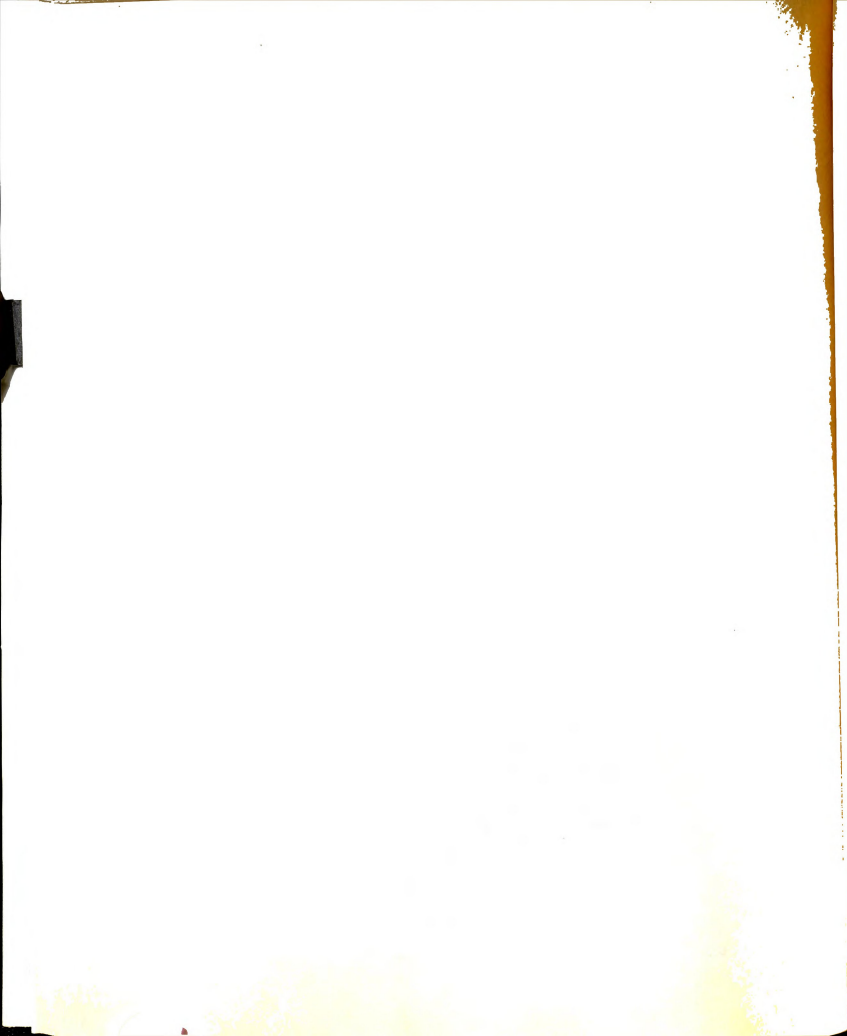
The first and only hearings of 1942 were taken up with the appearance of various Bundist and anti-Semitic witnesses. Their testimony was considered to be of such an inflammatory nature that the hearings were held in executive session.²⁰ Nor did the committee allow the usual flow of news to leak out to the press. Most of the witnesses were violently anti-Semitic and, of course, anti-Communist, two labels which some of them seemed to use interchangeably. Several were ex-convicts and some were of Ku Klux Klan backgrounds.

When Thomas was there, which was about half the time, he did conduct some cross-examination which again showed his lack of sympathy for this type of individual; however, he was unable to resist one opportunity to score the administration. A certain Edgar Sage, an official in the anti-Communist National Workers League, had observed that one of the problems of the country was the need for monetary reform. When Thomas interrupted to offer his version of what was wrong with the country, the following interesting exchange resulted with Committeeman Jerry Voorhis:

Mr. Thomas: What has hurt the chances of every situation here is the Roosevelt administration.

Mr. Voorhis: The what?

²⁰ U.S. Congress, House, 77th Cong., 2nd Sess., Special Committee to Investigate Un-American Activities and Propaganda in the United States, Executive Hearings, Volume VI; the Executive Hearings will hereafter be cited as EH-6, EH-7, etc., according to the Volume referred to.



Mr. Thomas: The Roosevelt administration. Call it the New Deal if you want to. That is the only reason we are floundering around in the Pacific today, too.

Mr. Voorhis: You say on account of the Roosevelt administration.

Mr. Thomas: Yes, the inefficiency and corruption.

Mr. Mason: Well, that is not part of this investigation.

Mr. Thomas: No, but Jerry brought up the question of the kind of government we had here, and I thought I would put in my two dollars worth.

Mr. Voorhis: I had no reference to the Roosevelt administration.

Mr. Thomas: Well, I had. I make reference to the administration every chance I get.²¹

For the most part these witnesses were allowed to continue unchallenged even though some advocated sterilization of Jews, and one demanded the execution of "such Jews as Roosevelt, Churchill, and Walter Winchell."²²

The testimony of James A. Colescott, the Imperial Wizard of the Klan, proved especially interesting. The only real criticism that Dies leveled at Colescott and the Klan was their basic anti-Catholicism. Dies called this unfair in view of the Catholic Church's own strong fight against communism. He ended his "examination" of the witness by commending him for taking his organization back "to the original objectives of the Klan"²³ Fellow committeemen Noah Mason and Joe Starnes also proved very sympathetic, with the latter describing the Klan as "just as American as the Baptist or

²¹ EH-6, Jan. 22, 1942, 2876-2877.

²² Ibid., 2896.

²³ Ibid., 2920.



Methodist Church, as the Lions Club, or the Rotary Club."²⁴
 Thomas, to his credit, remained silent.

If for no other reason than that of fairness, it seemed that these hearings should have been public. Dies had always cited the need for publicity to expose the subversive elements in our society, and he had proved more than willing to do this when it was communism that was being investigated. Perhaps he feared that the inflammatory nature of the testimony would bring pressure on the chairman to begin more extensive investigations into an area of un-American activities that did not particularly interest him. In any case, it would have proved embarrassing for Dies and his colleagues to have the public discover the extreme nature of the elements in our society which were as violently anti-Communist as the committee itself.

Thomas, the 1942 Election, and Some Critical Writers

With no more hearings scheduled for the rest of the year, the committee faded from the front pages. Thomas too was affected by any curtailment of committee activity, but the irrepressible Congressman could not long avoid public controversy. In March the committee was experiencing difficulty in obtaining operating funds, and Thomas charged that an administrative scandal was developing over the government's attempts to short-circuit the Dies committee.²⁵

²⁴ Ibid., 2945.

²⁵ Tribune, Mar. 25, 1942.



A few weeks later he promised that he would move to make "the New Deal-Communist marriage our first order of business at the next session of the Dies committee," and he insisted that President Roosevelt's commutation of the sentence of Earl Browder from four years to fourteen months was "conclusive proof that the New Deal is garroted by Communists."²⁶

In July the New Jersey Republican started his preparations for the fall elections. He insisted that "self-styled liberals are using the war as an excuse to elect an Earl Browder Congress in November."²⁷ Thomas had been goaded into action by Crawford Jamieson, the New Jersey Public Utility Commissioner, who had publicly called Thomas an isolationist. Thomas took the opportunity to assail several of his critics:

It was not by chance that Jamieson, Governor Charles Edison's right-hand man, made his attack. It was not by chance that Frank Kingdom of the Union for Democratic Action made his attack. Nor was it by chance that the Daily Worker, PM, Time magazine, and hundreds of Communist-front organizations in this country made their attacks against anti-New Deal Congressmen.²⁸

This was a rather broad grouping of elements hostile to "anti-New Deal Congressmen," but Thomas did not go into details on their alleged connections.

As the election neared, Thomas broadened his attack by charging that the Roosevelt administration was conducting

²⁶ Ibid., May 19, 1942.

²⁷ Ibid., July 15, 1942.

²⁸ Ibid.



the war effort along the same lines as a WPA program:

The entire administration setup at present is a hodgepodge of cross currents, class hatreds, failures, and experiments in socialization....Our armed forces certainly deserve better than this.... We must make changes in Washington, and in order to do so we must demonstrate to the New Deal that we mean business. The time to demonstrate this is in the coming congressional elections.²⁹

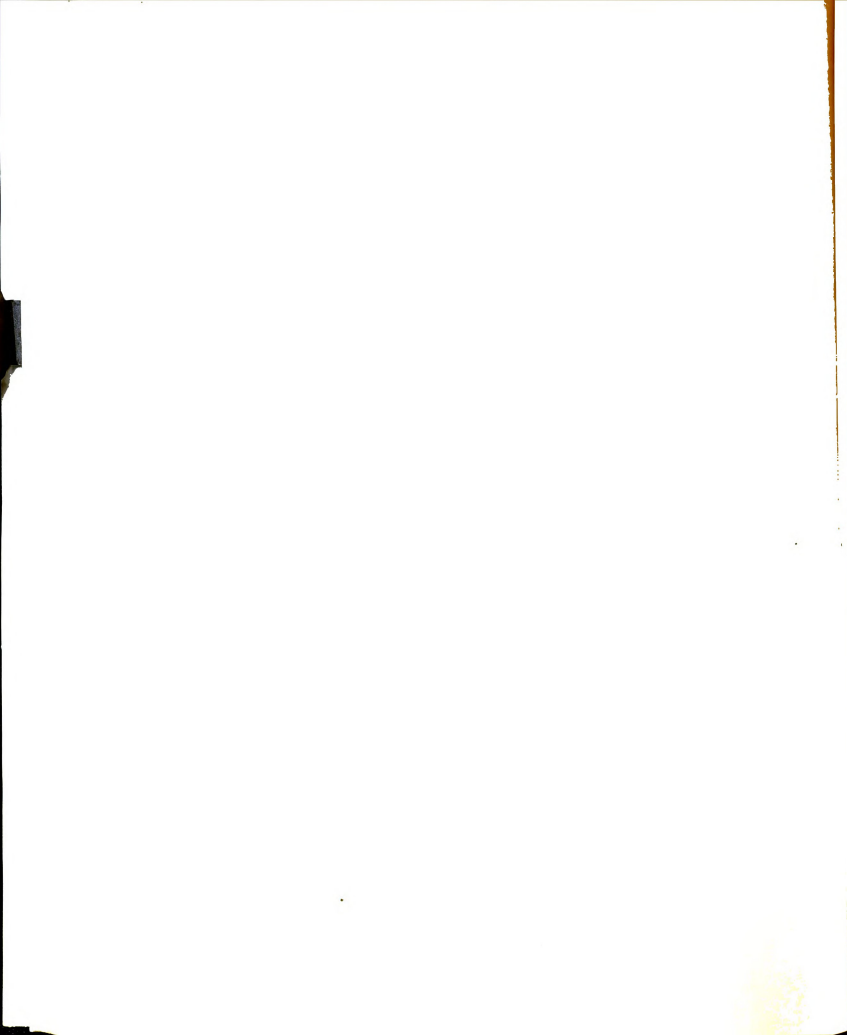
The fall encounter between Thomas and mystery writer Rex Stout interjected a note of levity into the otherwise serious business of tracking down subversives. Seemingly Mr. Stout had left Nero Wolfe to his own devices long enough to edit a little volume entitled The Industrious Dunderheads, which, by taking considerable liberty with the members' own words, made the Dies committee look woefully inept and foolish. Thomas rose to the House floor to make some charges of his own, but the vagueness of the wording was precisely the kind of thing that Stout had been trying to exploit in his pamphlet:

I think the most interesting thing about this author, this Stout, today is his present job. Unfortunately, I am not able to say definitely, right at this moment, what his job is, except that I have heard on very good authority that Rex Stout now is a ghost writer for one of the highest Government officials in America today. I hope before very long we will be able to verify that absolutely and name the official, although it is not very hard to guess who it is.³⁰

However, Stout was soon forgotten as Thomas turned next to the editors of the New Republic. He accused Malcolm Cowley, Bruce Bliven, and George Soule of subversive behavior,

²⁹ Ibid., Sept. 2, 1942.

³⁰ CR: 77-2, Oct. 16, 1942, 3253.



and he inserted into the Record a chart "proving" their Communist sympathies.³¹ Actually the chart was a list of the alleged Communist-front organizations which the three editors might have addressed, belonged to, or defended, and this ranged all the way from their editorship on the New Republic to an open letter to President Roosevelt supporting the Constitutional right of the Communist party to use the ballot.

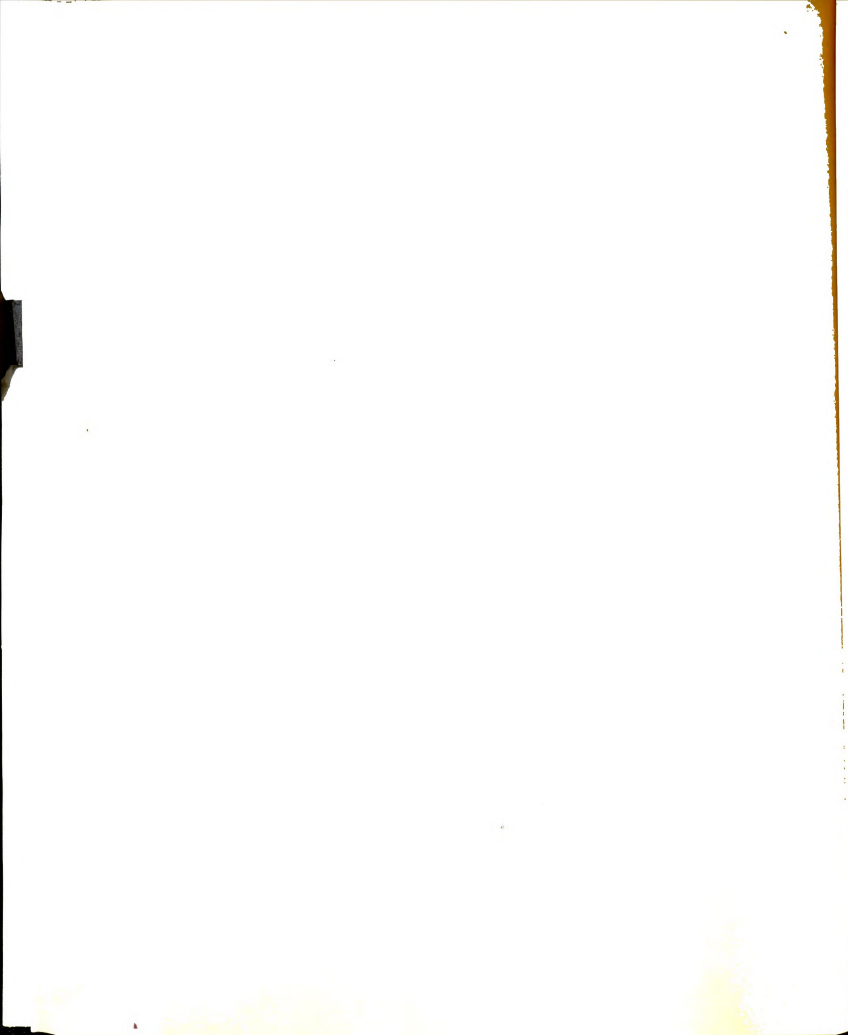
Less than a week later Thomas extended his charges to include three more contributing editors of the New Republic. Returning to his campaign theme, he accused them and the magazine of trying "to purge members of Congress," and he singled out Max Lerner's support of Representative Vito Marcantonio for reelection as an inverted case in point.³²

Interestingly enough, his campaign enthusiasm was not motivated by any fear for his own political defeat. In a district with a total population of less than 300,000 his victory margins usually ranged between 30,000 and 40,000 votes.³³ Thus his political motivation was rooted in something deeper--either in an honest fear of the policies of the opposition or in a personal quest for recognition and

³¹Ibid., Appendix, Oct. 15, 1942, 3710-3711.

³²Ibid., Oct. 20, 1942, 3768.

³³The Thomas Congressional victory margins were 1936, 4,000; 1938, 29,000; 1940, 40,000; 1942, 30,000; 1944, 42,500; 1946, 36,000; 1948, 17,000 (Thomas was under Federal indictment for payroll padding during his 1948 victory); these statistics were taken from the Congressional Directory for the appropriate years.



power.

Committee Renewal, 1943

With 1943 the committee again faced its annual battle for renewal. Seemingly, the fact that the committee had almost ceased to exist should have made its continuance a questionable necessity. But Thomas responded with the request that because the committee had "records of subversive activities which involve something like a million individuals or more than 1000 organizations," it should now have its life extended for two years instead of the conventional one.³⁴

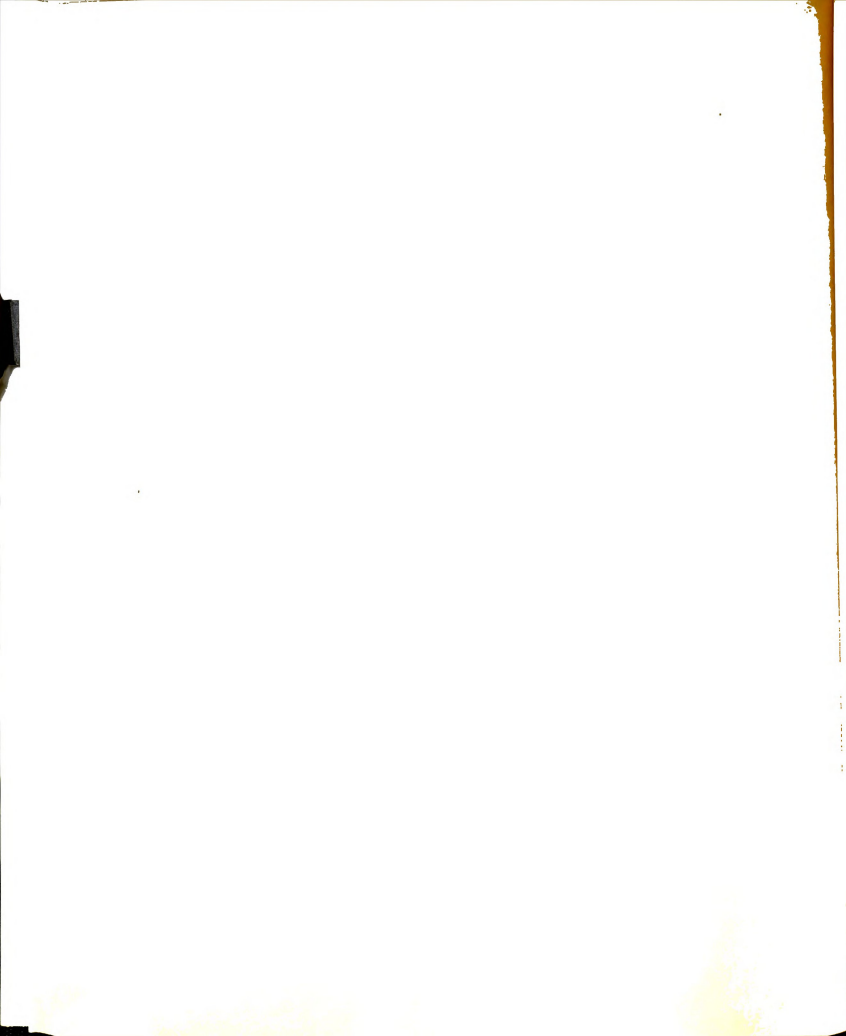
Most of the debate followed the usual line. The committee was generally criticized for its reluctance to investigate fascist and Nazi activities in the United States and for its continued preference for Red "witch hunts."³⁵ The critics also continued to complain that Dies and his committee were dividing and confusing the nation in time of war, and they made a point of the Imperial wizard of the Klan's acknowledgment that "the Dies program so closely parallels the program of the Klan that there is no distinguishable difference between them."³⁶

The opposition seemed to be gaining strength. Several of those speaking out admitted that previously they had voted approval, but that they were now changing

³⁴ CR: 78-1, Feb. 10, 1943, 795.

³⁵ Ibid., 795-809.

³⁶ Ibid., 798.



their votes. Representative Richard Gale of Minnesota made his point when he confessed that "a large number of us are afraid to vote against the continuation of the Dies committee. Afraid to vote our honest convictions because we are afraid of the misconception and the false impression which that committee, through abundant publicity, has built up in the American public."³⁷

Jerry Voorhis, in explaining his vote against the committee he had served for five long years, declared that he had seen the committee becoming "more and more a political instrument of definite conservative bias, and less and less a dignified, important, and effective Congressional committee."³⁸

Thomas replied with a resumption of his attacks on the administration, but now he had an answer for those who insisted that the committee was unwilling to uncover fascism:

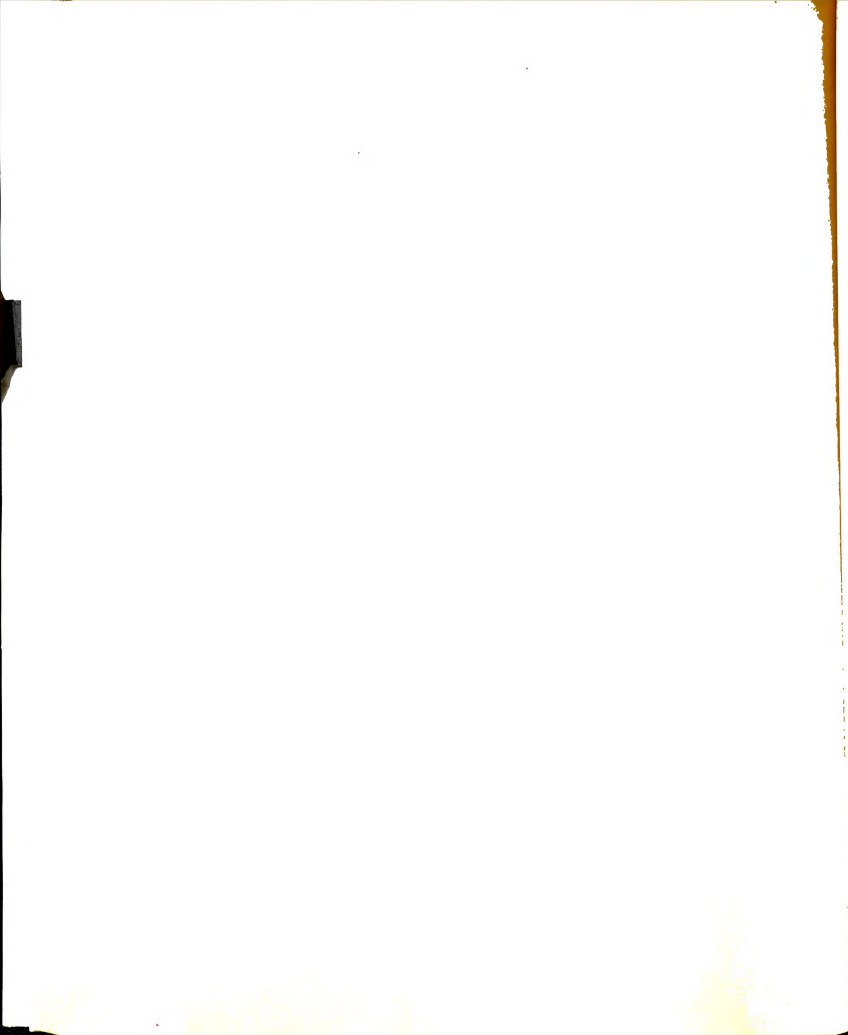
I want to say that bureaucracy is the backdoor to fascism or nazi-ism (sic). The German people entered nazi-ism (sic) by the backdoor of a gigantic socialistic bureaucracy.³⁹

He did not clarify whether it was the Weimer Republic or President von Hindenberg and the army which was the "gigantic socialist" organism that led to Hitler and National Socialism. However, explanation and logic were seldom necessary when giving the New Deal another unpopular label. Ironically,

³⁷ Ibid., 803.

³⁸ Ibid., 797.

³⁹ Ibid.



he concluded his warning about the dangers of big government by calling for the same: "Taken all in all, America must be on guard, and the more Governmental agencies we have ferreting into these problems, the better off we will be."⁴⁰ Evidently a governmental bureaucracy which agreed with the New Jersey Republican did not present nearly the threat that an opposing one would. In any case, the final vote for committee extension was 302 to 94.⁴¹

Undoubtedly the committee's lacklustre record against fascists and its unrelenting wartime attacks on Russia had inspired a few Congressmen to change their votes. An examination of the vote shows that several of those previously in the "not voting" category had moved over into opposition. In addition to fourteen Republicans, eleven border-state Democrats now joined their Northern brethren in opposing the committee.⁴² But 94 votes still did not pose any real challenge to the committee.

A short time after the renewal vote Thomas gave a startling example of the extremes to which he would willingly go in his unceasing war against the administration. The case in point involved a David Ginsburg, who had received a commendation from President Roosevelt for his work in the Office of Price Administration. It was the length of the congratulatory message that was so vexing to Thomas. He

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 809.

⁴² For a breakdown of the opposition vote, see Table 1, page 79.



noted that Ginsburg had received a four-hundred-word citation while General MacArthur had received only ninety-three words when he was awarded his Congressional Medal of Honor. Additionally, the parents of the five Sullivan boys killed in action had been granted only eighty-eight words. Finally, General Doolittle and his Congressional medal had earned only sixty-six.

Thomas saw this as an indication that the President cared more about a man deferred from the draft than for Generals MacArthur and Doolittle and the boys killed in the war. He concluded, "Such was the reward for his [Ginsburg's] part in bringing about New Deal confusion and chaos."⁴³

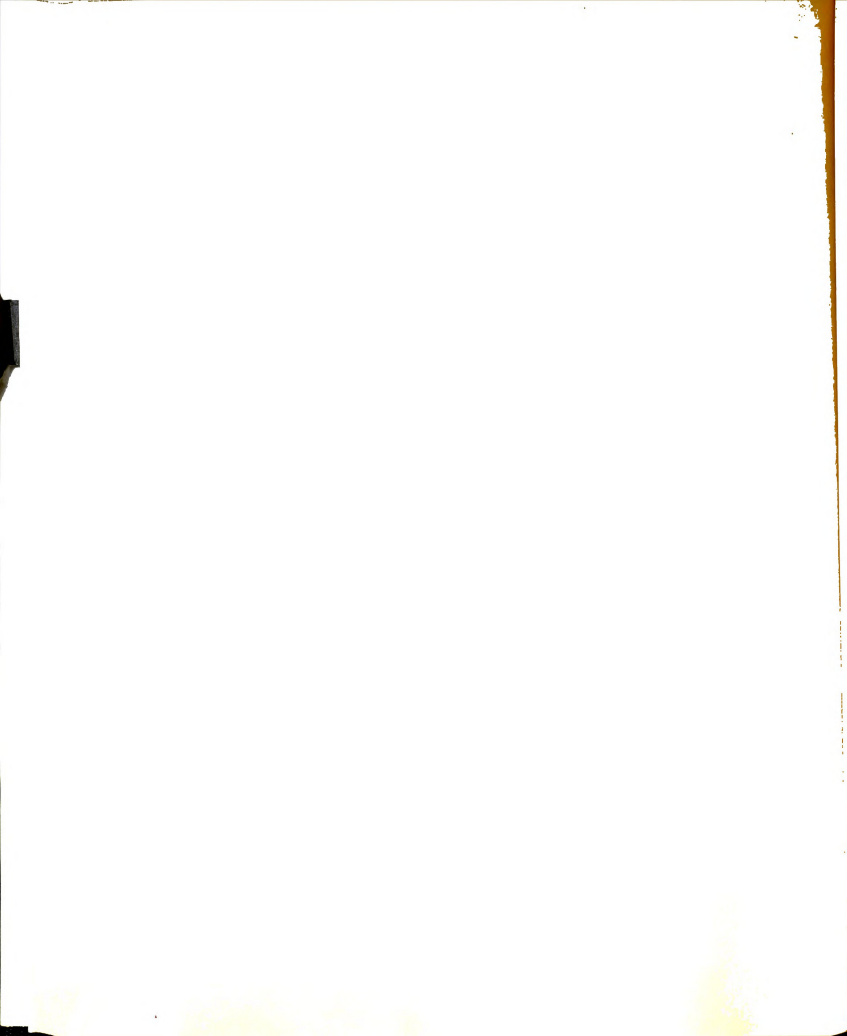
Though his logic seemed questionable, and even ludicrous, a question persisted: To an undiscerning newspaper reader might it not appear that his loved ones were indeed serving under a man who seemed to prefer a noncombatant New Dealer to those more directly involved in the war effort? Certainly the Chicago Tribune was expecting its readers to get such a message with its headline, "Ginsburg Gets 400 word Citation; Five Heroes Get 81."⁴⁴

"Disloyal" Employees

After his renewal victory, Martin Dies announced that he would start a campaign "to purge the Federal payroll... and to dismiss the disloyal" from among the more than 1000

⁴³ CR: 78-1, Appendix, Apr. 7, 1943, 1677.

⁴⁴ Tribune, Apr. 8, 1943.



names he had submitted to Attorney General Francis Biddle almost two years before.⁴⁵ A few days earlier the chairman had announced the names of thirty-nine specific Federal employees on the floor of the House and demanded their immediate removal from office.⁴⁶ Such an allegation forced the creation of a special subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations to evaluate these charges and to determine whether these employees should be taken off the Federal payroll. The Kerr subcommittee, as it was called, sat as a sort of jury while a Dies subcommittee afforded the accused the chance to defend themselves in closed sessions.⁴⁷

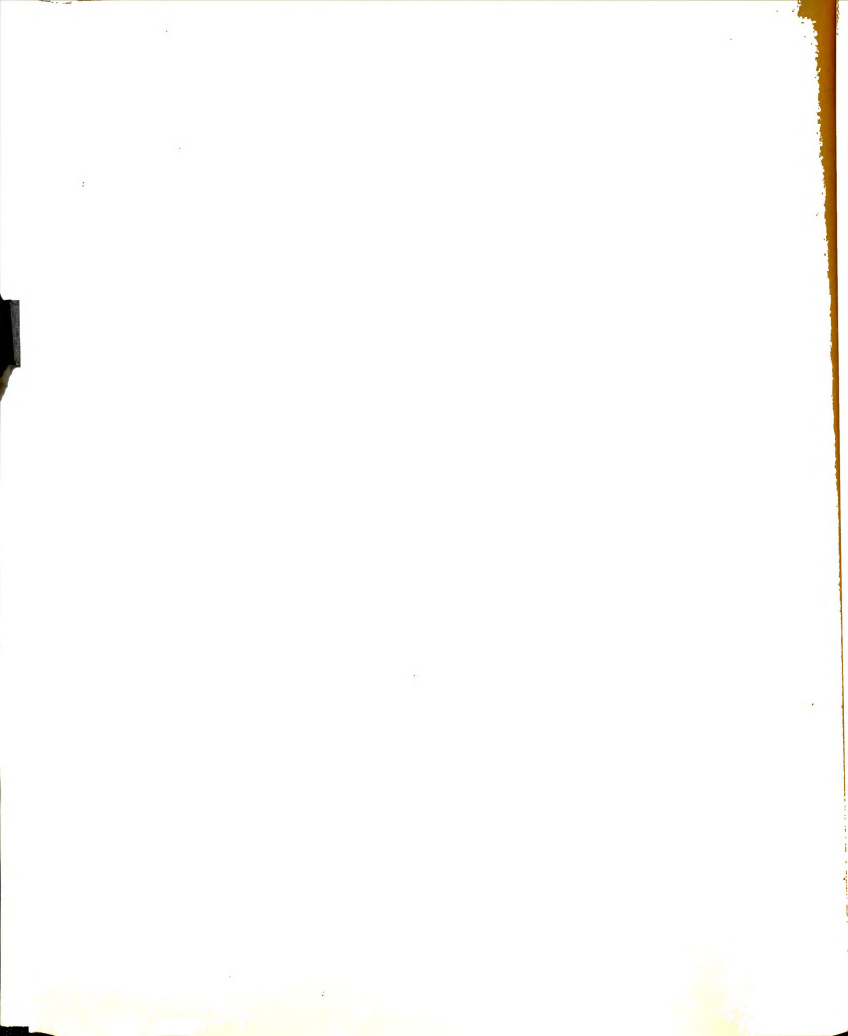
An investigation into the behavior of government officials should have been of significant interest to Thomas, but of the thirteen days of hearings, he attended only five. However, when Goodwin B. Watson took the stand, Thomas did take an active role in the questioning.⁴⁸ Watson, a former professor of education at Columbia, and the then Chief Analyst of the Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service for the Federal Communications Commission, had been described by Chairman Dies as one of the most suspect of the Federal

⁴⁵Times, Feb. 12, 1943. Actually, Dies had sent his original list of 1,124 Federal employees who needed investigation to the Attorney General back in October, 1941; see the Post, Oct. 20, 1941.

⁴⁶CR: 78-1, Feb. 1, 1943, 504-516; see also the Times, Feb. 2, 1943.

⁴⁷Hearings before a Special Committee on Un-American Activities, Mar. 23, 29, 30, 31, Apr. 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 6, 19, 1943.

⁴⁸Testimony of Goodwin Watson, EH-7, Apr. 1, 1943, 3236-3297.

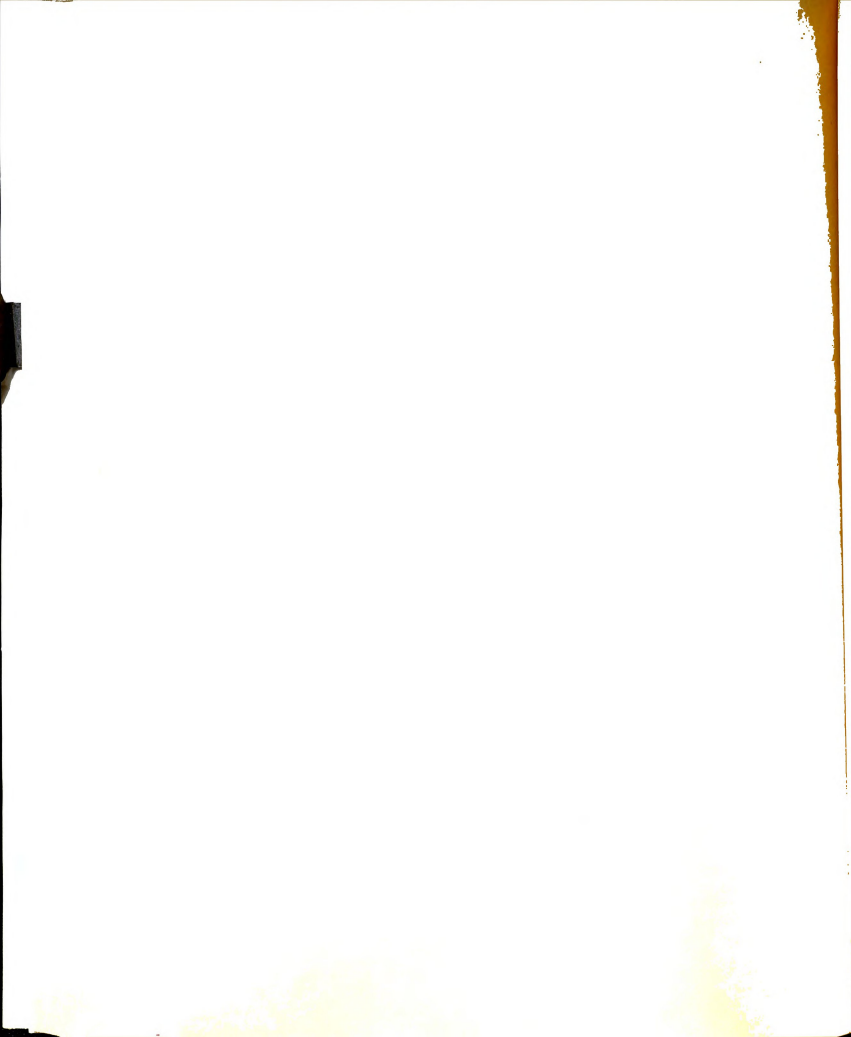


employees under his surveillance; yet on the stand Watson proved to be a very calm and convincing witness. He tried to emphasize that because a cause or organization had been supported by Communists did not necessarily mean that the movement had to be Communist-oriented. He admitted that in the early 1930's he had not thought that capitalism could reform itself, but he insisted that he had never advocated communism as a solution.

When it became apparent that Dr. Watson was not going to be of significant help to the committee on the issue of communism, the questioning turned to the subject of fascism. Thomas, who had curiously showed little interest in the alleged Communist affiliations of the witness, now took the lead in the questioning. In response to Watson's definition of fascism, Thomas asked him if the growth of our nation had reached the degree that "we are entering a fascist state in this country now."⁴⁹ When Watson replied that he was "deeply concerned" about the growing power of the state, Thomas again asked him if he did not think that "the tremendous growth of bureaucratic agencies in the last few years might turn us into a fascist state." Watson acknowledged this and called for a democracy of representative government and a democracy which allowed the individual to command respect for himself as an individual.⁵⁰ Thomas appeared satisfied and did not return for the afternoon session

⁴⁹Ibid., 3270.

⁵⁰Ibid., 3381.



with Watson.

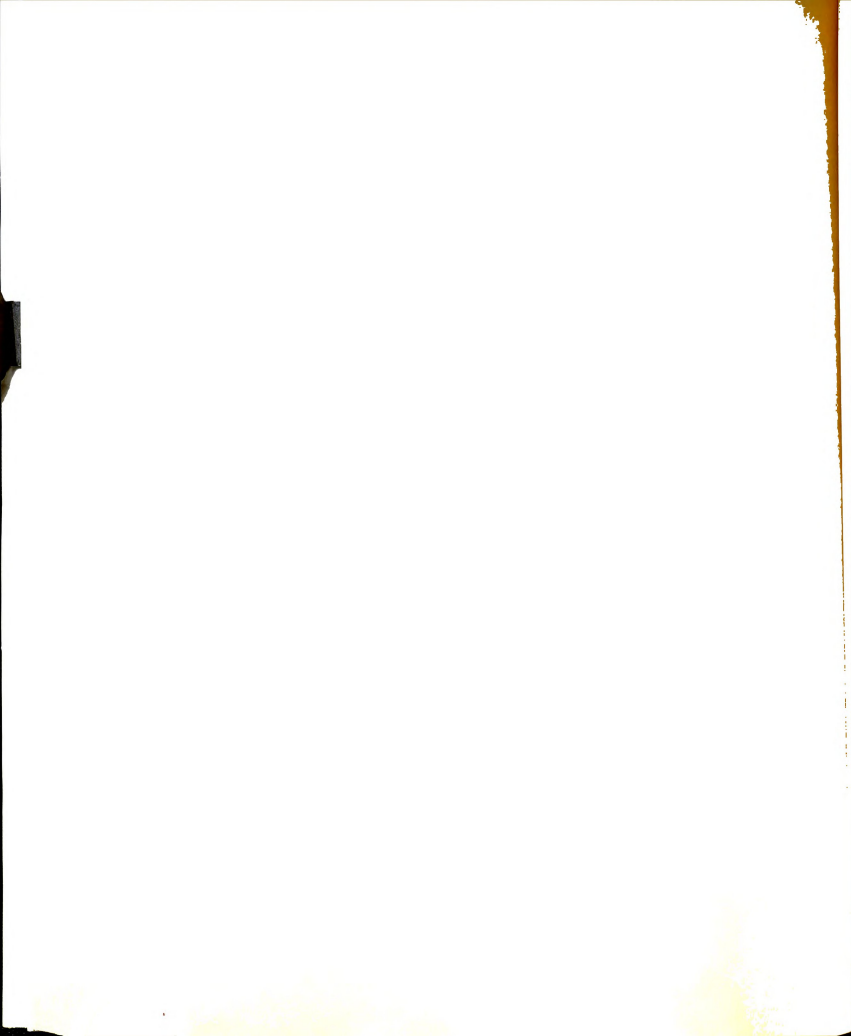
The parade of government witnesses continued, but Thomas did not again appear until Robert Morss Lovett was called some two weeks later.⁵¹ Lovett was then serving as Government Secretary of the Virgin Islands, but as a former editor of the New Republic he was anathema to J. Parnell Thomas. Lovett's past was similar to Watson's in that he too had been involved in many movements and organizations which had also attracted Communists. Lovett patiently tried to explain the difference between an organization formed for a specific social purpose and one which was dominated by a political party for an express political purpose. Then he startled the committee, and undoubtedly sealed his own doom, by admitting that he regarded "Communists as human beings with whom it is possible to work to the accomplishment of general desirable ends."⁵² Lovett concluded with the insistence that his sympathies had lain more with the Socialists than with the Communists.

Thomas prefaced his questioning of the witness with the assertion that he knew "of no person in the Government or out of the Government who has been a member or sponsored any more Communist-front organizations than you have."⁵³ Lovett made a telling, but futile, point in his rebuttal when he pointed out that the committee's J. B. Matthews had

⁵¹ Lovett testimony, ibid., Apr. 16, 1943, 3501-3506.

⁵² Ibid., 3526.

⁵³ Ibid., 3522.



also belonged to a great many of these "so-called front organizations," yet the committee was more than willing to use Matthews' services; hence why could not the government use his?⁵⁴ Thomas replied that perhaps Dr. Lovett could do even a better job if he were in Matthews' position, but he quickly turned back to Lovett's official position to express his amazement "that anybody should be given the position you have in the Government after the fact is known that you belonged to all of these screwball and nitwit organizations."⁵⁵

Once again the Congressman had neglected to explain how Lovett's past membership or interest in these organizations would prove such a subversive threat to the country from his position in the Virgin Islands. Evidently for Thomas it seemed almost axiomatic that a man who would join such an organization would also betray his country.

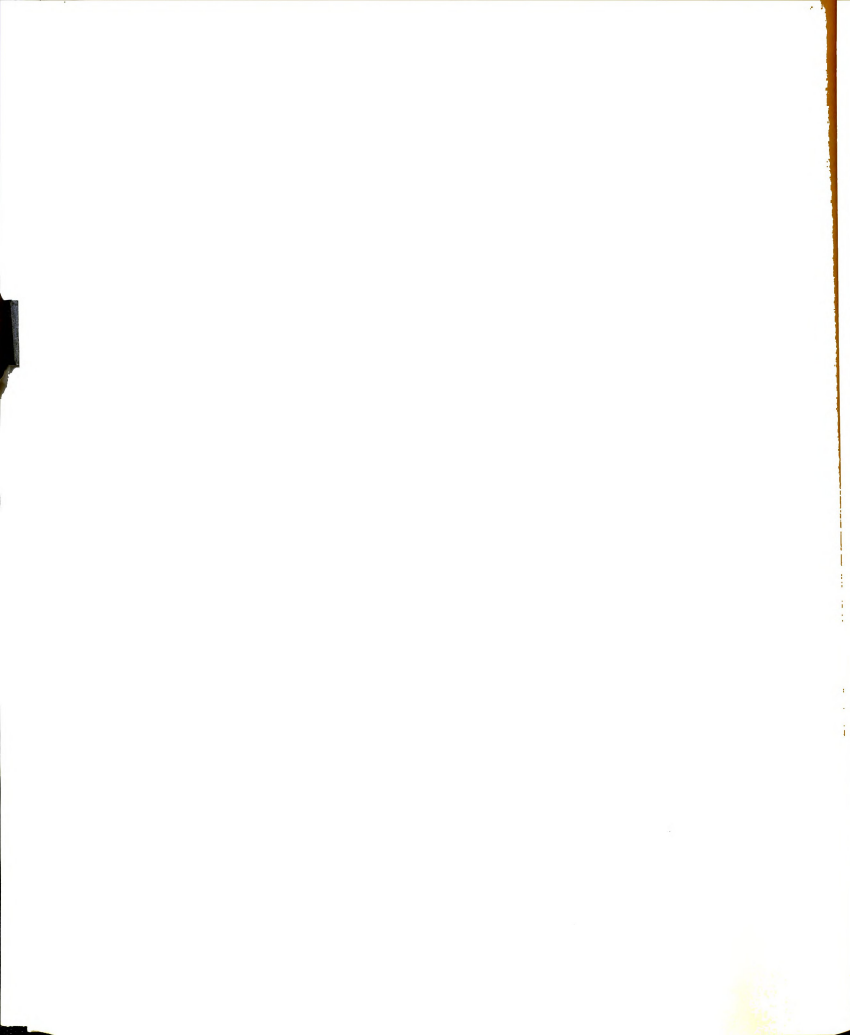
Japanese-Americans

The only public hearings of 1945 were taken up by an investigation of Japanese-Americans in relocation centers. They were conducted by a subcommittee and neither Dies nor Thomas attended the first set in Arizona; however, when the scene switched to Washington in early July, Thomas did attend a few of the sessions.⁵⁶ Several witnesses were questioned,

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Out of the twenty-one days of public hearings in 1943, Thomas attended only three.



but no clear picture of the general problem emerged.

The only time that Thomas showed any real interest occurred when Dillon S. Myer, the Director of the War Relocation Authority, took the stand. Thomas first accused Myer of addressing the press rather than the committee when he talked, and he insisted that he face the chairman.⁵⁷ He then admonished him for not having written the committee sooner to find out which Japanese were suspected saboteurs:

I know you heard about the Dies committee, the same as any other person. But a New Dealer would not want to get in touch with the committee.⁵⁸

He concluded that Myer's relocation centers were "a silly social experiment," though he admitted that he had not visited any, nor had he been attending the hearings thereon. His solution was to take the relocation camps out of the administration's hands and to turn them over to the Army. When he asked Myer what he thought of this idea, the New Dealer readily rose to the challenge:

You seem to have your mind made up before this hearing was even started, and it certainly has been made up before it is concluded and before the facts are all brought before the committee.⁵⁹

This seemed to quiet Thomas, and he said nothing further the rest of the day.

Apparently the problem of the activities and civil rights of the Japanese-Americans did not really concern

⁵⁷H-15, July 6, 1943, 9675.

⁵⁸Ibid., 9693.

⁵⁹Ibid., July 7, 1943, 9698.



Thomas, and he did not even attend the last day of the hearing when an old adversary, Attorney General Francis Biddle, testified on the subject.

The Final Year of the Special Committee

Representative Thomas started out the new session of Congress on an old note, as he once more called for the impeachment of Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins. He accused "Perkins and her long-haired advisers...of endangering not only the welfare of labor itself, but endangering the whole war effort. It may cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of American boys."⁶⁰ However, the House again ignored the Representative's insistence that Miss Perkins "be replaced by some two-fisted person who understands labor."⁶¹

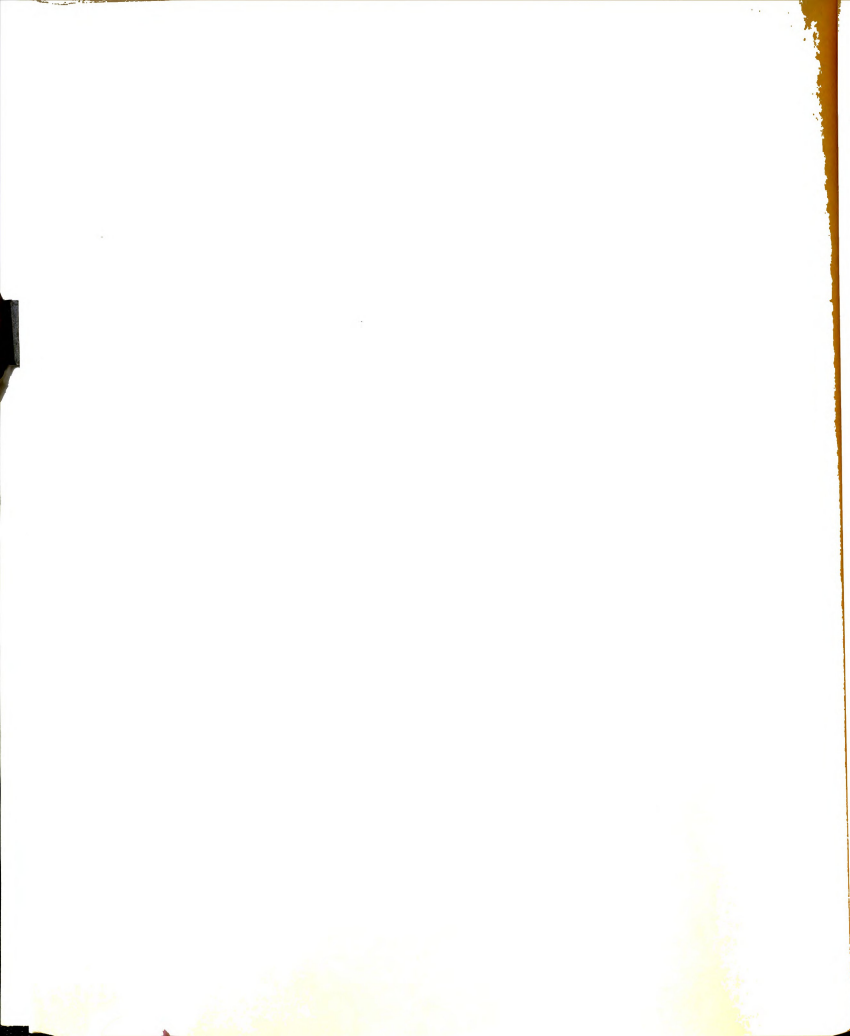
Little was heard from Thomas until May, but that was to be a particularly busy month for him. On the third he accused the administration of protecting thirty Federal employees who were suspected of disloyal activities.⁶² This was obviously a reference to the old Dies list of subversives in Federal service, but no names were mentioned, and he seemed to drop the matter in succeeding months.

Some two weeks later he called for a standing Committee on Un-American Activities backed by a highly trained

⁶⁰Ibid., Jan. 10, 1944, 13.

⁶¹Ibid. See also the Times, Jan. 11, 1944.

⁶²CR: 78-2, Appendix, May 3, 1944, 2132.



and permanent staff.⁶³ His statement came shortly after Martin Dies had announced that he would not seek reelection. Undoubtedly Thomas feared that without Dies there would be no special committee and hence his insistence that it be made permanent; however, his public reasons were cloaked in more sinister terms:

My convictions on this matter are based upon the present underground strategy now in operation by certain of the subversive and un-American groups within our midst. The Congress and the people must never let their guard down against these enemies, and the weapon of exposure which has been so effectively used by our committee must be maintained through a Congressional record.⁶⁴

Thomas finished the month with a radio address surprisingly entitled "Encroachment on American Liberties."⁶⁵ Of course, the "encroachment" was by the administration and with the help of the Reds:

Ladies and gentlemen of the radio audience, President Roosevelt and his governmental creatures, with the open aid of the Communist party, are attempting to bring to an end the traditional American way of life.⁶⁶

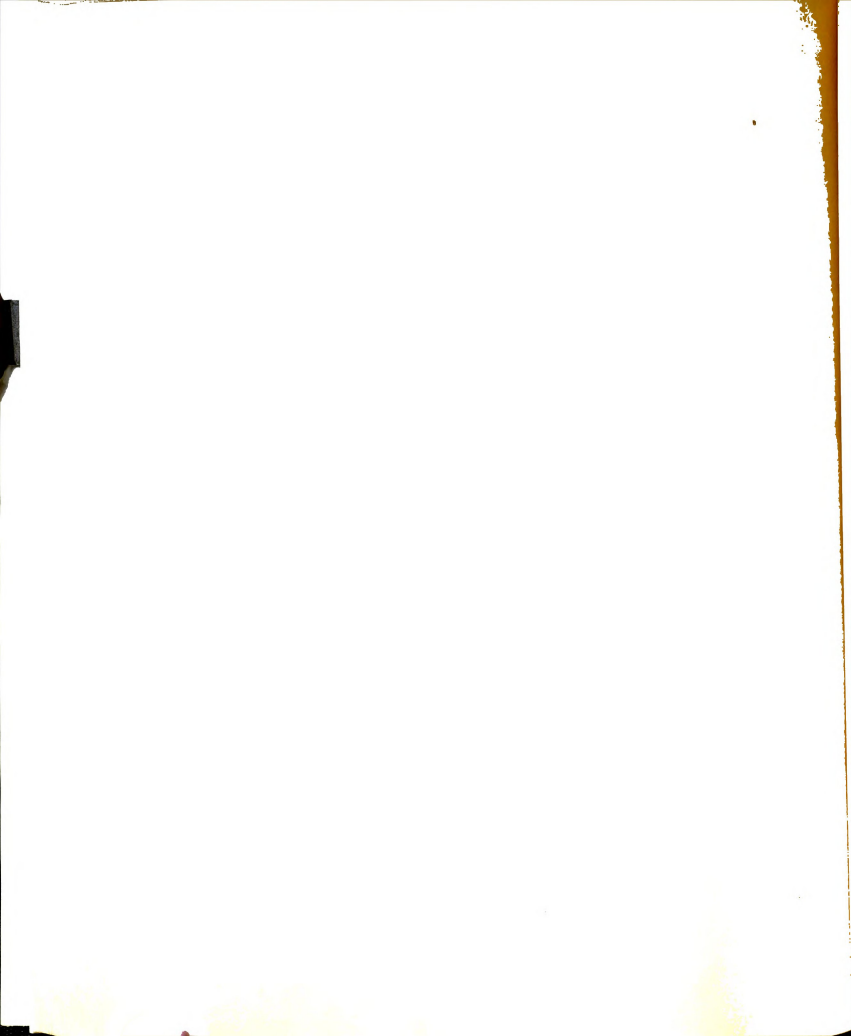
He further accused the New Deal of being a threat to the basic well-being of Congress. He insisted, "President Roosevelt and his satellites always misinterpret the laws passed by Congress," and he added that some of the same

⁶³ Times, May 14, 1944.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Radio address, as cited in Cx: 78-2, Appendix, May 26, 1944, 2611-2612.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 2611.



"subversive groups" which the administration was allegedly supporting were now bent on destroying the United States Congress.⁶⁷ Thomas concluded with his explanation of why the Communists were treated with such favor by the New Deal administration:

The Communist party has developed a tremendous following in our Nation, with the encouragement of the administration, and their strength at the polls--100% for the New Deal--is something to be reckoned with.⁶⁸

In June, Thomas was called upon to defend the committee and its chairman from William Gellerman, a professor of education at Northwestern University. Gellerman had written a critical biography of Martin Dies and his work.⁶⁹ Thomas reasoned that the book was the work of bias and prejudice because in 1938 Gellerman had written a book entitled The American Legion as Educator in which he had attacked that "great patriotic body."⁷⁰ In addition, Thomas noted that Gellerman's book on Dies had received "the sponsorship of one Professor George S. Counts, a member of the American League Against War and Fascism which at one time has had Earl Browder as its vice-president."⁷¹ But the examination of a book through the friends and organiza-

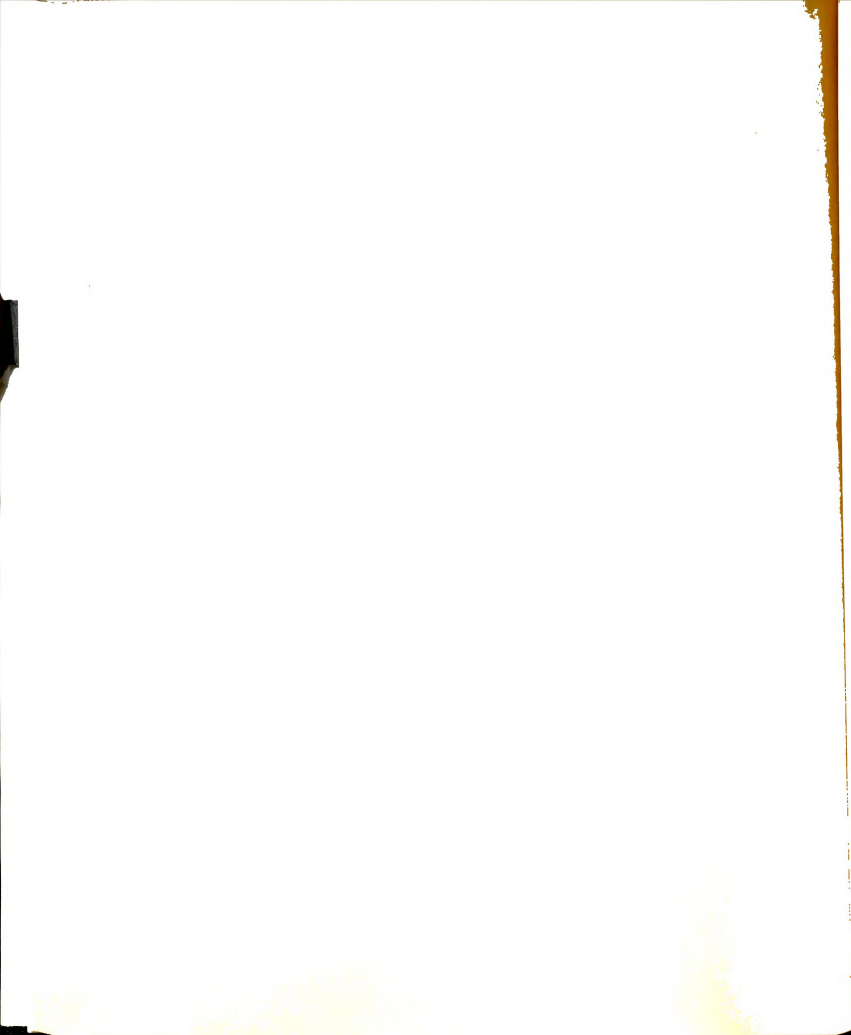
⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 2612.

⁶⁹ William Gellerman, Martin Dies (New York: John Day Co., 1944).

⁷⁰ CR: 78-2, June 15, 1972.

⁷¹ Ibid.



tions of one of its endorsers scarcely seemed a reliable approach to evaluating its contents.

In May, Martin Dies had announced that illness would not allow him to run again.⁷² Then, two of his staunchest supporters on the committee, Joe Starnes and John Costello, were defeated for renomination in the spring primaries. Though the end of the Dies committee seemed in sight, it refused to fade gracefully from the scene.

Dies had also announced in May that a proposed probe of the Political Action Committee of the CIO would provide a documented denunciation of the New Deal more sensational than anything yet released by the committee.⁷³ In the following month, taking over for his incapacitated chairman, Thomas labeled the PAC "the political arm of the New Deal," and he cited as evidence several telephone calls between PAC officials in New York City and the White House:

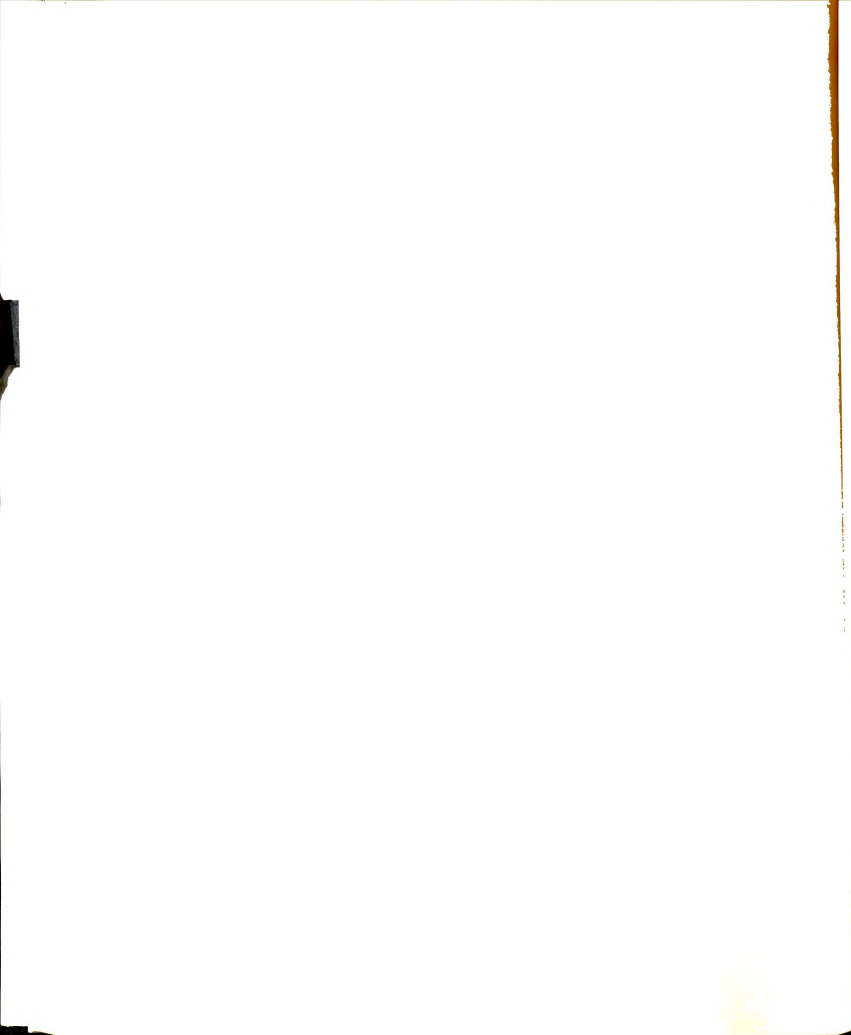
here is a Communist-dominated group, wielding a four million dollar slush fund aimed at the political death of every Congressman who will not take its orders, stretching its tentacles into the White House itself, consistently in communication with the President's closest intimates, undoubtedly with his full knowledge and approval.⁷⁴

Actually it was a column by Westbrook Pegler in the Washington Daily News which had first mentioned the long-

⁷² Times, May 13, 1944.

⁷³ Ibid., May 19, 1944.

⁷⁴ CR: 78-2, Appendix, June 22, 1944, 3250; see also the Tribune, June 22, 1944.



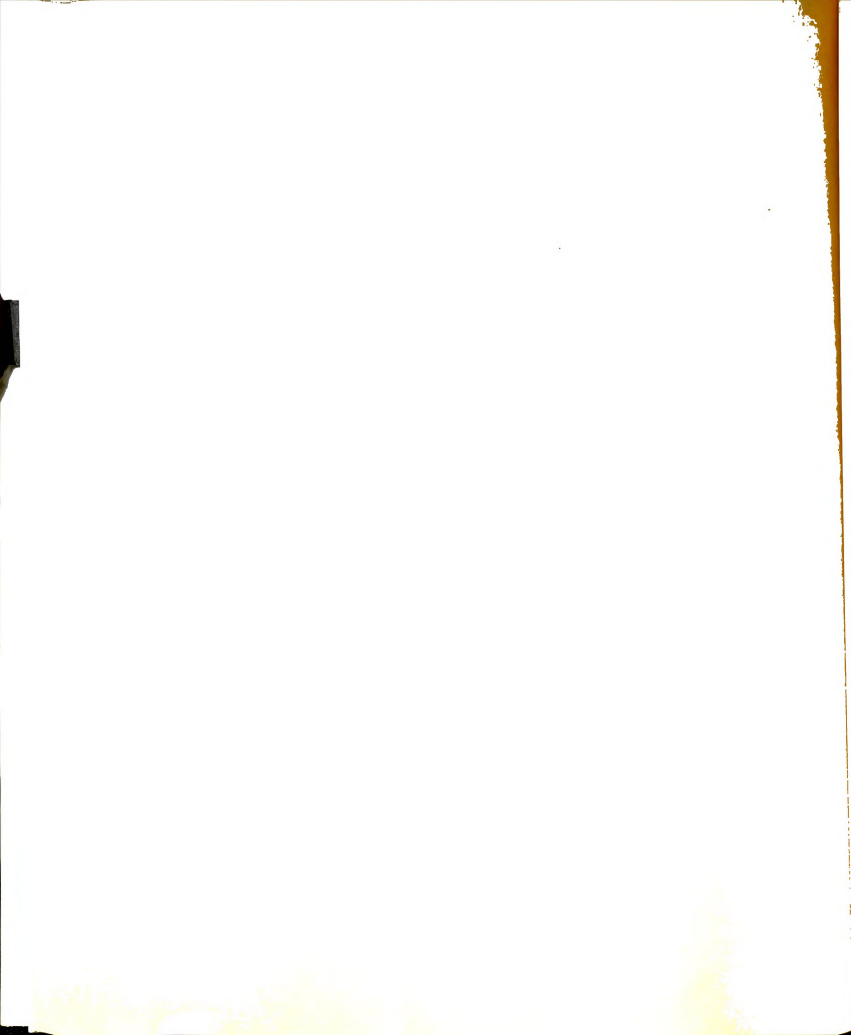
distance telephone calls which the committee was going to subpoena.⁷⁵ This column had brought a quick response from Committeeman Herman Eberharter on the House floor. Eberharter emphasized that he and two other members of the Committee on Un-American Activities knew nothing about the planned investigation, and he demanded to know how single members could, without consulting the other members, subpoena telephone company files and then pass on this information to a newspaper columnist.⁷⁶ The committee as a whole had not held any hearings in the past year, but Dies and Thomas had again displayed the political advantage to which they could put their committee affiliation.

The official investigation of the CIO-PAC was conducted by a subcommittee consisting of Costello, Starnes, and Thomas. Since the first two of these could attribute their recent defeat in the primaries in part to the PAC, and because Thomas had always been vehemently opposed to the CIO, the handling of the hearings and the final report thereon were quite predictable. Acting Chairman Costello made this even more apparent as he opened the hearings by stating that a definite tie-up between the PAC and Communist organizations throughout the country would be proven.⁷⁷ The actual hearings, which took up most of the month preceding the presidential election, often reached farcical proportions.

⁷⁵ Westbrook Pegler, Washington Daily News, June 20, 1944.

⁷⁶ CR: 78-2, June 22, 1944, 6578.

⁷⁷ H-17, Sept. 27, 1944, 10,211.

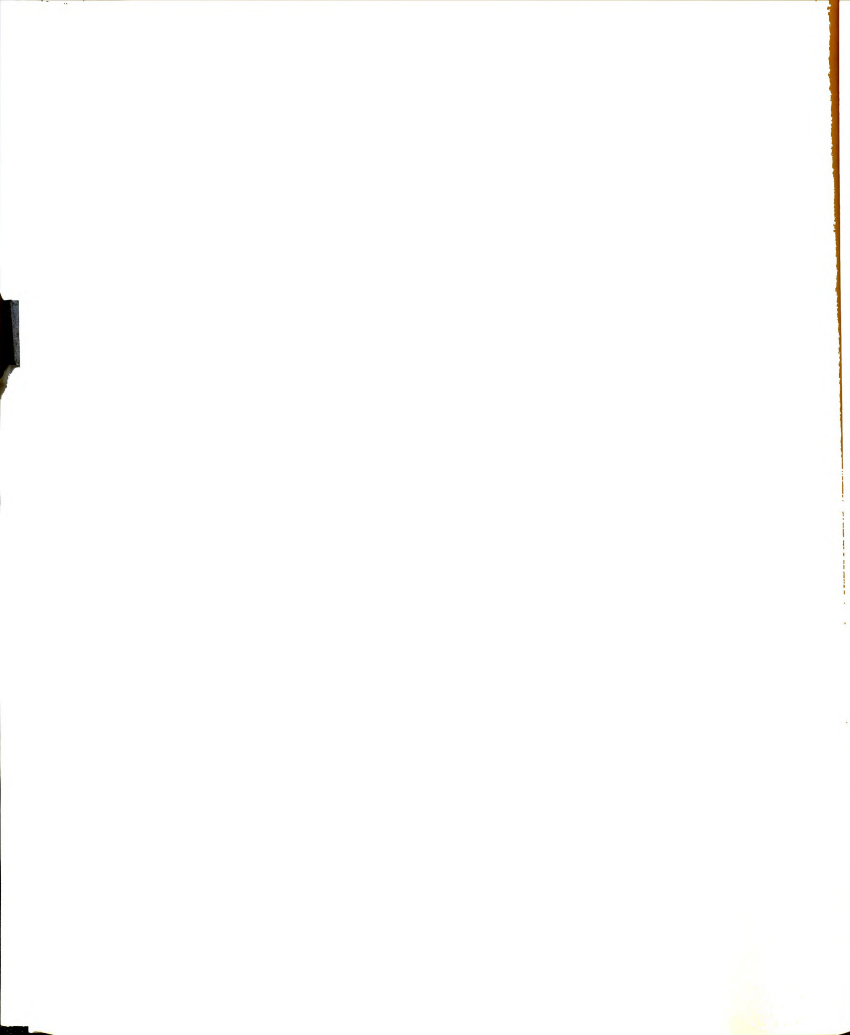


Much of the time they consisted of a panel discussion between Thomas and Costello and their director of research, J. B. Matthews.⁷⁸ They readily agreed that the CIO-PAC was Communist-directed and was using union funds to campaign for various New Deal candidates. They even speculated that after we had defeated Germany, we would have to face Japan alone, and this effort might well be blocked by the CIO and its Communist elements.⁷⁹

The witnesses too were carefully selected for their sympathetic views on the subject. Without exception, they were all former members of the CIO who were now willing to publicize the Red influence in their former union. Not one witness was called in defense of the CIO and its Political Action Committee; however, the witnesses did not go entirely unchallenged. Committeeman Herman Eberharter, though not assigned to the subcommittee by Dies, sat in on some of the hearings. Seeking to establish the reliability of the witnesses, Eberharter interrupted to inquire about their backgrounds. The first witness, John Blumenfield, was questioned on whether he was once convicted on the charge of robbery and assault with a deadly weapon and sentenced to ten years in prison, but Thomas came to his aid and insisted that the witness not answer the question:

⁷⁸For some examples of these interesting exchanges, see H-17, Oct. 3, 1944, 10,277-10,309 and Oct. 14, 1944, 10,331-10,350. It is also interesting to note that Thomas did not miss any of these public hearings on the PAC.

⁷⁹Ibid., 10,308.



I contend that the gentleman from Pennsylvania has no right to ask the question. He is only here by virtue of our accepting him as a guest anyway.⁸⁰

Thomas was inconsistent on two counts. He had often found the backgrounds of unfriendly witnesses to be all important in establishing the credibility of the testimony, and surely a fellow member of the Committee on Un-American Activities could not be excluded from one of its subcommittees simply because he disagreed with its members. In any case, the witness was temporarily forgotten as Thomas and Eberharter continued to exchange verbal blows. Thomas questioned why his colleague would defend "such Communist-front organizations," but before Eberharter could answer, Thomas warned him not to "bring out any smear observation or we'll do a little smearing ourselves."⁸¹ When the Pennsylvania Democrat was finally allowed to reply, he left no doubt as to what he felt the real motives of the subcommittee were:

This committee with its high-salaried staff is carrying on a sniping political campaign against the Democratic party, and there isn't one well-informed Washington observer who wouldn't know that to be a fact.⁸²

Eberharter, who was able to get a subsequent witness to admit to having served ten years for robbery and other convictions,⁸³ drew one final analogy. He accused the sub-

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 10,373.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid., 10, 386.



committee of using appropriated funds for political campaign purposes, a highly ironic charge in that this was precisely why the subcommittee was investigating the PAC.⁸⁴

The subcommittee reported to the full committee on October 30. The timing was obvious, and what they had to say corresponded generally with the political attacks made on the Roosevelt administration during the campaign. The report emphasized that the PAC and its subsidiary, the National Citizens Political Action Committee, were subversive organizations which represented "the Communists supreme bid for power throughout its twenty-five year history in this country."⁸⁵

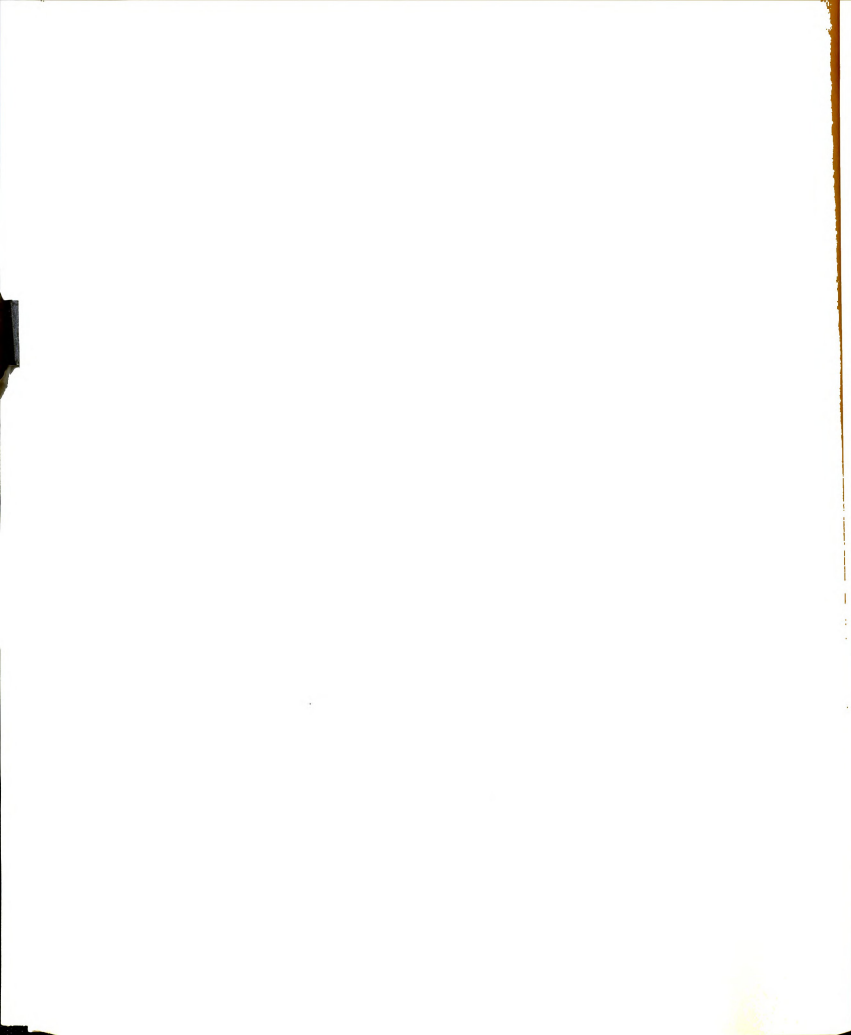
The report also referred to a large fund which was purported to have been used in various primary campaigns throughout the country to purge members of the House and Senate who had not obeyed the bidding of the CIO.⁸⁶ Undoubtedly Starnes and Costello were thinking of themselves in this latter allegation. But the quality of the witnesses had been embarrassingly illuminated by Eberharter, and the lack of any opportunity for the accused to reply to the charges was hardly in keeping with the traditional rules of evidence.

with the PAC hearings the Dies committee completed

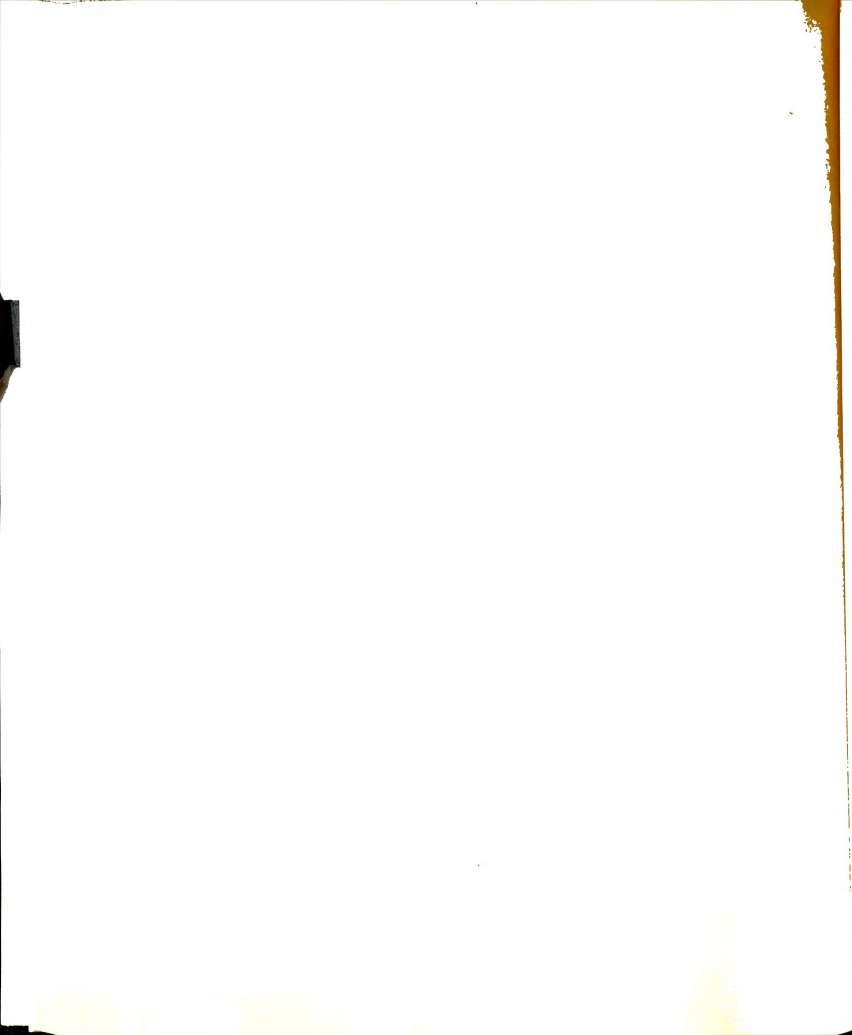
⁸⁴ Ibid., 10,375.

⁸⁵ Times, Oct. 30, 1944.

⁸⁶ Ibid.



its final year. It was perhaps fitting that it went out trying to influence an election. It had experienced a stormy, seven-year career, and it had left a legacy which, unfortunately, would be carried on when the committee was made permanent the following year.



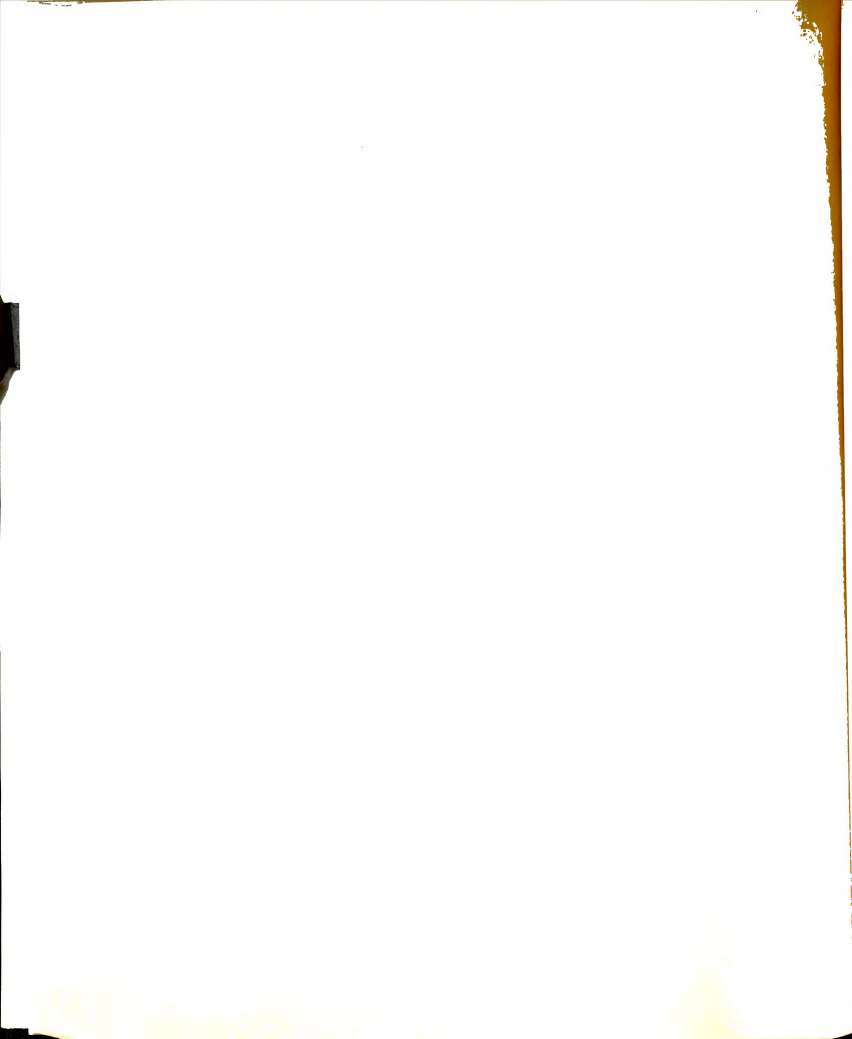
CHAPTER VI

THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE

The Dies committee came into being in May, 1938, and lasted until the close of 1944, when it expired with the Seventy-Eighth Congress. During its seven-year history it had won renewal of authority five times from the House of Representatives, always by overwhelming votes. Yet, by January, 1945, it was thought that the Committee on Un-American Activities was a dead issue. Chairman Dies was no longer in the House and three of the other six members of his old committee had not been reelected; in addition, the politically important CIO had waged a vigorous and open fight against the committee during and after the investigations of its Political Action Committee; and, finally, the administration had long been willing to block the renewal of the committee. Nevertheless, on the first day of the new session a standing committee on un-American activities was formed.

John Rankin's Coup

The permanent committee was almost single-handedly the work of John Rankin. The wily Mississippi parliamentarian caught the House by surprise and carried out one of the most remarkable procedural coups in modern Congressional



history. With the opening of the new session, Representative Adolph Sabath, the Chairman of the Rules Committee in the previous Congress, made the usual resolution that the rules of the House in the previous Congress remain in effect.¹ But Rankin interrupted to propose an amendment to Sabath's resolution to the effect that the Committee on Un-American Activities be added to the list of standing committees of the House.² This was a particularly clever move, as the Sabath resolution had to be voted upon at once and could not be referred to the Rules Committee for deliberation since technically no committees existed until the resolution itself was adopted. The crafty Mississippian anticipated that any hesitancy on the part of the Representatives to accept the first-day rules would be overcome by their individual fears, so often indicated in previous years, that any kind of a vote against the investigation of un-American activities would be politically unwise.

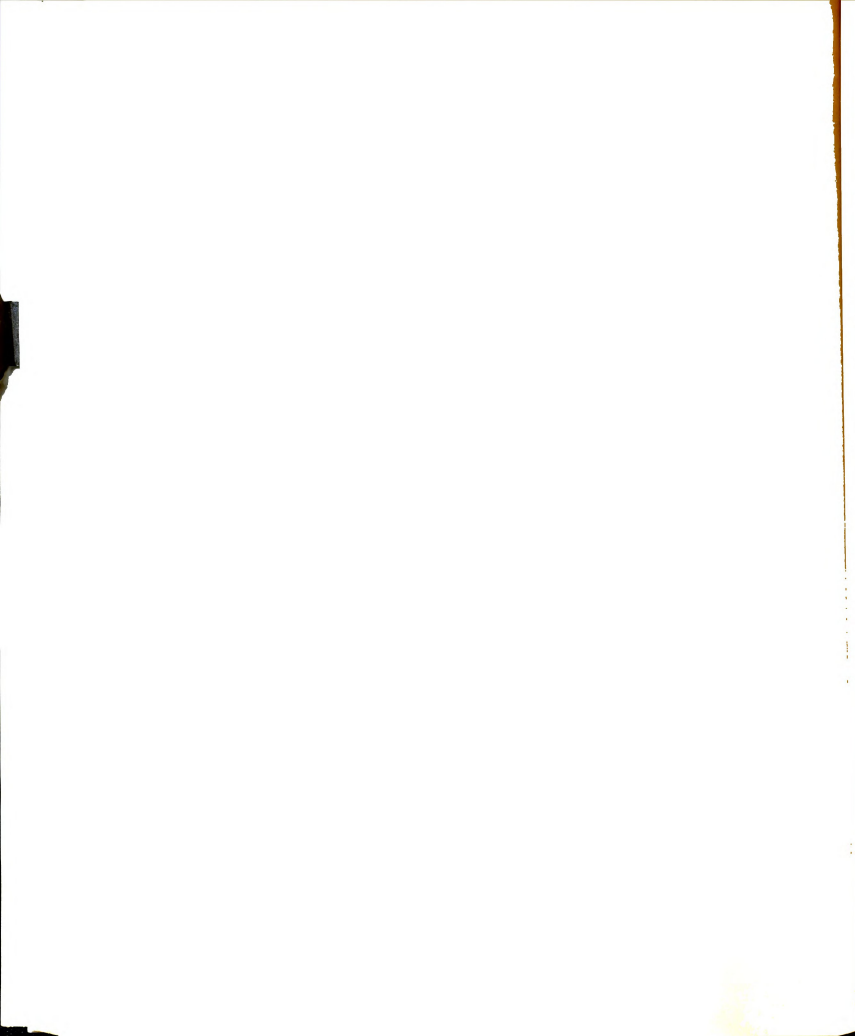
Robert Carr, in his excellent volume on the first five years of the permanent committee, stated that Rankin's immediate motivation was a concern about the preservation of the voluminous records and files accumulated by the Dies committee.³ True, Rankin did announce on the floor that there was a move afoot to destroy these records,⁴

¹ CR: 79-1, Jan. 3, 1945, 10.

² Ibid.

³ Robert Carr, The House Committee on Un-American Activities (Ithaca: Cornell Uni. Press, 1952), 20.

⁴ CR: 79-1, Jan. 3, 1945, 11.



but in the future the committee would also afford him the opportunity to air some of his particular prejudices just as it had Thomas and Dies in the past.

The actual vote on Rankin's amendment was much closer than the previous renewal votes. When the first vote by division went against the proposal, 146 to 134, Rankin immediately asked for a record vote. When the roll was called the amendment was carried by a vote of 207 to 186, with 40 members not voting.⁵ A breakdown of the vote showed that supporting the Rankin amendment were 137 Republicans and 70 Democrats. Voting against were 150 Democrats, 34 Republicans, one Progressive and one American Laborite. Sixty-three of the seventy Democrats voting for the resolution were Southerners.⁶ Thus, in a vote that was clearly along politically conservative lines, it was a coalition of Republicans and Southern Democrats which created the permanent House Un-American Activities Committee.

The language of the resolution was similar to that which had introduced the old Dies committee,⁷ but there was an almost complete turnover in personnel. Six of the nine seats were filled by Democrats, none of whom carried over from the Dies committee. The three Republicans included

⁵ Ibid., 15. Chief Counsel Robert Stripling later wrote that Rankin was well aware that the Representatives would not be so brave on a roll call vote; hence, he demanded one; Stripling, Red Plot, 51.

⁶ Carr, 22; Times, Jan. 4, 1945.

⁷ See above, page 11.



Thomas and Karl Mundt from the 1944 committee.⁸ The House rule limiting Representatives to one chairmanship precluded any possibility of Rankin heading the new committee as he had already been appointed to chair the Committee on World War Veterans' Legislation. Accordingly the Democrats assigned the post to Edward J. Hart of New Jersey. Hart, however, lasted only a few months, and midway through 1945 he was replaced by John Wood of Georgia.

With so many new faces it was hoped that the permanent committee would be able to avoid some of the pitfalls that had resulted in considerable criticism for its predecessor. The New York Times editorialized:

Let us hope that at the least the resurrected committee will not itself indulge, as Mr. Dies' committee surely did, in un-American practices. Let it be impartial. Let it respect the rules of evidence. These changes would be an improvement that might make the committee useful.⁹

Even after the passage of Rankin's resolution, the old Dies committee was recalled for one final ventilation on the floor of the House. During the election campaign of 1944 a paid political advertisement had appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle.¹⁰ It was directed against Frank Havenner, a Democratic candidate for a House seat

⁸ Members of the permanent committee were Edward J. Hart (Dem., N.J.); John E. Rankin (Dem., Miss.); J. Hardin Peterson (Dem., Fla.); J.W. Robinson (Dem., Utah); John B. Murdock (Dem., Ariz.); Herbert C. Bonner (Dem., N.C.); Karl E. Mundt (Rep., S.D.); Gerald W. Landis (Rep., Ind.); and Thomas.

⁹ New York Times, Jan. 5, 1945.

¹⁰ San Francisco Chronicle, Oct. 30, 1944.



from California, who, in spite of the advertisement, was elected. Havenner was now calling the whole affair before the House.¹¹

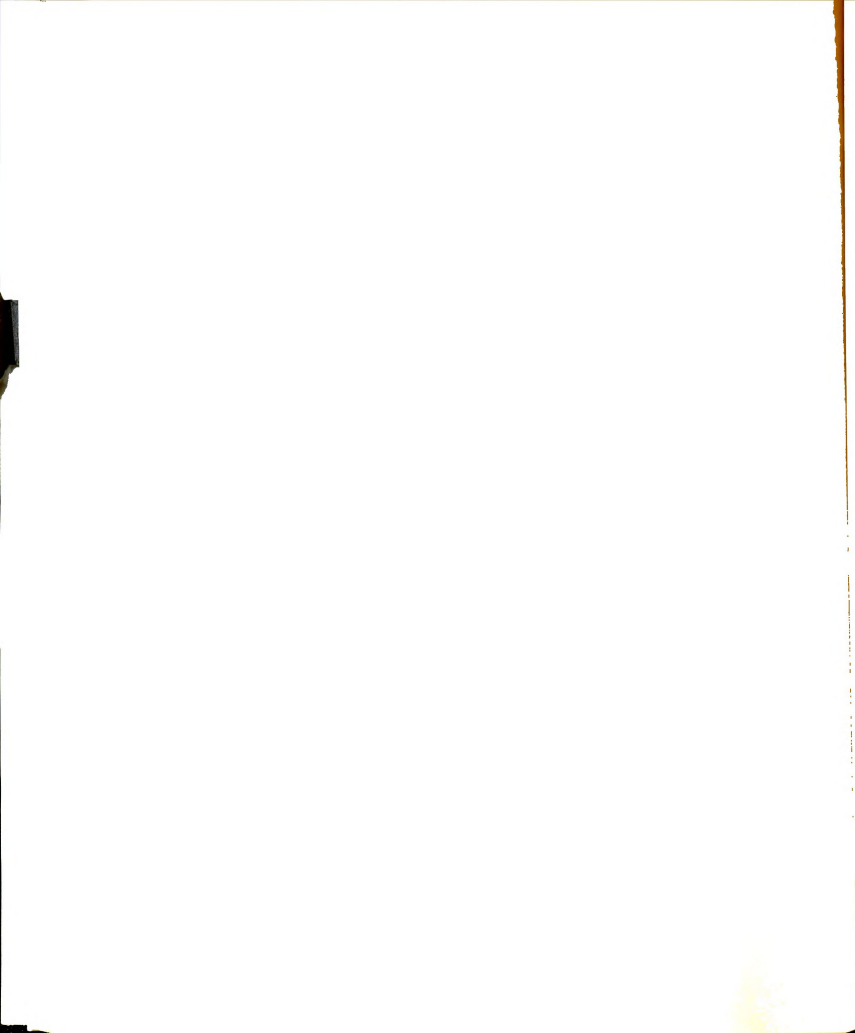
The advertisement contained excerpts from an executive session which Dies and two investigators held in Beaumont, Texas, in 1940. The star witness, one John L. Leech, a former member of the State Committee of the Communist Party of California, testified that Havenner, while a member of Congress in the late Thirties, had attended top-level Communist meetings where no one but a Communist would be let in. Leech's testimony was not made public until it appeared mysteriously four years later in the Chronicle.

Havenner claimed that he had never heard of the Beaumont session until it appeared in the paper, nor had he ever been presented with the opportunity to appear before the committee to face his accuser. But Havenner posed the right question. If Dies had believed the testimony, why had he not brought it before the House? After all, Dies had always maintained that Communists advocated the violent overthrow of the government; thus, had it not been a dangerous decision for him to pigeonhole such information for four years, allowing it to appear first during a political campaign?¹²

Representative Jerry Voorhis sympathized with Havenner, and the former committee member's words later

¹¹ CR: 79-1, Jan. 11, 1945, 206-211.

¹² Ibid., 207.



took on added significance in view of his own defeat by Richard Nixon under somewhat similar circumstances:

On Friday last I addressed the House on the general subject of a proper investigation of un-American activities, what I believe it could accomplish if properly conducted and what I thought the dangers were if improperly conducted. I cited as one of my greatest fears that on the basis of unsupported, uncorroborated evidence a single member might make possible accusations of an untrue sort against an American citizen, an accusation of a most serious nature, and, as I put it on that occasion, it will deal a body blow to the institution of basic American political institutions.¹³

In addition to Voorhis, Noah Mason admitted that he too knew nothing about the testimony. Even Thomas, when asked on the House floor, acknowledged that Haverner should have a chance to defend himself before the new committee.¹⁴ For the moment it appeared that the permanent committee might be forced to accept a greater degree of judicious objectivity than had been the case under its former chairman.

Public Hearings, 1945

The standing committee had trouble getting off the ground in its first two years. In 1945 it published no reports and conducted only two brief sets of hearings. The first, in June, was a three-day set concerning radio publicity sponsored by the Office of Price Administration; the second, held in the fall, took up six days and dealt with the American Communist party.

Robert Carr labeled the OPA hearings "about as

¹³ Ibid., 208.

¹⁴ Ibid., 208-209.



futile an undertaking as the committee ever attempted."¹⁵
 The opening of the hearings on June 20 coincided with the introduction of a House bill calling for the renewal of the basic OPA legislation.¹⁶ There seemed little doubt that Thomas and Ernie Adamson, the newly appointed chief counsel, allowed politics to influence their part in the proceedings. Indeed, when Chairman Hart suggested that the committee go into executive session precisely because the OPA legislation was then being debated in the House, it was Thomas who led the opposition, insisting that the hearings be public and on that day.¹⁷

Evidently hoping to embarrass the administration, Adamson began by charging that a series of thirteen weekly fifteen-minute radio programs, entitled "Soldiers with Coupons," contained subversive propaganda. These features were prepared by a group of writers in the OPA and consisted of the rather dramatic story of the OPA's fight to hold the line on prices and to prevent inflation.

The first witness was Chester Bowles, OPA administrator. Most of the questioning dealt with salaries, distribution of scripts, the make-up of the radio audience, the size of

¹⁵Carr, 24.

¹⁶The hearings of the permanent committee were not bound into the convenient, large volumes that the Dies hearings were; hence, it was necessary to cite the particular hearing by its name; Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States (Office of Price Administration), June 20, 21, 27, 1945.

¹⁷Ibid., June 20, 1945, 1.



various radio stations, and the general function and organization of the OPA. Nothing was said about the allegedly subversive broadcasts; in fact, Chairman Hart had to warn Adamson and the committee members that the hearing was not meant to be "an interrogation into the general conduct of OPA nor the patriotism of volunteers that are helping the government."¹⁸

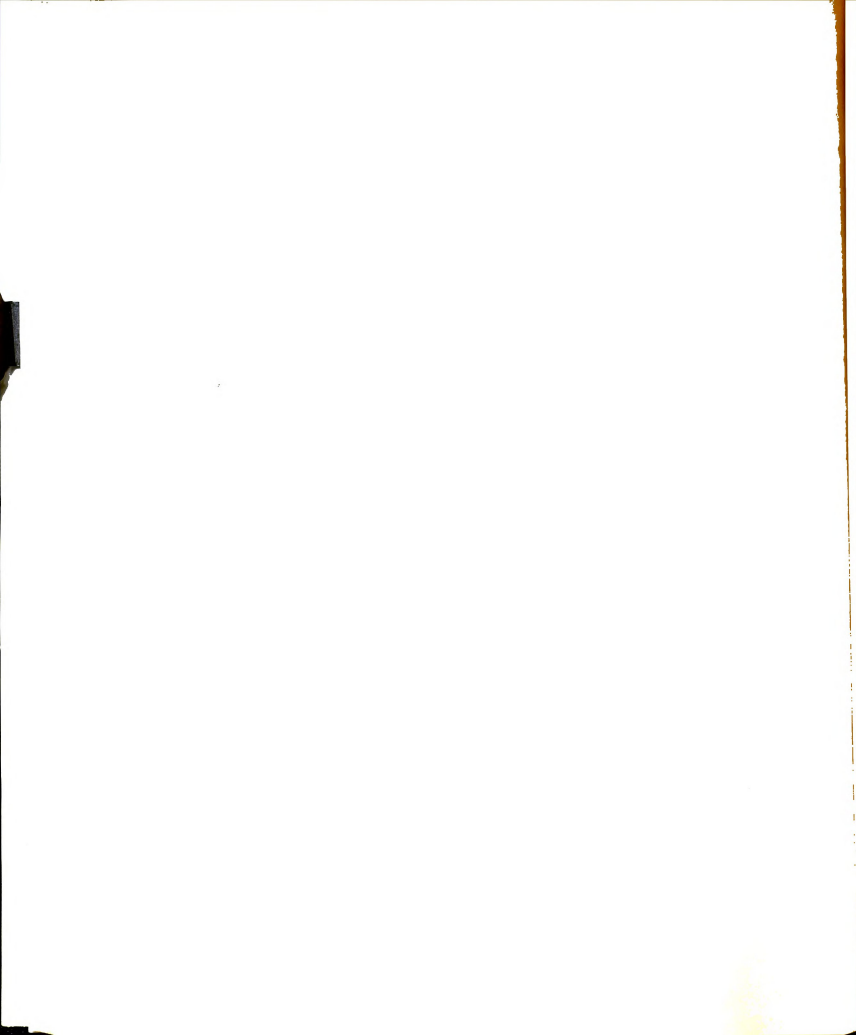
On the second day Thomas got a chance to censure the administration for supposedly interfering with the committee's work. The committee had established that Zenas L. Potter, Director of the Congressional Information Office of the OPA, had discussed with some of the committee members the possibility of postponing the hearings until after the renewal debate on the OPA legislation had ended in Congress. Thomas declared that this was a clear case of administrative interference with an investigation through pressure on sympathetic members of the committee.¹⁹ His pointed questions led one committeeman, J. W. Robinson, to ask him if he were now starting an investigation of the committee.²⁰ But Karl Mundt gave his support to his Republican colleague and asked Potter why it was he had asked only the Democratic members of the committee for a postponement of the hearing.²¹ Chairman Hart interrupted to

¹⁸ Ibid., 13.

¹⁹ Ibid., June 21, 1945, 63.

²⁰ Ibid., 64.

²¹ Ibid., 65.



call a halt to this line of questioning:

This hearing is devoted to a single subject: Whether or not the broadcasts were of a subversive nature, and I wish we could get down to the heart of the subject and let us find out whether they were or not.²²

The chairman had recalled the original function of the committee--to investigate un-American activity.

Nor did the final day of these OPA hearings uncover any startling evidence. The best that could be done was to show that one of the involved script writers, Tex Herman Weiner, had filled out his Civil Service application incorrectly.²³ Finally, special committee investigator George V. McDavitt did insist that the scripts "never came to the defense of the citizens of the United States, of the landlords, or the industrialists, of the capitalists who have abided by the law."²⁴ But neither was this very convincing evidence of un-American activity on the part of the OPA.

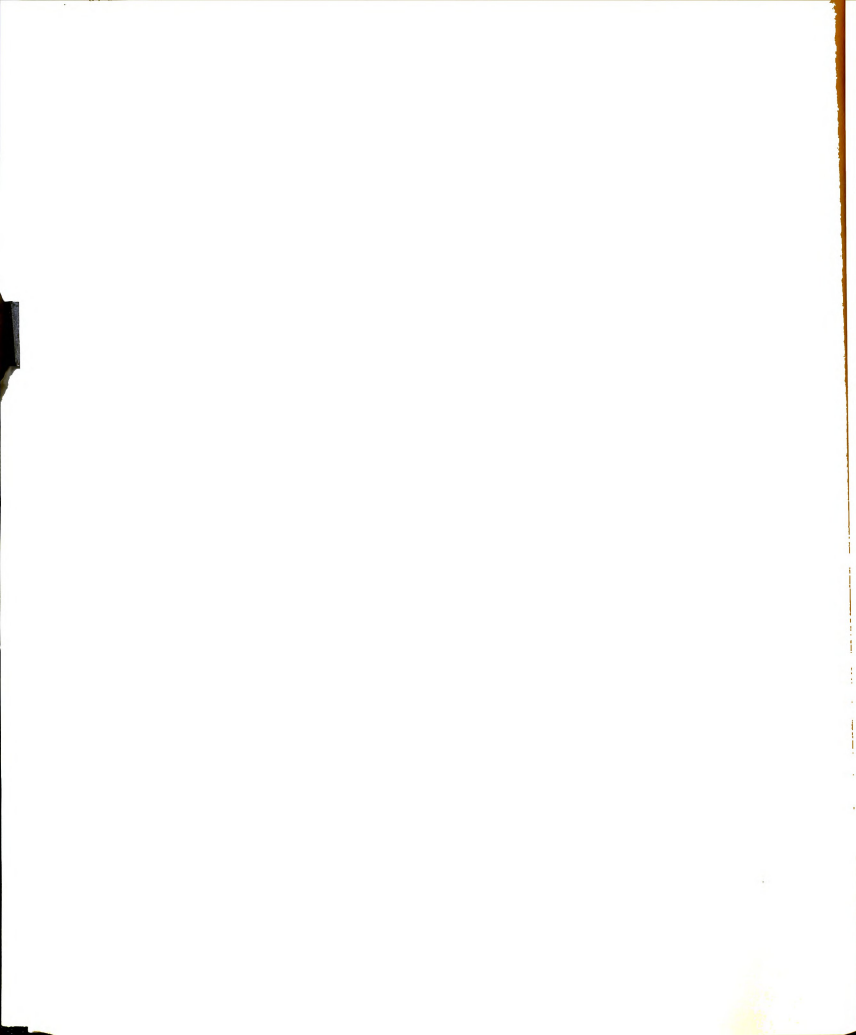
These first hearings of the permanent committee had been a miserable failure. Not even the newspapers showed much interest,²⁵ and the only further reference made to the OPA hearings by the committee was a single paragraph

²² Ibid., 66.

²³ Ibid., June 27, 1945, 70-72.

²⁴ Ibid., 84.

²⁵ A check of the Times, Post, and Tribune shows that only the Tribune took any interest in these hearings; Tribune, June 22 & 23, 1945.



in an annual report published more than a year later.²⁶

With the second set of 1945 hearings, the committee returned to its major interest--the Communist party and its fellow travelers, but these hearings were not much more successful than those held in June. The two chief witnesses were Earl Browder, who had just been deposed as the leader of the Communist movement in the United States, and William Z. Foster, his successor.²⁷ The committee announced it would investigate the extent to which foreign control was exerted over the American Communist party and the extent to which the party advocated revolution by force and violence.

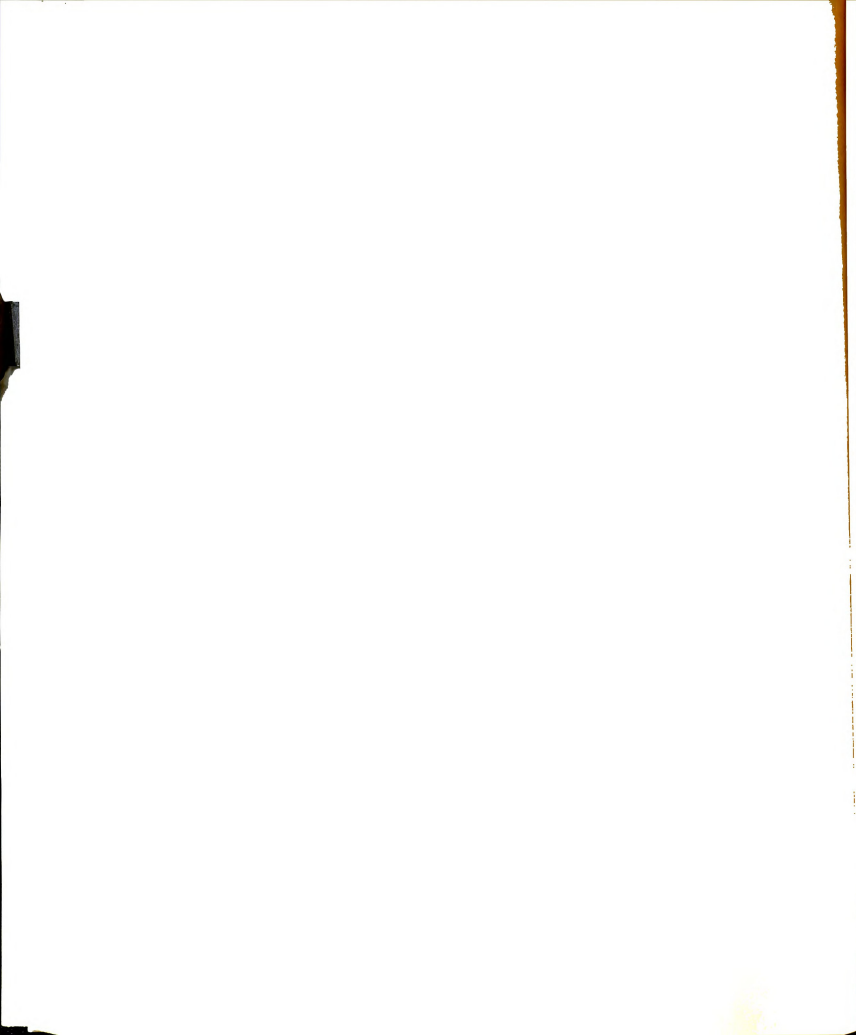
Before Browder could begin his testimony, Thomas interrupted to insist that the photographers be allowed to take pictures, even though Chairman Wood had asked them not to.²⁸

Browder proved, as he had in 1939, to be an extremely uncooperative witness, and the committee was able to get few, if any, definite answers out of him. At times the questioning went far afield from the announced intentions of the committee as in the following exchange which dealt more with political personalities than it did with the power of the Communist party, and which ended with the wit-

²⁶U.S. Congress, House, 79th Cong., 2nd Sess., Report of the Committee on Un-American Activities, June 7, 1946, 11.

²⁷Hearings on the Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States (Communist Party), Sept. 26, 27, Oct. 17-19, and Nov. 8, 1945.

²⁸Ibid., Sept. 26, 1945, 7.



ness questioning the committee:

Mr. Rankin: You never regarded the President of the United States as a Communist did you?

Mr. Browder: I certainly did not. And I made that clear at all stages of public debate on this question.

Mr. Thomas: Did you ever regard Mrs. Roosevelt as a Communist?

Mr. Browder: I did not. I have very sharp differences with you, Mr. Thomas, on that point.

Mr. Thomas: I never said Mrs. Roosevelt was a Communist.

Mr. Browder: I understood you had.

Mr. Thomas: Oh, No! You are mistaken.²⁹

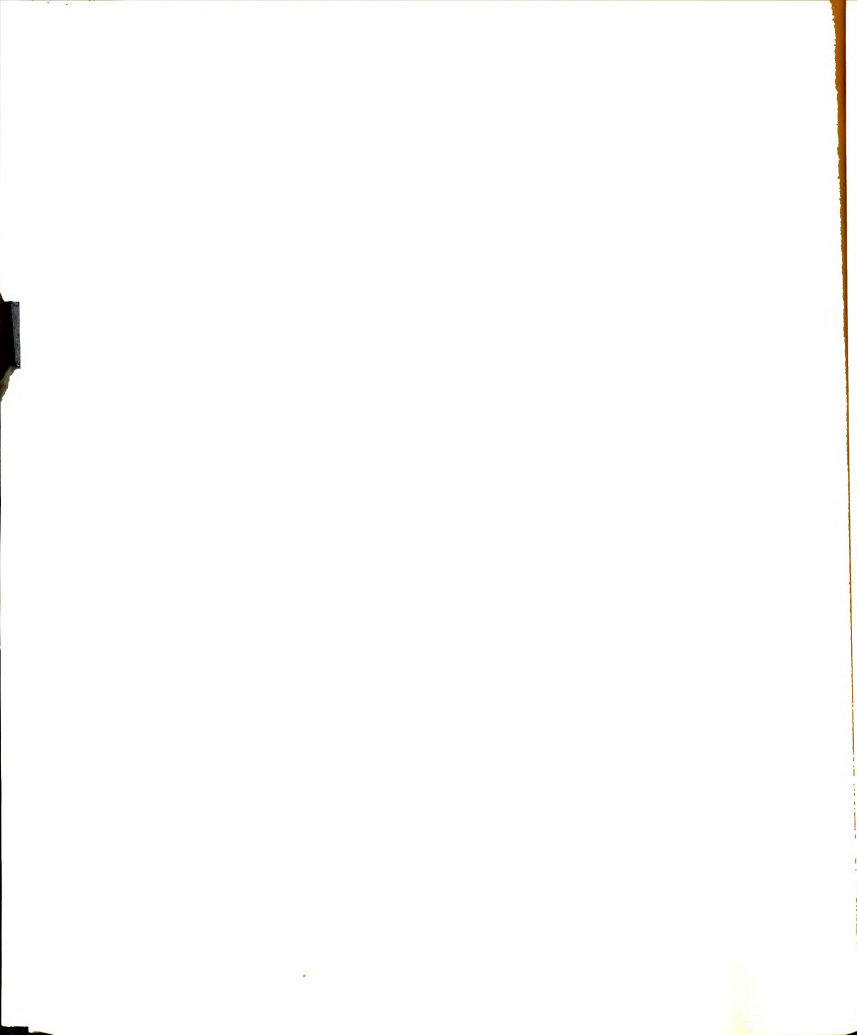
The committee continued to flounder in a fashion which showed that very little preparation had been made for these particular hearings. The committee seemed almost maudlin as it asked Browder and succeeding witnesses whether the fact that we had the highest standard of living in the world did not mean that we also had the best government in the world.³⁰

William Z. Foster's appearance made it even more evident that the committee had made little or no attempt to uncover any new material before these hearings commenced. Counsel Adamson probed thirty-three years into the past to show that Foster had then written things which advocated the violent overthrow of the government. Whether Foster had actually changed his mind since then was never clearly established, but his point that a man might be allowed a change of heart over thirty-three years was a telling one.³¹

²⁹Ibid., Sept. 27, 1945, 23.

³⁰Ibid., 39.

³¹Ibid., Oct. 17, 1945, 43.



When Foster returned for his second day of testimony, Thomas started the questioning by asking him if the Communists participated in every big strike. Foster, obviously feeling that the Communists had helped the labor movement in the United States, readily admitted that the Reds were involved in many of the strikes, though nothing was said about Communist leadership.³² But Thomas had what he wanted--the admission of the National Chairman of the Communist party that Communists were involved in many of the big labor strikes.

Foster was an extremely militant Communist, and it was rather easy to bait him. However, much of the second and third days of the testimony was taken up with the exchange of insults between Rankin and Foster which again sidetracked the committee from its announced intentions.

Foster concluded his testimony on November 3. This final hearing illuminated the glaring ineptness of Counsel Adamson, the ability of a witness to sometimes control the questioning, and the overall lack of organization and planning on the part of the committee. The following brief exchange between Adamson and Foster was a case in point:

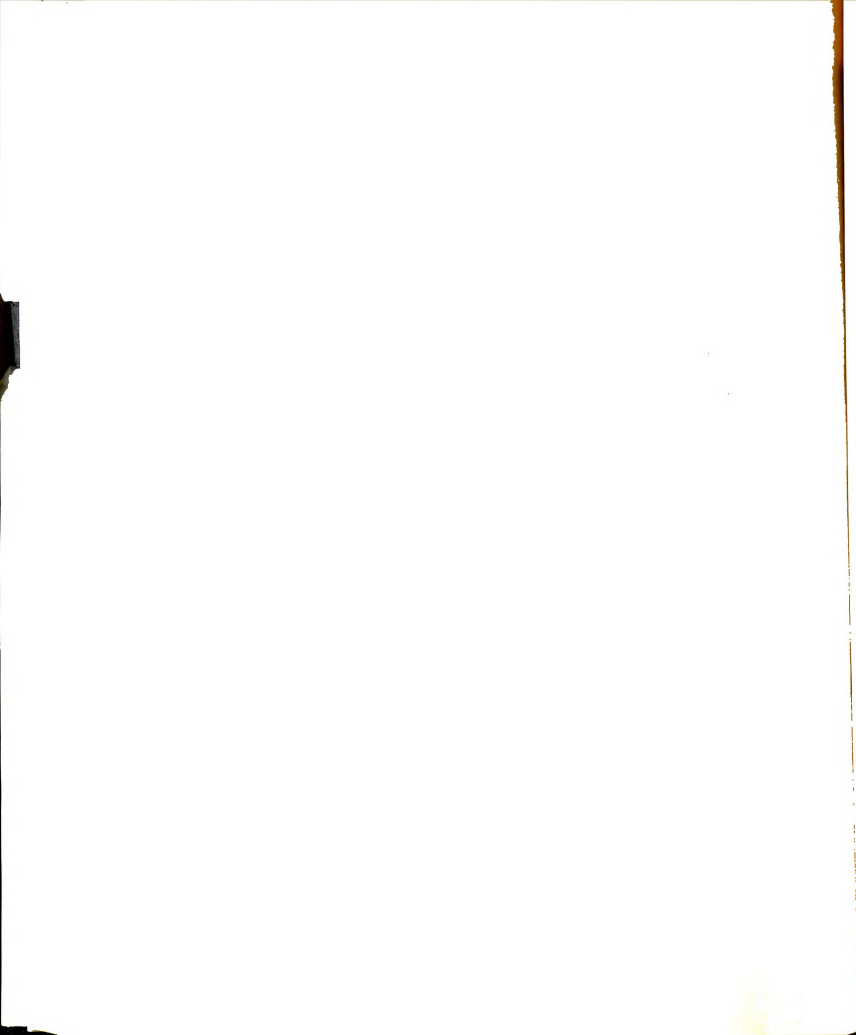
Mr. Adamson: Would you tell us something about the Trade Union Educational League?

Mr. Foster: The Trade Union Educational League has been liquidated some fifteen years ago. I would like to know what that has got to do with these hearings?

Mr. Adamson: You mentioned it, Mr. Foster. And what, if any, connection did that League have with the Communist movement?

Mr. Foster: At that time, none.

³² Ibid., Oct. 18, 1945, 54.



Mr. Adamson: Well, what did it have subsequently?

Mr. Foster: What has that got to do with un-American activities?

Mr. Adamson: I don't know.

Mr. Foster: I don't mind coming down here and being persecuted day after day with these nonsensical hearings, but let us at least confine ourselves to real questions. It is getting so I have to serve a sentence before this committee instead of coming here for information. I think it is about time we are done with this ridiculous performance.³³

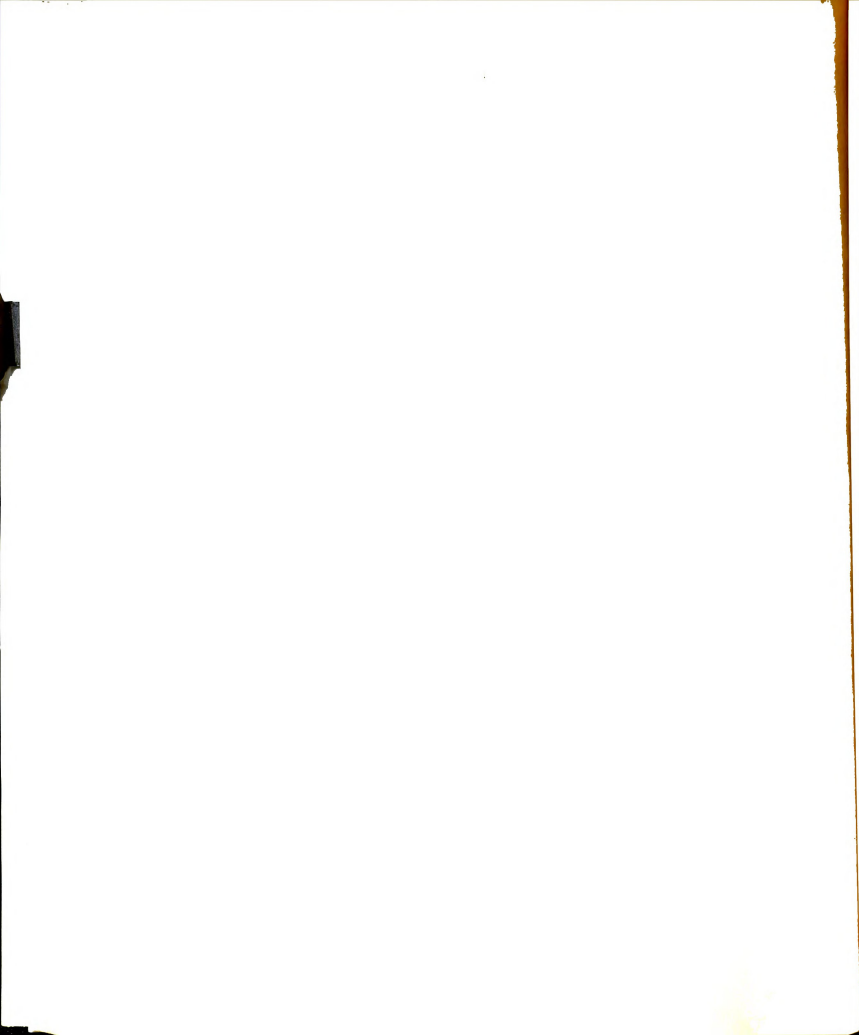
Thomas later informed the author that Adamson had been one of John Wood's political protégés and was indeed hopelessly ineffective as a chief counsel. One of his first moves upon replacing Wood as chairman was to fire Adamson.

Foster had not made any friends with his testimony as it became increasingly evident that he did prefer the Soviet way to that of the country in which he was a citizen. But he had succeeded in making the committee look woefully inept and, at times, very foolish. The handling of Foster made it undeniably clear that the committee needed to reorganize itself if it were going to achieve any degree of success or critical acclaim.

Public Hearings, 1946

If the 1945 hearings indicated that the permanent committee was off to a shaky start, the following year showed little improvement. There were, in all, only three days of hearings. Gerald L. K. Smith, a violent anti-Semite and the alleged leader of the American fascist movement, took the stand for one day at the end of January;

³³Ibid., Nov. 8, 1945, 160.



on April 4 the committee heard some officers of an organization known as the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee who had refused to turn over their files and records to the committee; and, finally, in late November, the committee heard the ex-Communist, Louis F. Budenz, testify. This was the extent of the public hearings for 1946. In addition, only three reports were published, two of which were the annual reports for 1945 and 1946.

The Gerald L. K. Smith hearing proved unproductive, but it did demonstrate the rather obvious sympathies of the committee. The committee had let it be understood that Smith would be subjected to a searching investigation, but the hearings lasted only one day, and for the most part Smith was treated as a friendly witness.³⁴ Two years later, in a speech reviewing the ten-year record of the Dies-Wood-Thomas committee, Thomas stated that Smith had been "questioned at length...regarding his anti-racial propaganda,"³⁵ but a reading of the testimony indicates that little real interest was taken in Smith's alleged fascist activities.

One of the more interesting aspects of this hearing resulted from Chairman Wood's announcement that members of Congress would be given the opportunity of interrogating

³⁴Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States (Gerald L. K. Smith), Jan. 30, 1946, 1-60.

³⁵CR: 80-2, Appendix, May 26, 1948, 3473.



the witness.³⁶ Representative Ellis E. Patterson, taking advantage of the offer, asked to present a nine-point statement that had been jointly signed by Representatives Emanuel Celler, Hugh De Lacy, Vito Marcantonio, Charles Savage, and himself. In addition to criticizing general committee procedures, the statement declared that these five Representatives would gladly interrogate Smith if they were given a free hand in the questioning and unlimited access to the committee files.³⁷

Thomas and Rankin were quick to oppose, with the latter employing a characteristic defense:

I want to say now that this statement is an attack on the committee, and it sounds like the usual Communist propaganda, or the propaganda that their fellow travelers use to attack the Committee on Un-American Activities. We are used to propaganda. This is propaganda of fellow travelers.³⁸

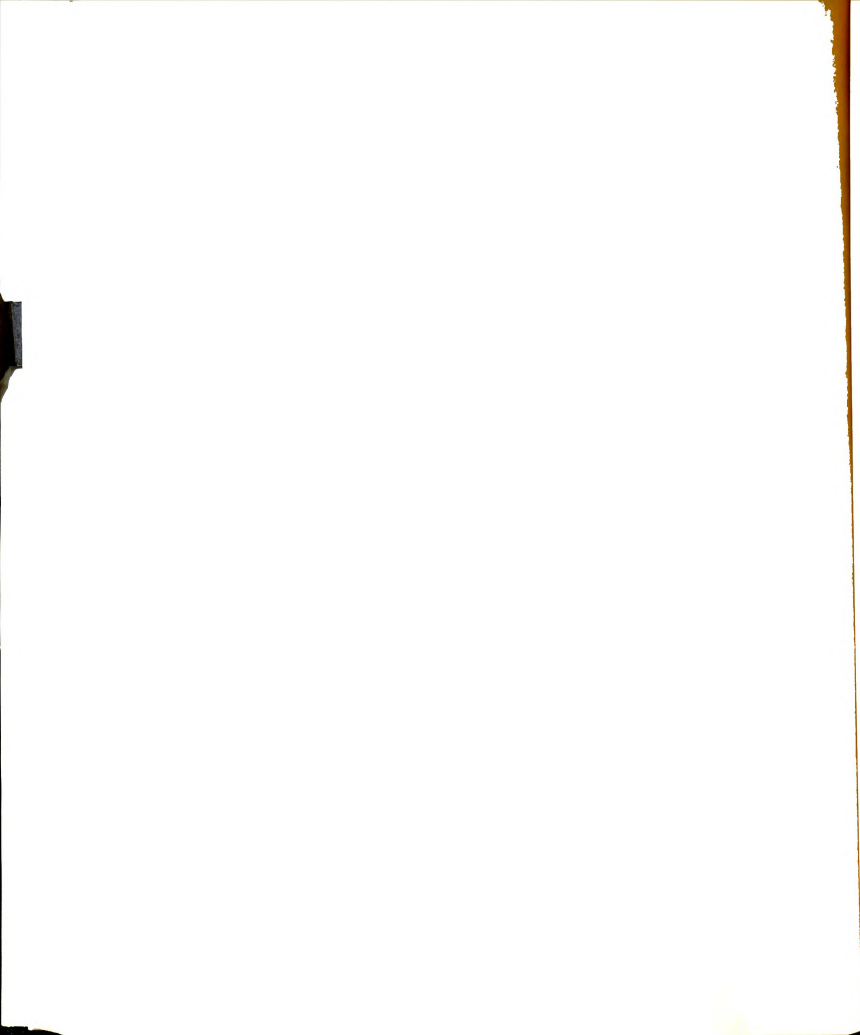
The letter was not permitted to be read aloud, but it was included in the record. It was unfortunate that Patterson and his colleagues made demands of a nature that precluded their acceptance by the committee; the Smith testimony might have read much differently.

In any case, when his actual testimony did get underway, Smith was allowed to present a six-page opening statement. This was later augmented by five more pages of his views on Jews and Communists, two evils which seemed

³⁶ Smith hearing, Jan. 30, 1946, 1.

³⁷ Ibid., 2.

³⁸ Ibid., 3.



inseparable to Smith. He called on the committee to investigate Walter Winchell, Frank Sinatra, Ingrid Bergman, and B'nai B'rith. His testimony went largely unchallenged, though Thomas did interrupt to say that he was a particular fan of Ingrid Bergman, and he did not like the accusations against her.³⁹ Thomas also brought laughter from the gallery with the following exchange concerning Frank Sinatra:

Mr. Thomas: You wouldn't say Frank Sinatra was a Communist, would you?

Mr. Smith: He may not be that intelligently, but he certainly is being used by the Communist party, because when you take a man that is publicized as he is, and then direct the spotlight that leads right to a Young Communist banquet, you overtake millions of young people unprepared for that sort of persuasion and lead them to believe that communism is respectable.

Mr. Thomas: Would you say he was sort of a Mrs. Roosevelt in pants?⁴⁰

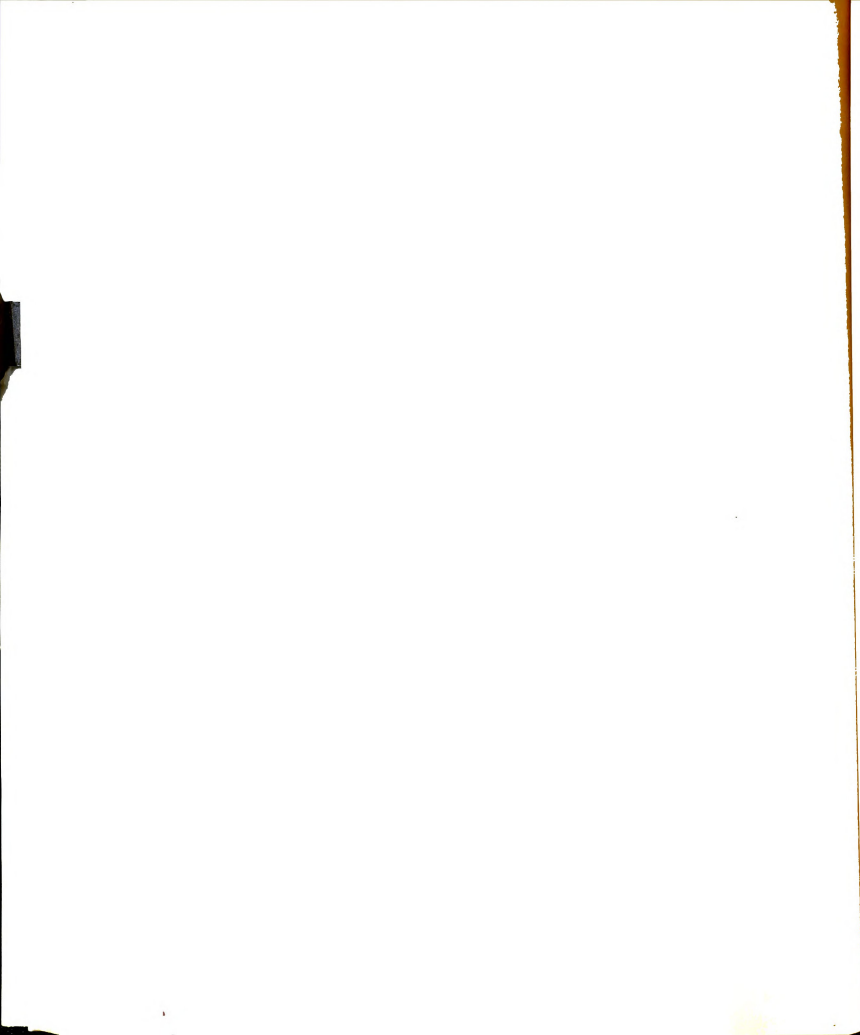
Smith, like several other allegedly fascist-leaning witnesses, was supposed to be examined on the workings or existence of a native American fascist movement; however, as soon as the testimony was turned in the direction of the Communists, the committee sat back to listen.

The next 1946 hearing was held on April 4. The committee heard a long line of uncooperative witnesses who were members of the executive board of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee.⁴¹ The committee's request for the books, papers, and records of the organization had been

³⁹ Ibid., 39.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 45-46.

⁴¹ Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States: Executive Board: Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee, Apr. 4, 1946.



refused; hence, the subpoena of these witnesses. However, unlike Gerald L. K. Smith, these witnesses were not allowed the opportunity of making opening statements. Their subsequent refusal to answer questions proved so frustrating that in one instance Rankin demanded that "the next question he refuses, just call up the marshall and send him to jail."⁴² Karl Mundt ended the hearing with a resolution that all seventeen witnesses be cited for contempt.⁴³

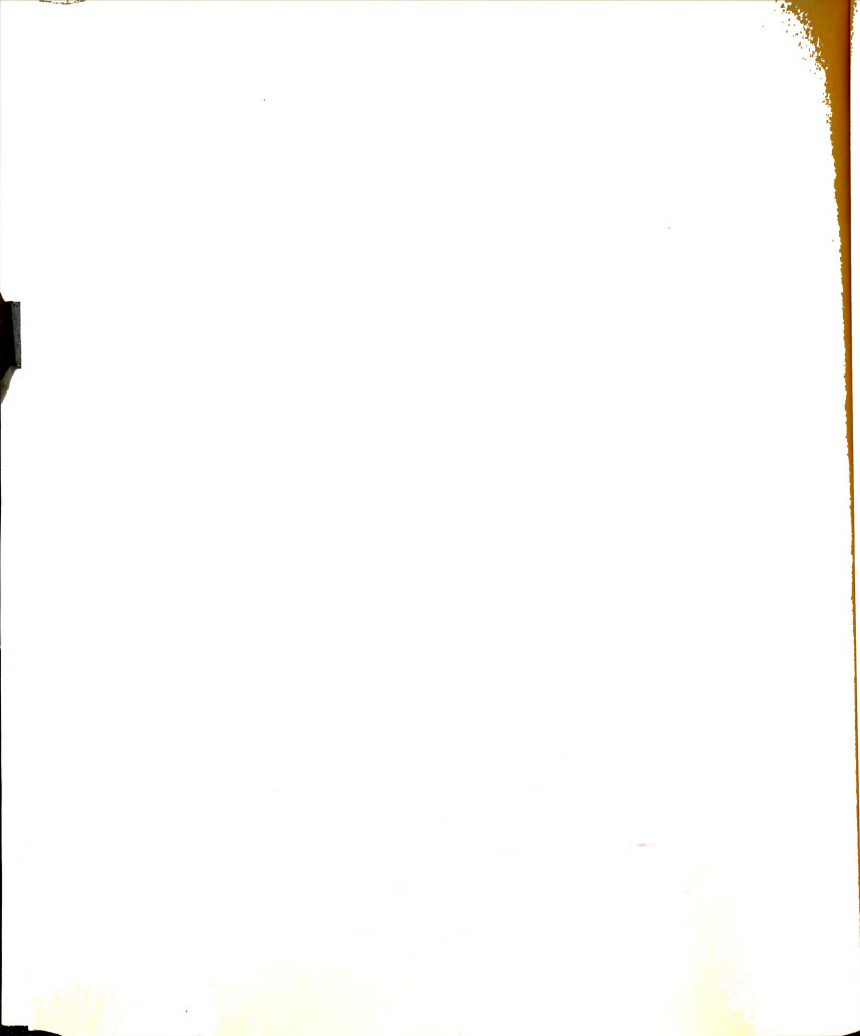
Congress upheld the contempt citations, and although eventually the seventeen members of the executive board appealed their case all the way to the Supreme Court, the conviction stood. The fact that by this time the "iron curtain" had descended over most of Eastern Europe had undoubtedly convinced many Americans that the great post-war threat to our national security would come from the left.

The final 1946 hearing came on November 22 when Louis Budenz testified on the "conspiracy to establish a Soviet dictatorship throughout the world."⁴⁴ Budenz was a fascinating individual who for ten years had been a member of the Communist party, had resigned, joined the Catholic church, and had ended up with a professorship in economics at Notre Dame and star billing before the committee. Budenz represented the most sympathetic of witnesses--an ex-

⁴² Ibid., 10.

⁴³ Ibid., 105.

⁴⁴ Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States: Louis F. Budenz, Nov. 22, 1946.



Communist who had seen the light and was willing to do penance with a full confession. Budenz stressed that the American Communists were entirely subservient to Moscow, and, with the encouragement of Thomas, he insisted that every Communist in the United States was a member of the Russian fifth column.⁴⁵

This information was especially gratifying to the committee, and it would often be cited in the following years in the committee's successful campaign to introduce legislation to outlaw the Communist party. Most of his fifty pages of testimony were taken up with his further remarks on the great Red conspiracy, and again great latitude was given the witness with little cross-examination of his statements.

Thomas and the Critics, 1946

Though not many formal hearings were held in the first two years of the permanent committee, and even less accomplished, Thomas and the committee continued to make news. For the most part, the Congressman's exposure resulted from his ready willingness to defend the committee from its detractors. And it became increasingly clear that he considered criticism of the committee tantamount to un-American activity.

In February Thomas rose to the challenge of a Professor Clyde Miller of Columbia Teachers College. In an

⁴⁵Ibid., 24.



affidavit included in a resolution critical of the committee by the Greater New York Federation of Churches, Miller stated that one of the committee's investigators, a certain Mr. Nicklau, accompanied by committee chief counsel, Ernie Adamson, had informed him that he should tell "his Jewish friends that the Jews in Germany stuck their necks out too far and Hitler took care of them and that the same thing will happen here unless they watch their steps."⁴⁶ Thomas replied that Mr. Nicklau had not been employed by the committee for the last six months and that Adamson denied everything.⁴⁷

In view of his unsavory reputation, Adamson's denial did not mean much. In the same month Representative John M. Coffee of Washington testified that Adamson had told a group of veterans that the word "democratic" did not appear in the Constitution and that this country was not a democracy.⁴⁸ Adamson had also written a letter to Drew Pearson informing him that the committee might want to investigate his use of the word "democracy."⁴⁹ Interestingly enough, Thomas later informed me that at this time Adamson was being used by the Russians, albeit unwittingly. It seemed that Adamson had refused to fire one of his secretaries with whom he was having an affair even after he was informed that she was also spending a great deal of

⁴⁶The Record, Feb. 20, 1946.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸CR: 79-2, Apr. 16, 1946, 3769.

⁴⁹Carr, 262.



time with the Russian naval attaché in Washington.⁵⁰

Thomas, however, attested to Miller's questionable background with the statement that he had found "twenty-seven references to him in the files of the old Dies committee."⁵¹ He also included a list of subversive organizations in the Appendix of the Congressional Record to which Miller allegedly belonged.⁵² But Thomas seemed to be straining as his final bit of evidence consisted of the fact that Miller had signed an open letter to President Roosevelt defending the right of the Communist party to use the ballot.⁵³

A few weeks later, when Thomas was defending the committee in Congress, he was joined by fellow committee member, John Rankin. It was time for committee appropriations and, as was usually the case, a heated debate resulted.⁵⁴ Leading the criticism was Adolph Sabath, an old enemy of the committee who had once labeled it the "Un-American Committee."⁵⁵ But Rankin warned Sabath and the rest of the house that the work of the committee was "going to be an issue in every Congressional district in the United States this year in the primaries and in the

⁵⁰ Personal Interview.

⁵¹ The Record, Feb. 20, 1946.

⁵² CR: 79-2, Appendix, Feb. 19, 1946, 838.

⁵³ The Record, Feb. 20, 1946.

⁵⁴ CR: 79-2, Feb. 27, 1946, 1724-1733.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 1729.



general elections."⁵⁶

A month later Karl Mundt, in support of his committee colleagues, called for the members of Congress in an election year "to stand up and be counted on this issue of whether they believe the American way of life should be defamed or defended."⁵⁷ And there was little doubt what kind of a label Thomas, Rankin, and Mundt would give to those Congressmen who might question their definition of the "American way."

In April, Thomas gave another example of his defense tactics. The New Jersey Congressman was holding a one-man subcommittee hearing into the subversive character of the National Federation of Constitutional Liberties and its chairman, George Marshall. Marshall had publicly described John Rankin as "bigoted, fascist-minded, race-baiting, and poll taxing." In addition, he had criticized Thomas for his refusal to admit into evidence a statement explaining why the NFCL had reprinted a U.S. Army orientation course on native fascism.⁵⁸ Again Thomas conveniently ignored the criticism to score the critic as he labeled the NFCL "a Communist-front organization."⁵⁹

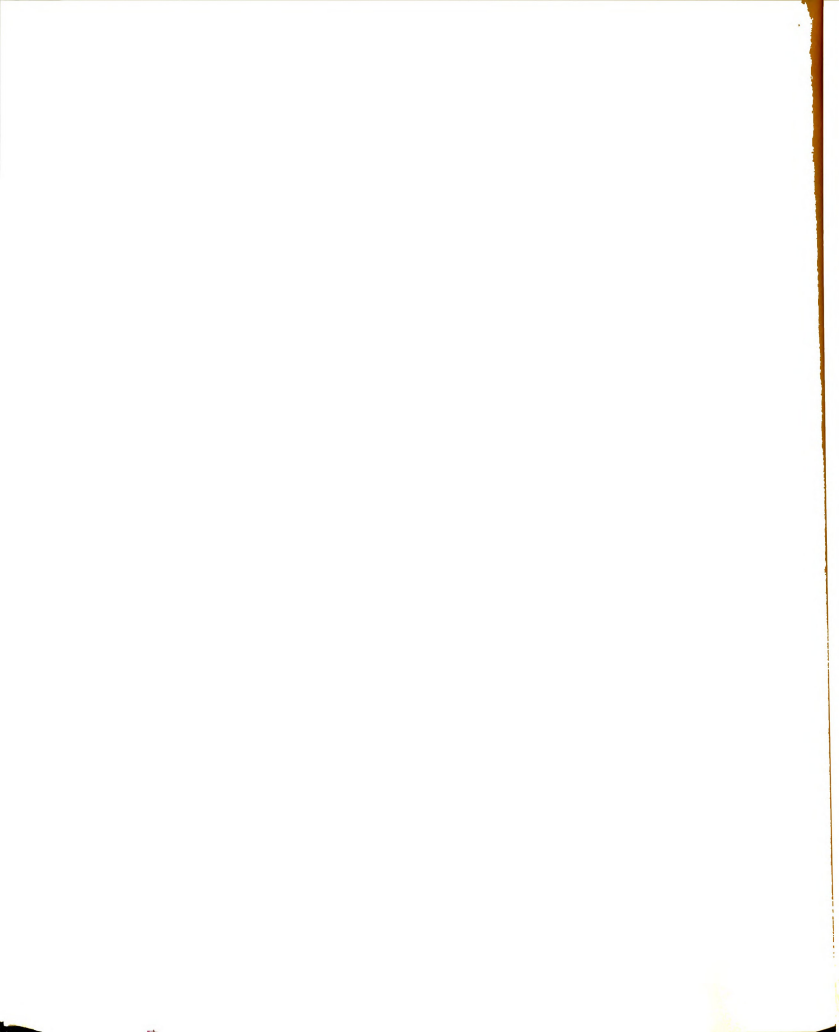
It was also during these one-man hearings in New York that Thomas quizzed several representatives of an advertising agency which had run an advertisement in the New

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ CR: 79-2, Mar. 28, 1946, 2747.

⁵⁸ The Record, Apr. 9, 1946.

⁵⁹ Ibid.



York Times urging the House of Representatives to abolish the Committee on Un-American Activities.⁶⁰ The advertisement had been sponsored by the Citizens United to Abolish the Wood-Rankin Committee, but Thomas called forth Joseph Gannon and Stanley Moss as representatives of the Moss and Arnold Company which had drawn up the advertisement. The implication was obvious--the company that would draw up such a document was just as suspect of un-American activities as the organization that sponsored it. Moss was well aware of this:

If this hearing sets a precedent, it will be a sad day for advertising agencies and publishers, who will find that censorship has been clamped down on the American press.⁶¹

If the House Committee on Un-American Activities had not been notably successful in uncovering subversive activities in its first two years as a standing committee, it had certainly tried to intimidate its critics. More alarming was the fact that this was often done by individual members acting outside the committee as a whole. To Thomas and Rankin any criticism of the committee seemed a personal affront, and they answered by questioning the very integrity and patriotism of the critic. For a Congressman this could mean political suicide, for a private citizen or organization, economic disaster and social exclusion.

⁶⁰ Times, Mar. 14, 1946.

⁶¹ Ibid., Apr. 9, 1946.



CHAPTER VII

CHAIRMAN THOMAS AND THE "NEW" COMMITTEE

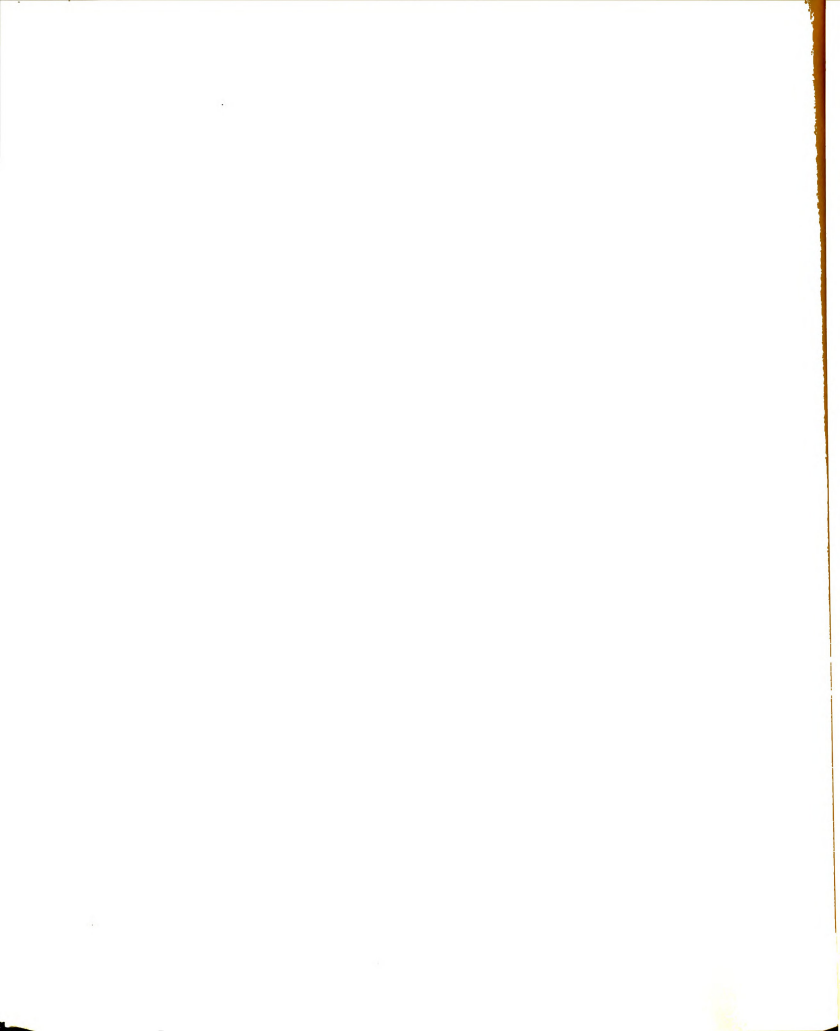
In its first two years of existence, the permanent committee had showed little increase in its public activity over that of the wartime Dies committee. But the appointment of J. Parnell Thomas to the chairmanship was to change all that.

The Republican victory in the 1946 Congressional election resulted in a major change in the organization and leadership of the House Un-American Activities Committee. Republican representation was increased from three to five, administrative personnel was changed, the committee files were streamlined, and Thomas, as the ranking Republican on the committee, inherited the chairmanship.

Thomas had long insisted that greater efficiency was needed in government, and now he proposed to run his committee as a business with himself serving as the "Chairman of the Board."¹ In addition, he promised that there would be no publicity leaks and no speeches from the committee floor--the committee would concern itself only with the legitimate exposure of un-American activity.²

¹Personal Interview.

²Times, Dec. 28, 1946.



The key to the reorganization was Robert E. Stripling who replaced the incompetent Adamson as chief counsel. Before being drafted, Stripling had been the committee's ace investigator under Martin Dies, and his talents were well known to Thomas.³ The new chairman placed all employees under his jurisdiction. In addition, Stripling did much of the planning for the proposed investigations and directed the actual cross-examination of the witnesses.

The three new Republicans on the committee (John McDowell, Pa.; Richard Nixon, Calif.; Richard Vail, Ill.) were destined to play an active role on the Thomas committee. McDowell and Vail usually gave their enthusiastic support to any committee project, and Nixon was instrumental in planning and carrying out the Alger Hiss affair. However, Nixon's addition to the committee had its ironies. he had won his House seat from former liberal committee member Jerry Voorhis in a controversial campaign in which he had made repeated reference to allegedly subversive groups which were supporting Voorhis; then he had been handpicked by Thomas for his place on the committee; yet Thomas later informed the author that Nixon was not one of the better members on the committee--he too often allowed politics

³Shortly after the fall election Drew Pearson wrote that "Stripling, three times deferred, has been constantly seen with dark glasses going through the old committee files for possible victims;" Post, Nov. 19, 1946. Evidently Thomas was urging Stripling to get an early start as he was not officially appointed to the committee until the new session of Congress convened the following January.

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry, no matter how small, should be recorded to ensure the integrity of the financial statements. This includes not only sales and purchases but also expenses, income, and any other financial activity.

The second part of the document provides a detailed breakdown of the accounting process. It starts with the identification of the accounting cycle, which consists of eight distinct steps: identifying the accounting cycle, analyzing and journalizing the transactions, posting to the ledger, determining debits and credits, preparing a trial balance, adjusting the accounts, preparing financial statements, and closing the books.

The third part of the document focuses on the preparation of financial statements. It explains how the trial balance is used to verify the accuracy of the ledger and how it leads to the preparation of the income statement, balance sheet, and statement of cash flows. It also discusses the importance of comparing these statements with the previous period to identify trends and anomalies.

The fourth part of the document discusses the role of the accountant in the business. It highlights the need for the accountant to provide accurate and timely information to management and other stakeholders. This involves not only recording transactions but also analyzing the data to provide insights into the company's financial performance and to identify areas for improvement.

The fifth part of the document discusses the importance of ethical behavior in accounting. It emphasizes that accountants have a duty to act in the best interests of the public and to maintain the highest standards of integrity and honesty. This includes being objective, fair, and transparent in all of their actions.

The sixth part of the document discusses the role of the accountant in the tax system. It explains how accountants are responsible for ensuring that their clients comply with all applicable tax laws and regulations. This involves calculating the correct amount of taxes to be paid and preparing the necessary tax returns.

The seventh part of the document discusses the role of the accountant in the financial markets. It explains how accountants provide the data and analysis that are used by investors and other market participants to make informed decisions. This involves providing accurate and timely information about the company's financial performance and risk profile.

The eighth part of the document discusses the role of the accountant in the legal system. It explains how accountants are often called upon to provide evidence in court cases involving financial disputes. This involves providing accurate and detailed records of all transactions and activities.

The ninth part of the document discusses the role of the accountant in the public sector. It explains how accountants are responsible for ensuring that public funds are used efficiently and effectively. This involves providing accurate and timely information about the government's financial performance and to identify areas for improvement.

The tenth part of the document discusses the role of the accountant in the global economy. It explains how accountants provide the data and analysis that are used by international investors and other market participants to make informed decisions. This involves providing accurate and timely information about the company's financial performance and risk profile.

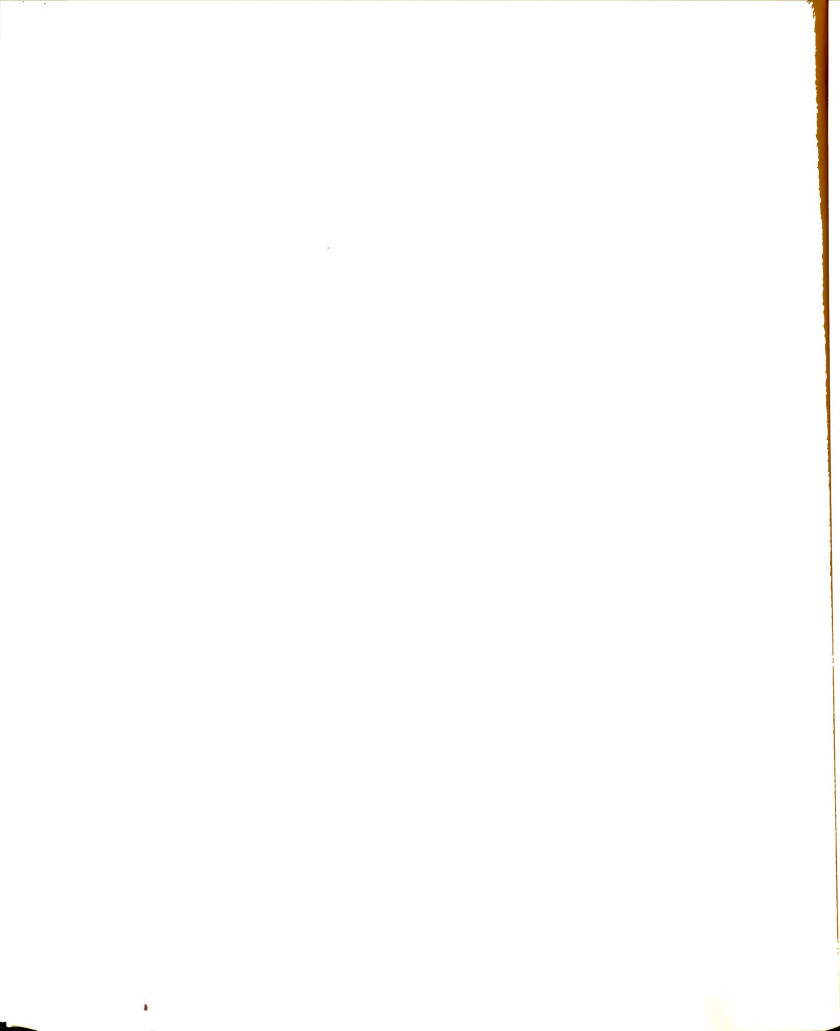
to interfere with his committee work.⁴

Chairman Thomas was also responsible for a committee library being set up with a good filing system, and an area was established for other agents of the government to look over the committee's records. Thomas was particularly proud of this and often referred to the numerous government agencies, including the FBI, which used the committee's files.

Even before he was formally appointed chairman, Thomas explained that the committee's job for the next two years would be to rout out the Communists through "exposure, education and prosecution" and to eliminate the "favorable conditions" under which they had flourished. In addition, he had an eight-point plan which would be used to implement his program. Among other things, the committee would "expose and ferret out" Communists in the Federal Government and in some of our "most vital" labor unions; "institute a counter-educational program" against subversive propaganda; and investigate atom bomb security, Communists in Hollywood, and un-American activity in education.⁵ Whatever the shortcomings of the committee during the Eightieth Congress, it did attempt to cover most of the ground set down in the Thomas program.

⁴ Personal Interview. It was also Thomas who told the author that he had "handpicked" Nixon, but, unfortunately, he did not go into details on his motivation.

⁵ Times, Nov. 27, 1946.



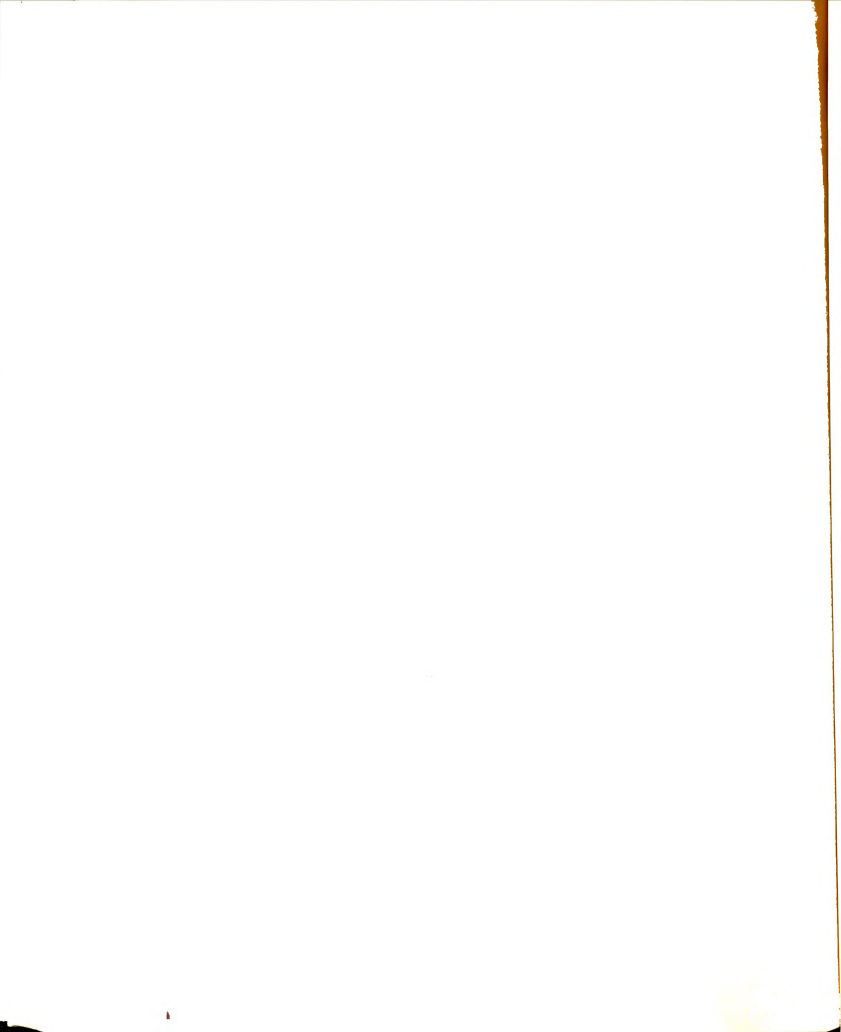
Eisler and Josephson Hearings, 1947

Under J. Parnell Thomas, the House Committee on Un-American Activities held more public hearings than it had at any time since the early years of the Dies committee. During 1947 the committee conducted seven sets of hearings and published four reports. The hearings covered a wide area, but all had the search for subversive Communist activity as their central purpose. By 1947 relations between the Soviet Union and the United States had deteriorated to a point that made the country ready for a wholesale investigation of the threat of domestic communism. No longer did the committee have to make any pretense of investigating un-American activities on the Right, and the feeble 1946 questioning of Gerald L. K. Smith marked the last of such ventures during the Thomas years.

Four of the 1947 hearings concerned prominent personalities in the Communist movement: Gerhart Eisler, Leon Josephson, Eugene Dennis, and Hanns Eisler. The other three dealt with legislative proposals to curb the Communist party, communism in labor unions, and communism in the motion picture industry. It would mark one of the committee's busiest years.

The first witness to face the Thomas committee was Gerhart Eisler, alleged representative of the Communist International.⁶ This hearing was the result of the Louis

⁶Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States (Gerhart Eisler), Feb. 6, 1947.



Budenz testimony of the previous November in which Budenz had insisted that Eisler had for many years been the real boss of the Communist party in the United States. Eisler proved a most uncooperative witness. He refused to be sworn in without first reading a prepared statement and was quickly cited for contempt.⁷ But the committee was prepared for the unwilling Eisler, and other witnesses were called to the stand to testify about his activities. William O. Nowell, an ex-Communist, the ubiquitous Louis Budenz, and Ruth Fischer, the sister of Eisler, all testified in considerable detail concerning Eisler's important role in the international Communist movement and his false passport procedures.

The committee also employed a new technique which it was effectively to repeat in the Hollywood hearings. When a witness proved unwilling to testify, the committee would replace him with one of its own investigators who in turn would disclose what information the committee had on the witness in question. In this way the committee could feature whatever evidence it wished. In the case of Eisler it proved effective as two weeks later the chairman's resolution for contempt proceedings passed the House by a 370 to 1 vote.⁸

Thomas was particularly satisfied with the way the Eisler case had been handled. He pointed out that it was

⁷ Ibid., 3.

⁸ CR: 80-1, Feb. 18, 1947, 1137.

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry should be supported by a valid receipt or invoice. This not only helps in tracking expenses but also ensures compliance with tax regulations.

In the second section, the author provides a detailed breakdown of the company's revenue streams. This includes sales from various product lines and services. The data shows a steady increase in revenue over the past year, which is attributed to improved marketing strategies and operational efficiency.

The third section focuses on the company's financial health. It highlights the strong cash flow and the ability to meet all financial obligations. The author notes that the company's debt-to-equity ratio remains low, indicating a solid financial foundation.

Finally, the document concludes with a summary of the company's overall performance. It expresses confidence in the company's future prospects and the commitment to continued growth and innovation.

a good example of how he planned to conduct investigations, as "even the committee members did not know what was planned until the eve of the hearing."⁹ Thomas was to take a singular pride in running things his own way--even if this meant excluding other members of the committee on important issues until he saw fit to inform them. Stripling later explained his own role in the Eisler case, but he did not dispute the chairman's allegation that the other members had been kept in the dark:

I prepared the difficult Gerhart Eisler case without informing a single member beyond Chairman Thomas until the night before the witness was called.¹⁰

Thomas and the man whom he later described as "my genius" would work closely together on future investigations--especially those dealing with atomic energy.¹¹

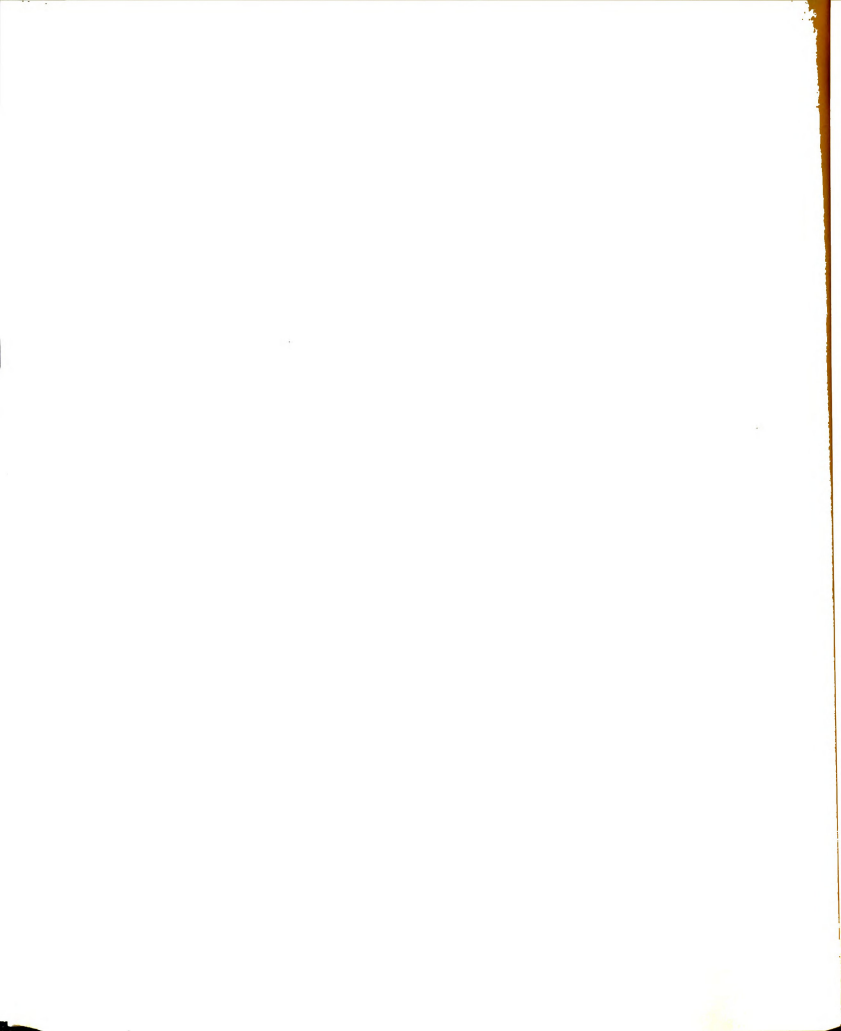
The Leon Josephson hearings in March were conducted in much the same way as the Eisler hearing the month before.¹² Josephson, also reported to be a high-ranking Communist official, challenged the committee on the grounds that it was unconstitutional. This argument had been tried before, and the committee ignored it to cite Josephson for contempt. Again a committee investigator was put on the stand to finish the case against the accused, and Congress followed

⁹The Record, Feb. 20, 1947.

¹⁰Stripling, Red Plot, 24.

¹¹Personal Interview.

¹²Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States (Leon Josephson), Mar. 5 & 21, 1947.



with its approval of the chairman's contempt resolution.¹³

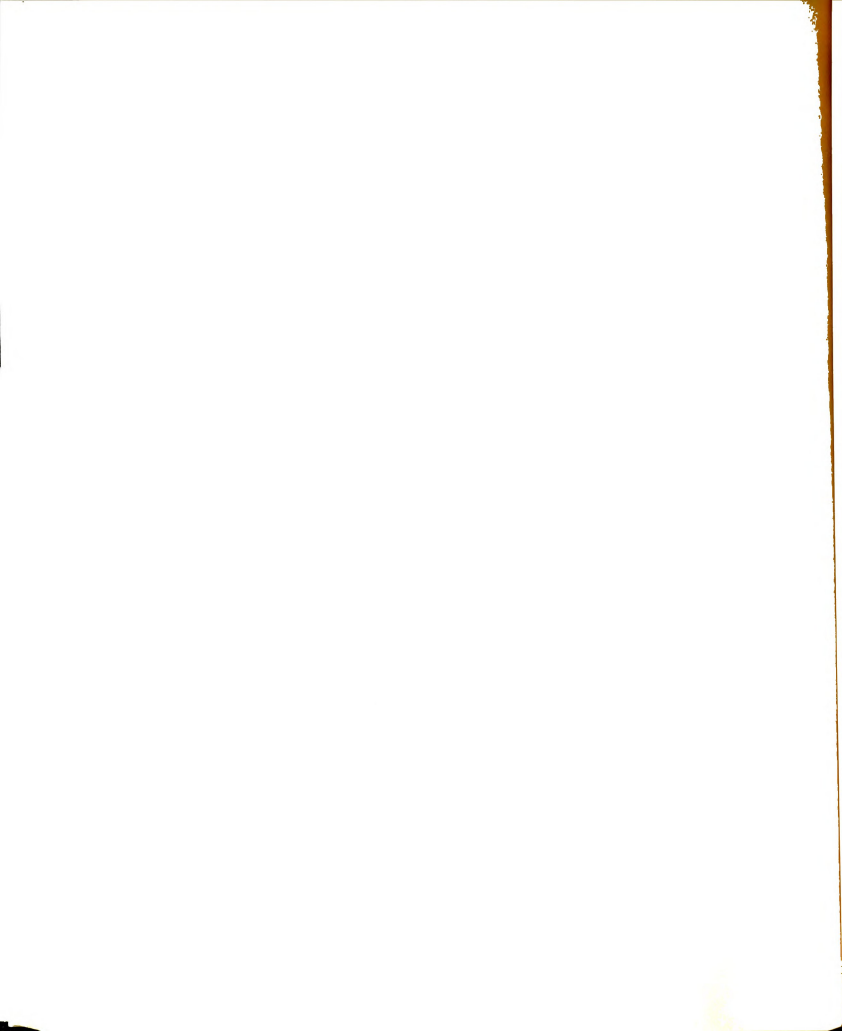
These early 1947 hearings did appear to be much better organized than the initial hearings of the permanent committee. Thomas allowed Stripling to do the questioning, and he was obviously better prepared than his predecessor, Adamson. Thomas too seemed to take his new responsibilities as "Chairman of the Board" more seriously, even to the extent of squashing the repeated interruptions of the obstreperous Rankin. But how long could this last? How long could the committee and its chairman avoid their past history of headline hunting and their general attack on those standing on the other side of the political fence?

Thomas did not long remain in his pose of the quiet, judicious coordinator of committee activity. In a heated House debate over the proposed contempt resolution of Josephson, he demanded vigorous action from the Department of Justice, and he asked if the Government of the United States was to be "cowed and insulted by this Communist conspiracy."¹⁴ Without acknowledging his source, he claimed that President Truman had asked Congress for \$50,000,000 "to get the Communists out of government." This forced the Congressman into the rather ironic corner of having to insist that investigations were not the answer:

The American people rightfully have a deep sense of fear about communism. Apparently all that the President and the Attorney General see in it is a chance for more

¹³CR: 80-1, Apr. 22, 1947, 3813.

¹⁴Ibid., 3806.



spending through more investigations, which become the burial ground for action.¹⁵

Perhaps he was reflecting his own committee's failure to initiate legislation that might have effectively curbed the Communist threat, but more likely he felt apprehensive about possible competition in the hunt for subversives.

Thomas had also commanded headlines outside his committee work with his claims of Russian patent stealings. It was a fact that most of our patents were a matter of public record, with copies of each available for twenty-five cents. Thomas claimed that the Russians had obtained practically every industrial, chemical, and military patent that had been registered.¹⁶ The chief culprit was an old nemesis of his, the former Secretary of Commerce, Henry Wallace. He demanded that Wallace "answer to the proper committee of this House as to why such a policy was permitted."¹⁷ It made little difference to him that W.W. Cochran, Solicitor of the Patent Office, had informed him and other worried individuals that all atomic and national defense inventions were kept separately and were not open to the public.¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibid., 3807.

¹⁶ Ibid., Mar. 4, 1947, 1647.

¹⁷ Times, Mar. 5, 1947; see also The Record, Mar. 20, 1947.

¹⁸ Times, Mar. 5, 1947.

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry, no matter how small, should be recorded to ensure the integrity of the financial statements. This includes not only sales and purchases but also expenses and income. The document provides a detailed list of items that should be tracked, such as inventory levels, accounts receivable, and accounts payable. It also outlines the procedures for reconciling these accounts and identifying any discrepancies.

The second part of the document focuses on the classification of expenses. It explains how to distinguish between capital expenditures and operating expenses, and how to allocate costs to different departments or projects. This section includes a table with columns for the type of expense, the department, and the amount. The document also discusses the importance of using the correct accounting codes to ensure that expenses are properly categorized and reported.

The third part of the document addresses the issue of asset management. It describes how to track the acquisition, depreciation, and disposal of fixed assets. This includes a detailed explanation of the straight-line depreciation method and how to calculate the book value of an asset over its useful life. The document also provides a sample depreciation schedule and discusses the importance of regular physical inventory counts to verify the accuracy of the accounting records.

The final part of the document covers the preparation of financial statements. It explains how to use the accounting records to generate the income statement, balance sheet, and cash flow statement. It provides a step-by-step guide to the calculation of each component and includes a sample set of financial statements. The document also discusses the importance of reviewing these statements for errors and ensuring that they accurately reflect the company's financial performance.

Outlawing Communists

When the committee resumed public hearings in late March, it was to hear testimony on two proposed pieces of legislation aimed at either curbing or outlawing the Communist party in the United States. House Resolutions 1884 and 2122 were to inspire a great deal of controversy; nevertheless, when the hearings opened Chairman Thomas insisted that the committee intended "to hear both sides of this question thoroughly."¹⁹

The initial witnesses left little doubt which side of the question the committee intended to hear first. Colonel John Thomas Taylor, Director of the National Legislative Committee of the American Legion, opened the testimony with a three-page statement which, among other things, brought out his friendly ties with Committeeman Rankin.²⁰ The Mississippi Democrat was addressed as "John" and praised for his work against the Communists and for his support of the American Legion. Rankin was effusive in his thanks, and Thomas had to interrupt the mutual back-patting to move things along.²¹

Taylor was followed by two other officers of the

¹⁹ Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States: Hearings on H. Res. 1884 and H. Res. 2122: Bills to Curb or Outlaw the Communist Party of the United States, Mar. 24-28, 1947, 1.

²⁰ Ibid., Mar. 24, 1947, 3.

²¹ Ibid., 6.

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry, no matter how small, should be recorded to ensure the integrity of the financial statements. This includes not only sales and purchases but also expenses and income. The document also highlights the need for regular reconciliation of accounts to identify any discrepancies early on.

In addition, the document provides a detailed breakdown of the accounting cycle, which consists of eight steps. These steps range from identifying the accounting entity to preparing financial statements. Each step is explained in detail, with examples provided to illustrate the process. The document also includes a list of common accounting errors and how to avoid them, as well as a glossary of key terms.

Overall, the document serves as a comprehensive guide for anyone looking to improve their accounting practices. It covers all the essential aspects of accounting, from basic principles to advanced techniques. By following the guidelines provided, users can ensure that their financial records are accurate and up-to-date, which is crucial for making informed business decisions.

American Legion, James F. O'Neil and James F. Green.²² Like Taylor they supported the proposed legislation and emphasized the extensive threat of domestic communism. The committee would hear several more representatives of other patriotic organizations, but it was never clarified why these individuals should have been considered experts on communism, unless it was the fact that all were strongly anti-Communist.

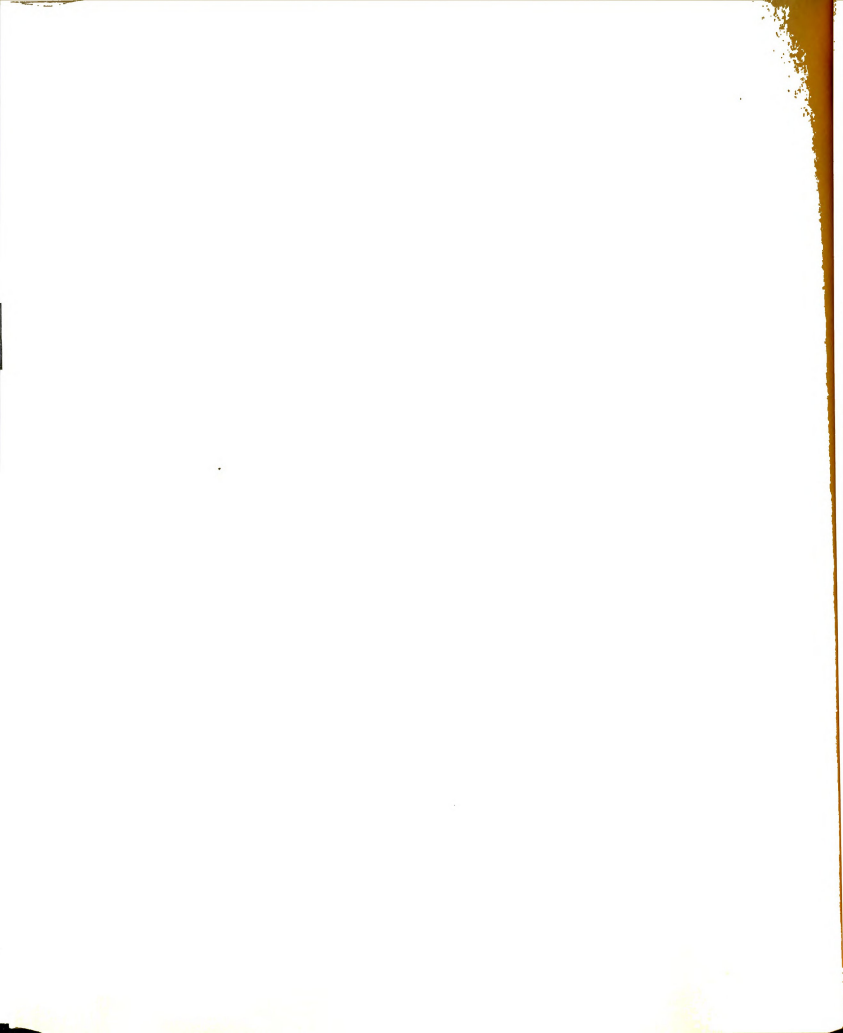
That afternoon William C. Bullitt, former ambassador to the Soviet Union, was heard.²³ Bullitt proved to be a very well-informed witness who, though an admirer of the committee's work, refused to be led through his testimony. He did agree with Thomas that the government and its agencies had not really understood the continued Russian threat during the war years, but he disagreed that it was time to outlaw the Communist party as that would only lead to martyrs.²⁴ When Rankin tried to get Bullitt's support for his contention that seventy-five percent of American Communists were Jews and that the Zionist movement was a Communist-front organization, Bullitt, with the chairman's support, quickly cut him off.²⁵

²² Ibid., 20-45.

²³ Ibid., Part I, Testimony of William C. Bullitt, Mar. 24, 1947, 1-31. Bullitt's testimony is under separate cover from the other hearings on H. Res. 1864 and H. Res. 2122.

²⁴ Ibid., 9.

²⁵ Ibid., 20-22.



On the second day the committee heard the president of the American Federation of Labor, William Green, vigorously oppose the proposed legislation.²⁶ Green claimed that such legislation would destroy our Constitutional guarantees of freedom of ideas and the spirit of the law in America. Green was, however, no friend of the Communists, and he called upon the committee to expose what the Communist movement really stood for.

Next to testify was Allen P. Solada, the National Executive Director of the American Veterans of World War II.²⁷ His support of Resolutions 1884 and 2122 was to be expected. Of more interest was the chairman's interruption to give the function of a veterans' organization:

The largest task of veterans' organizations and of individual veterans today and in the future will be to protect this country from within as well as from without. You have two jobs, two important jobs, aside from aiding one another. The first is to be ever vigilant, and the second, to carry on a program of education.²⁸

Throughout his public career the Thomas allegiance to the military had been evident. In the past he himself had been active in veterans' organizations, and in the future he would lead the fight for military control of atomic energy. But now he was entrusting our past heroes with the patriotic education of the country.

²⁶ Hearings on H. Res. 1884 and H. Res. 2122, Mar. 25, 1947, 48-76.

²⁷ Ibid., 77-82.

²⁸ Ibid., 81.

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry, no matter how small, should be recorded to ensure the integrity of the financial statements. This includes recording all sales, purchases, and expenses in a timely and accurate manner.

The second part of the document outlines the various methods used to collect and analyze financial data. It describes the process of gathering information from different sources, such as sales invoices, purchase orders, and bank statements. This data is then analyzed to identify trends, patterns, and areas for improvement.

The third part of the document focuses on the preparation of financial statements. It details the steps involved in calculating the total revenue, expenses, and net income for a given period. It also discusses the importance of presenting this information in a clear and concise manner, using appropriate accounting principles and standards.

The fourth part of the document addresses the role of the auditor in verifying the accuracy of the financial statements. It explains how auditors use various techniques, such as sampling and testing, to ensure that the records are free from errors and fraud. This process is essential for maintaining the trust and confidence of investors and other stakeholders.

The fifth part of the document discusses the impact of financial reporting on the overall performance of the organization. It highlights how accurate and timely financial information allows management to make informed decisions, identify areas for cost reduction, and improve operational efficiency. It also notes that transparent financial reporting is crucial for attracting investment and maintaining a strong reputation in the market.

In conclusion, the document emphasizes that effective financial management is the key to the long-term success of any business. By maintaining accurate records, analyzing data thoroughly, and preparing reliable financial statements, organizations can gain valuable insights into their financial health and make strategic decisions that drive growth and profitability.

Dr. Emerson Schmidt, Secretary of the United States Chamber of Commerce's Committee on Socialism and Communism, headed the witnesses as the committee went into its third day of hearings.²⁹ After the normal preliminary remarks praising the work of the committee, Schmidt submitted a 136-page document on the Communist movement in the United States. Such public exposure was perhaps edifying to the Chamber of Commerce, but it shed little new light on the workings of the American Communist movement. The report consisted of the usual accusations of Communists in the government and in the labor unions; however, strangely enough, the conclusions did not call for the outlawing of the Communist party in America, but emphasized the committee's role of continuing public exposure of such subversive elements.³⁰

Thomas had promised that all sides would be heard on the question of the proposed legislation, and the next witness was indeed in opposition to the resolutions and to the committee itself. Eugene Dennis, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of America, took the stand, but not for long.³¹ When Dennis refused to disclose his other names, he was quickly dismissed and cited for contempt. By his own intransigence Dennis lost an opportunity to explore the constitutional arguments against the proposed

²⁹ Ibid., Mar. 26, 1947, 83-236.

³⁰ Ibid., 234-235.

³¹ Ibid., 236-240.



laws; and the committee, with its quick dismissal, showed little real interest in discovering what Dennis might have disclosed about the activities of our domestic Communists.³²

The next witness restored things to their normal order. Jack B. Tenney, state senator of California and chairman of the state's own Committee on Un-American Activities, was an investigator in his own right. Tenney spent most of his time summarizing a 372-page report on communism which his committee had compiled.³³ The Tenney committee had found Reds everywhere in California and especially in Hollywood and in educational circles. Thomas would later cite the Tenney report in his preliminary investigations of the film industry, and he had only praise for Tenney's words:

Senator, you have made a very excellent statement. The Chair wants to not only commend you for the statement, but to commend your committee for the wonderful job they have done out in the State of California.³⁴

The high point of the five-day hearing on proposals 1884 and 2122 came on March 26 when J. Edgar Hoover appeared before the committee to testify.³⁵ Hoover had never been particularly friendly toward the old Dies committee--Martin

³²Contempt proceedings against Dennis passed the House 196 to 1; CR: 80-1, Apr. 22, 1947, 3820.

³³Hearings on H.Res. 1884 and H. Res. 2122, Mar. 26, 1947, 241-267.

³⁴Ibid., 249.

³⁵Ibid., Part II, Testimony of J. Edgar Hoover, 33-50. Hoover's testimony also appears under separate cover from the rest of the hearings on H. Res. 1884 and H. Res. 2122.



Dies had once labeled the FBI "a bunch of boy scouts"-- but this appearance marked the Director's apparent willingness to cooperate with the Thomas committee.³⁶

Hoover began his testimony with a rather generous appraisal of the respective roles of the FBI and the Committee on Un-American Activities: "The aims and responsibilities...are the same--the protection of the internal security of the Nation."³⁷ Showing a marvelous capacity for figures, and sounding surprisingly like the committee chairman himself, Hoover stated that there were 74,000 enrolled Communist party members in the United States and that for each of these there were ten others "ready, willing, and able to do the party's work...there is one Communist for every 1,814 persons in this country."³⁸

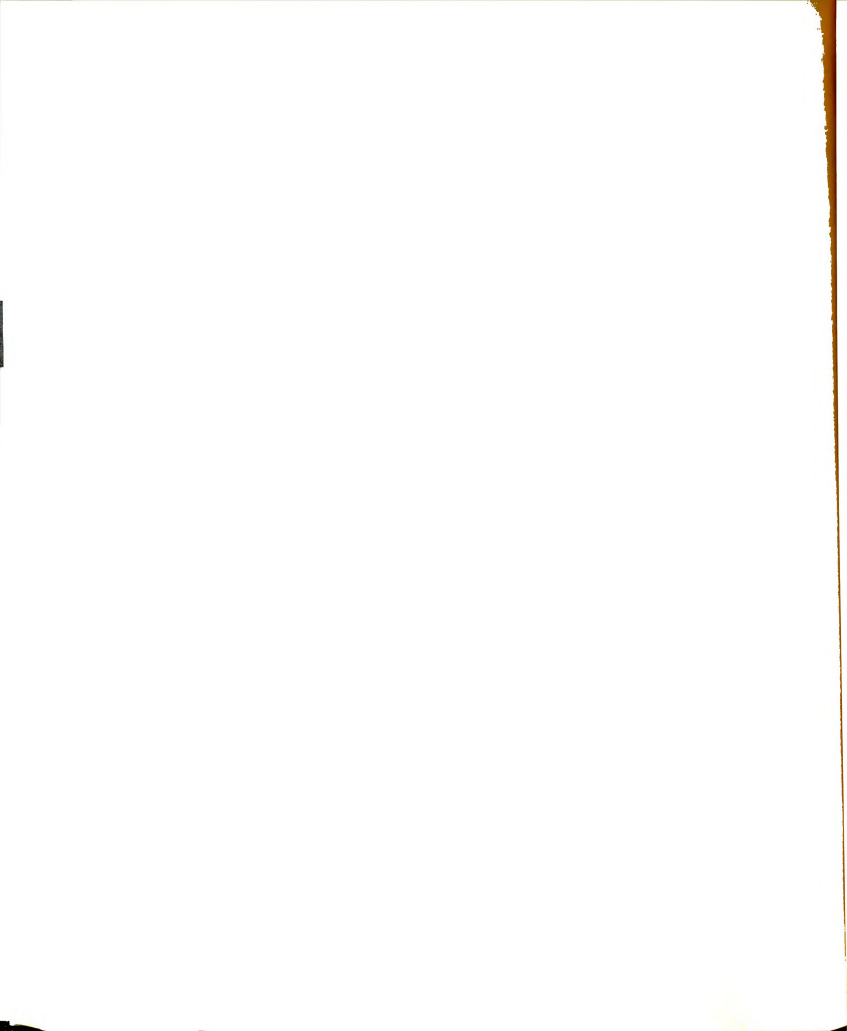
The Director struck another responsive note when he intimated that the administration had not always done everything possible by way of acting on FBI information concerning subversive Federal employees. He cited the example of one Doxey Wilkerson whom the government had kept on in the Office of Price Administration even after a report from the FBI told of witnesses testifying that Wilkerson was a Communist.³⁹ A short time later Hoover commended the com-

³⁶ Personal Interview. Thomas did not specifically state why Hoover changed his mind, but he did explain that his own use of former FBI agents did establish closer ties with the Bureau.

³⁷ Hoover testimony, 33.

³⁸ Ibid., 37-38.

³⁹ Ibid., 41.



mittee for cleaning out the Communists in government:

I think the committee has already done an excellent job of focusing attention on Communists in Government, and I think probably we are well on the way to rid ourselves of that virus in the Government.⁴⁰

When Nixon asked Hoover where the committee should next turn its attention, the Director recommended an investigation of the subversive influences in radio and Hollywood and on college campuses. Thomas responded warmly and prophetically to Hoover's comments: "We all hope that this will just be a continuation of an era of cooperation between the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the House Un-American Activities Committee." Hoover assured Thomas that this was also his earnest wish.⁴¹

Hoover seemed to feel that the real danger lay not so much with the admitted party members but with all the thousands of "fuzzy-minded" liberals who were witting or unwitting dupes of the Communists and their front organizations. Like Dies and Thomas, Hoover appeared convinced that most liberals were incapable of distinguishing between subversive and legitimate causes and, hence, the great need for the exposure techniques of the Committee on Un-American Activities.

After Mr. Hoover any further testimony would have seemed anti-climactic, but the committee continued its long parade of witnesses. Mrs. Julius Y. Talmadge, the President

⁴⁰ Ibid., 46.

⁴¹ Ibid.

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry, no matter how small, should be recorded to ensure the integrity of the financial statements. This includes not only sales and purchases but also expenses and income. The document also highlights the need for regular reconciliation of accounts to identify any discrepancies early on.

In addition, the document provides a detailed breakdown of the accounting cycle, which consists of eight steps: identifying the accounting cycle, journalizing, posting, determining debits and credits, preparing a trial balance, adjusting entries, preparing financial statements, and closing the books. Each step is explained in detail, with examples provided to illustrate the process.

The document also covers the preparation of financial statements, including the balance sheet, income statement, and statement of cash flows. It explains how these statements are derived from the accounting records and how they provide valuable information to stakeholders. The document also discusses the importance of internal controls and the role of the auditor in ensuring the accuracy of the financial statements.

Finally, the document concludes with a summary of the key points discussed and a reminder of the importance of accuracy and integrity in accounting. It encourages students to practice the concepts discussed and to seek help if they have any questions.

General of the Daughters of the American Revolution, was next to take the stand.⁴² She and her organization actively supported the passage of the proposed legislation. Of more interest was the chairman's interruption to the effect that the Communist party had "probably made more progress in the United States in the last five or six years than they ever have in any other period in the history of this country."⁴³ Thomas, however, did not offer any evidence in support of his statement; actually after twelve years of ever decreasing success at the polls, the party had not even run a presidential candidate in 1944.⁴⁴ In any case, if Thomas really meant what he said, he seemed to be admitting the failure of the FBI and his own committee to handle the situation. Of course, what he had in mind was the total exclusion of the party through House bills 1884 and 2122.

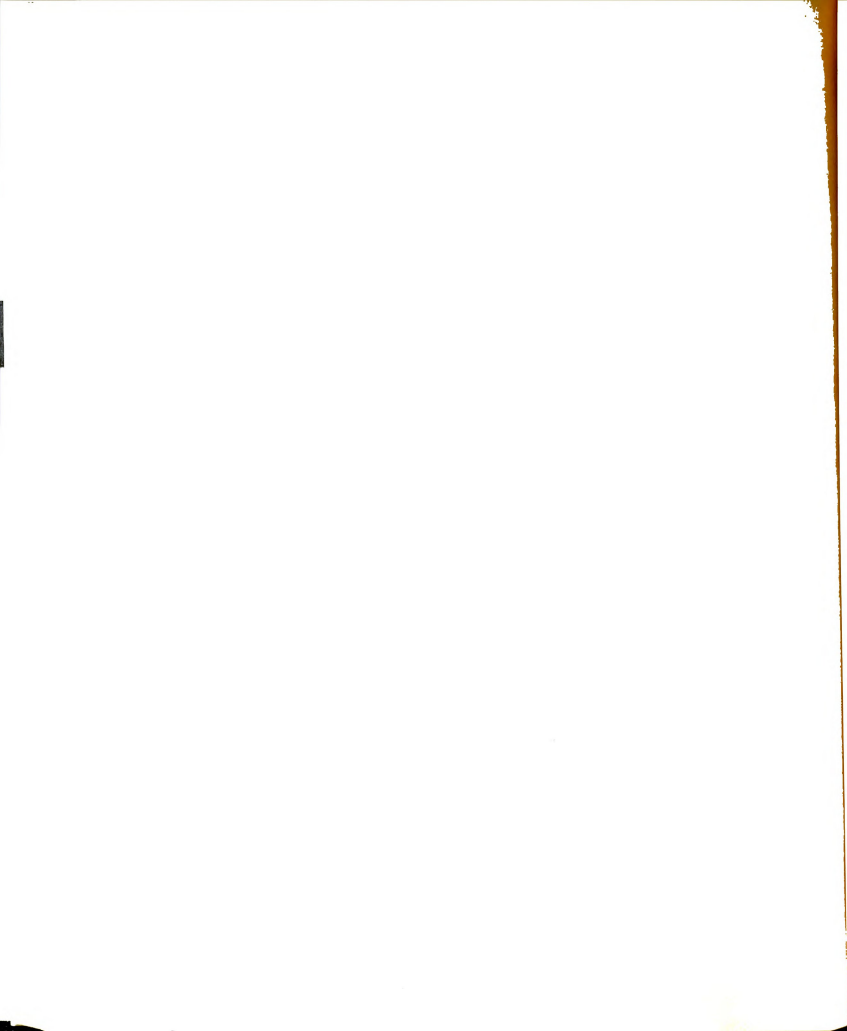
Mrs. Talmadge was followed by Louis E. Starr, the Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.⁴⁵ Starr's testimony differed little from the previous witnesses representing similar patriotic organizations, but a bit of humor was unintentionally interjected by Committeeman

⁴²Hearings on H. Res. 1884 and H. Res. 2122, Mar. 26, 1947, 267-272.

⁴³Ibid., 272.

⁴⁴In 1932 the Communist party had polled 102,785 presidential votes; in 1936, 80,159; in 1940, 46,251.

⁴⁵Hearings on H. Res. 1884 and H. Res. 2122, Mar. 27, 1947, 273-286.



John McDowell when he questioned the witness on his knowledge of Karl Marx:

Well, Commander, I wonder if you would agree with me that it should be said in this year 1947, for the record, that Karl Marx was what in modern times, these days, would be known as a 'bum,' a rather shiftless scoundrel, who would do anything but work, who lived all his life on somebody else, whose family also lived on somebody else?⁴⁶

The final day of these hearings was reserved for any of the forty-eight state governors who might wish to testify about the Communist movement in their respective states. One governor responded, Kim Sigler of Michigan.⁴⁷ Karl Mundt explained this singular lack of cooperation on the part of the state executives:

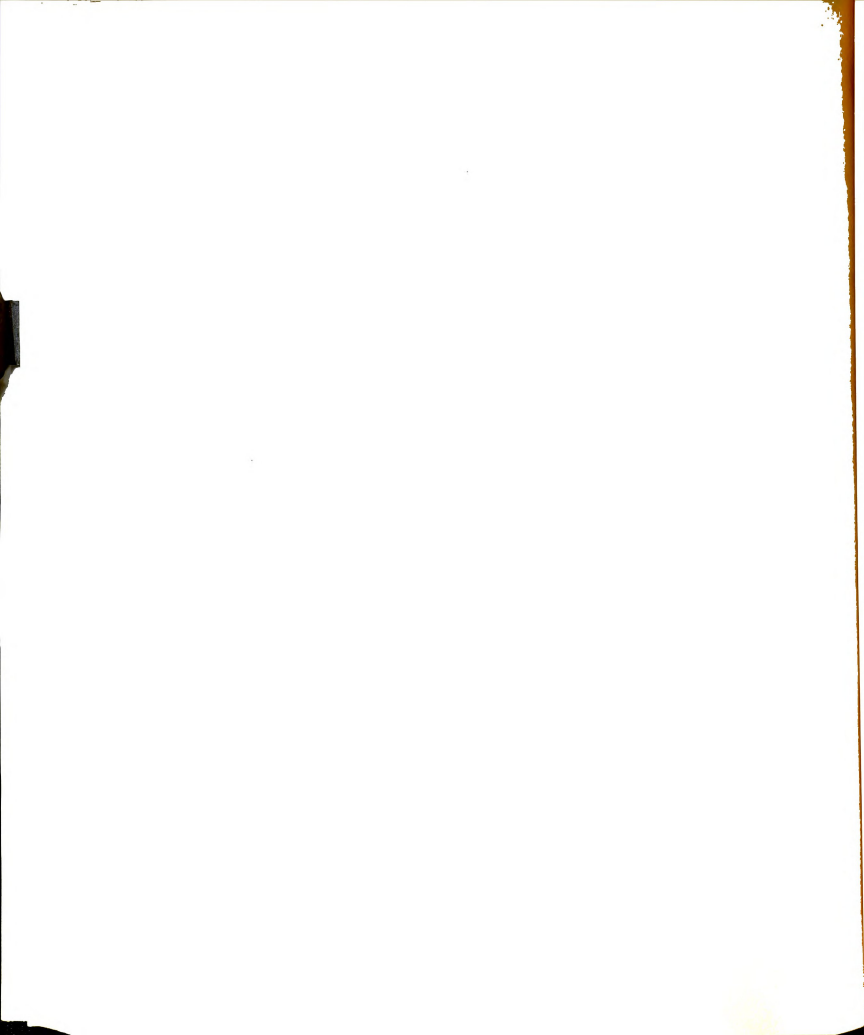
Of the forty-eight governors you are the only one to appear. That is because you are doing the best job of any of the forty-eight governors in eradicating communism from your commonwealth.⁴⁸

Accompanying Sigler was Donald S. Leonard, Commissioner of the Michigan State Police, who supported his governor's claims that there were "upwards of 15,000" Communists in Michigan. Sigler and Leonard emphasized that the Communists were especially active in the labor movement and had succeeded in establishing "absolute" control over some unions. Sigler had his list of "a hundred or more of the most notorious Communists in the labor movement in Michigan," but he protested turning it over to the committee until he

⁴⁶ Ibid., 282.

⁴⁷ Ibid., Mar. 28, 1947, 309-326.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 323.



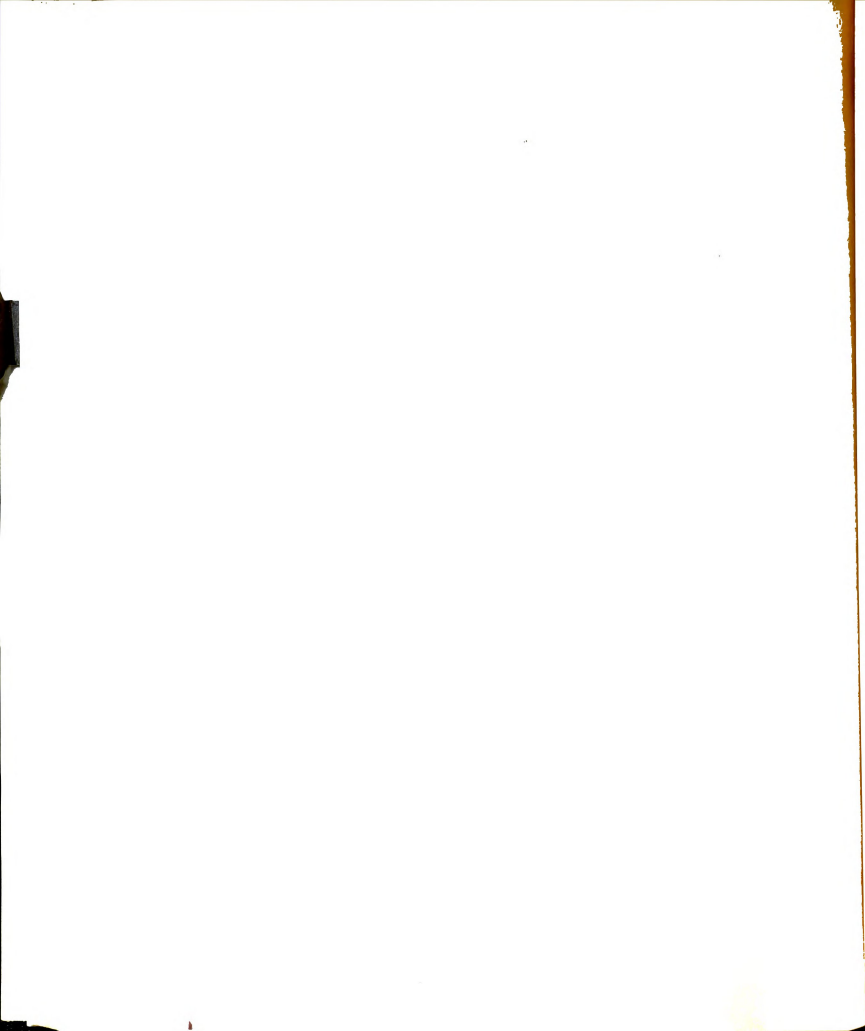
had the chance to check it for complete accuracy. He was willing, however, to list some nineteen Communist-front organizations in Michigan ranging from the Finnish Women's Organization to the Lithuanian Workers Literary Club.⁴⁹

Sigler also testified about the inroads the Communists had made into higher education in Michigan, but it was his testimony on the Communist infiltration in the labor movement that was of greatest interest to Thomas and his committee. Their next scheduled hearings were to be on this subject.

Communists and the Labor Movement, 1947

When Thomas laid out the eight-point program for his revamped committee, a proposed investigation of Communists in the American labor movement stood near the top. Thomas had been opposed to organized labor long before he decided that the movement was honeycombed with Communists. He had been greatly influenced by his mother's family, his long years on Wall Street, and by the conservative Seventh District of New Jersey itself, and from his earliest days as a state politician he had showed a deep distrust for organized labor. And as a member of the Committee on Un-American Activities he had often employed the same tactics against labor as he used against the administration--the bold accusation that there were many Reds in the movement--that the welfare of the entire country was threatened.

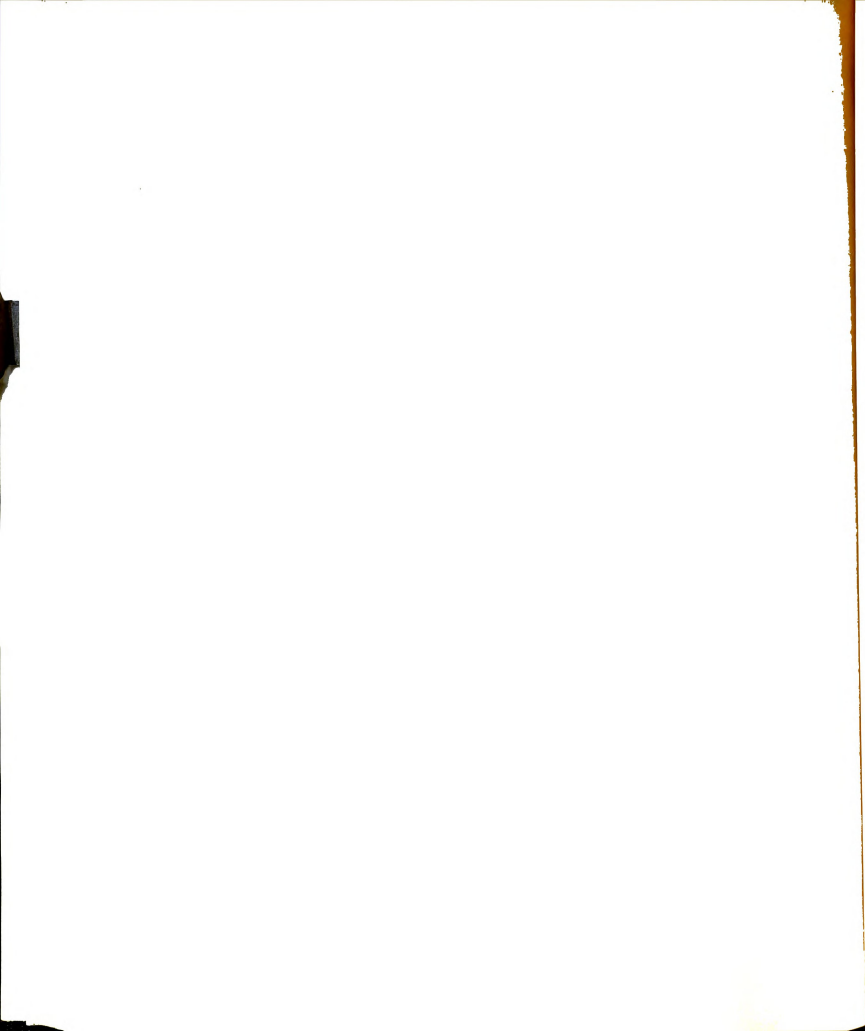
⁴⁹Ibid., 310-313.



Early in 1947 Thomas showed that he had no intention of taking a more circumspect view of labor now that he was chairman. The case in point concerned a United Mine Workers' grievance over portal-to-portal pay. On the floor of the House Thomas concluded that "it appears that the present legal controversy between industry and labor, which has been occasioned by portal-to-portal suits, has Communist inspiration."⁵⁰ He pointed the accusing finger at Ben Riskin, the man who had conceived the portal-to-portal pay claims, to charge that he had a long record of Communist affiliations. He cited the fact that ten years before Riskin had written an article in the New Order, the official paper of the International Workers' Order, an organization that had long been recognized by the chairman as one of the "outstanding Communist-front organizations in the United States."⁵¹ In addition, Riskin was a member of the American Peace Mobilization, another organization that had long been under the surveillance of the committee and Thomas. The implication was clear and not at all untypical. Here was a man who had purportedly moved in some questionable circles. Surely anything he proposed or backed could not be in the best interests of the country. Thomas had completely ignored the question of whether the miners had a legitimate grievance to focus his attention on the suspicious background of one

⁵⁰ CR: 80-1, Jan. 23, 1947, 538-539; see also the Tribune, Jan. 24, 1947.

⁵¹ Ibid.



of their leaders.

A great deal of testimony was heard in 1947 to support the contention of Thomas and the committee that many of our leading unions were controlled by the Communists, and the selection of the witnesses assured the committee that it would receive the kind of testimony it desired. Almost without exception those testifying were former union officials who had either resigned from their local unions or had been expelled, and who were now willing to expose the Communist influence in their former unions.

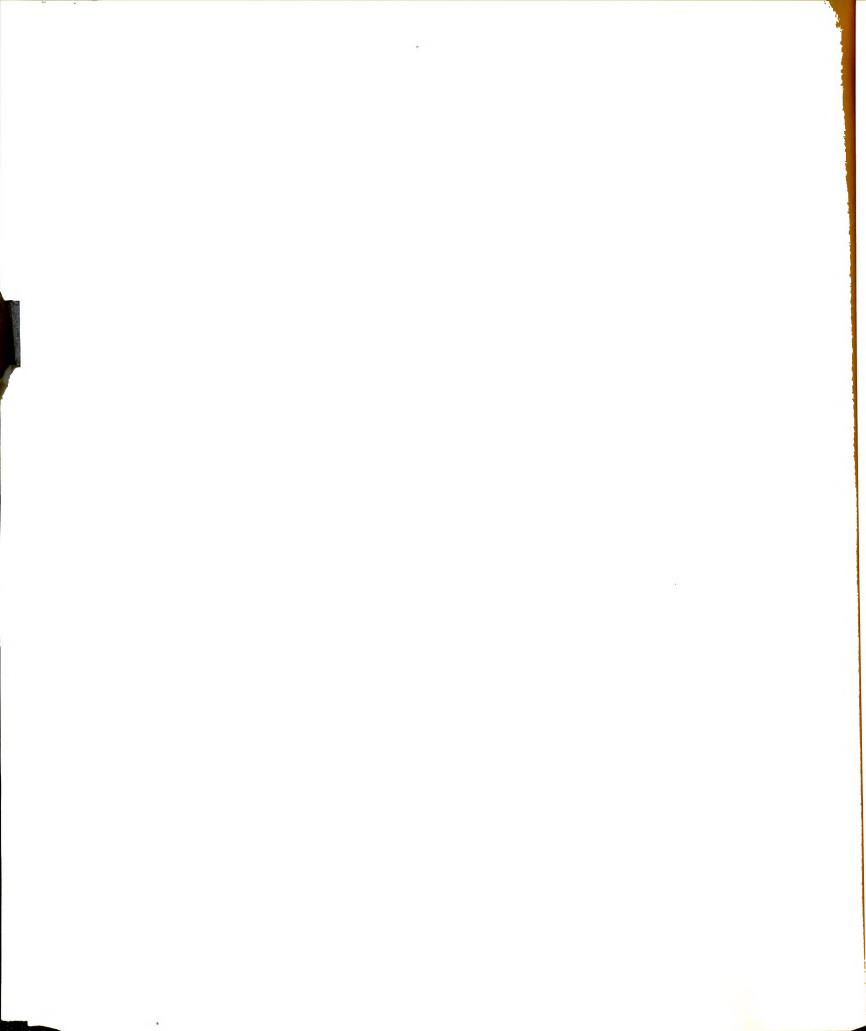
The first hearing took place on February 27, and it rather set the tone for those following in July.⁵² A strike of some ten months was then in progress at the Allis-Chalmers Manufacturing Company at West Allis, Wisconsin. Three ex-union officials were heard, all of whom made it quite clear that the strike was Communist inspired.⁵³ Their testimony was detailed and, at times, convincing; yet they were the only witnesses called.

In July another series of similar witnesses appeared before the committee in relation to a strike by the Winston-Salem local of the Food, Tobacco, and Agricultural Workers of the CIO.⁵⁴ These former officials also testified that their opposition to the Communists in their local had resulted

⁵² Hearings Regarding Communism in Labor Unions in the United States, Feb. 27 and July 23-25, 1947.

⁵³ Ibid., Feb. 27, 1947, 1-60.

⁵⁴ Ibid., July 23, 1947, 60-126.



in their own expulsion from the union. However, this time some of the alleged Communist leaders were subpoenaed. These individuals refused to cooperate, and their reticence before the committee did nothing to help their case. Thomas was especially interested to find that their lawyer, one Joseph Forer, had been employed as an attorney in the Office of Price Administration, the Rural Electrification Administration, and the National Labor Relations Board--all New Deal agencies.⁵⁵

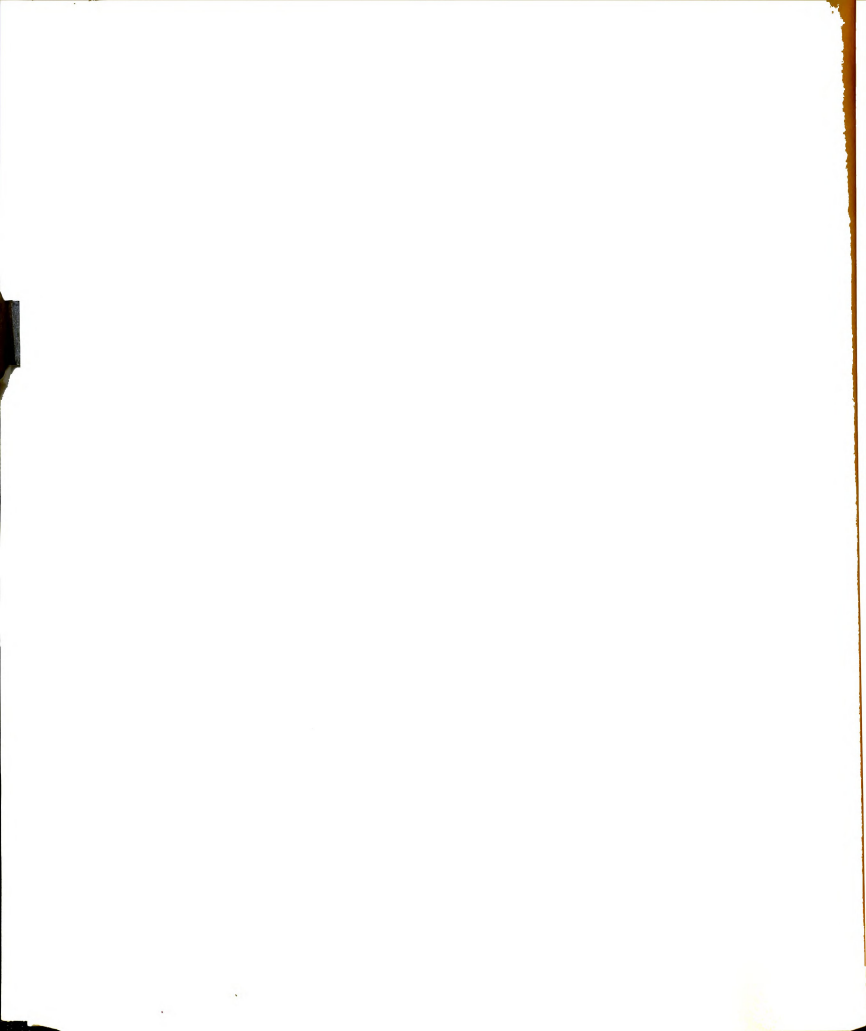
Again the issue of whether the local union had a legitimate reason for striking was ignored. Undoubtedly there were some Communists in the union, and perhaps they even controlled it, but as one of the hostile witnesses pointed out, they were striking for an increase in their forty-six cent-an-hour wage and not to overthrow the country.⁵⁶

Two more days of hearings were held. This time the local in question was a member of the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America, CIO.⁵⁷ Once again the only witnesses heard were those sympathetic to the committee's views; nevertheless, an interesting picture of Communist techniques in small local unions was given. This in itself was valuable, but only as far as it went. The promised disclosure of the Communist control over some of the most vital unions in American labor was not forthcoming.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 122-123.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 121.

⁵⁷ Ibid., July 24, 1947, 126-228.



Nor did the committee ever attempt to shed any light on the Thomas statement that "as a result of Communist influence in many of the unions, our whole economy has been retarded."⁵⁸ In addition, no reports were issued on the subject during the two years that Thomas chaired the committee. A few minor cases of obvious Communist interference had been cited, and there the committee rested its case. The public could draw its own conclusions.

These final hearings on labor corresponded to an article by Thomas in which he again took up his attack on the Federal Government. The article was entitled "How to Recognize the Un-American Individual and His Un-American Activities," but it amounted to one more indictment of the administration.⁵⁹ After bringing out the twin dangers of fascism and communism, Thomas tied both to the New Deal and its leadership:

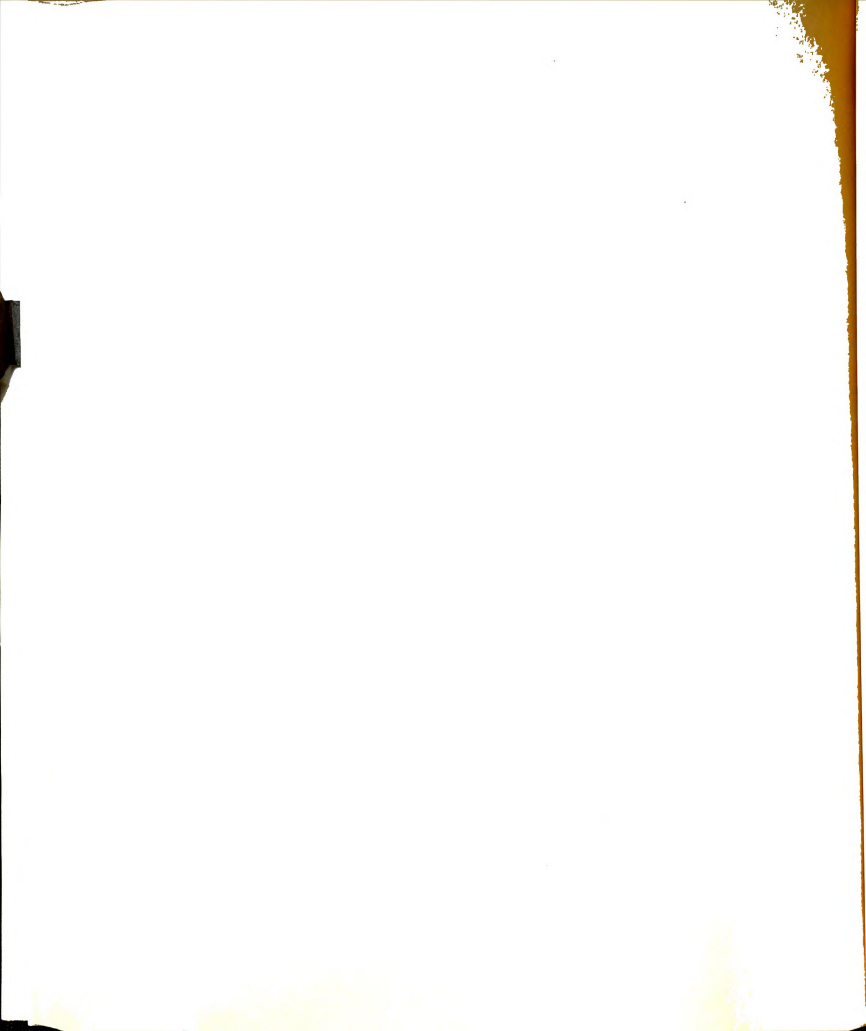
Insofar as they tend to overglorify a leader and set him up beyond criticism and insofar as they tend toward the concentration of power over all phases of human life in the hands of a power-hungry bureaucracy, the New Dealers are borrowing lock, stock, and barrel from the totalitarian arsenal of both communism and fascism.⁶⁰

In addition, he spelled out a nine-point formula for recognizing the un-American individual--including the

⁵⁸ Ibid., 186.

⁵⁹ The article appeared in the magazine Republican, but Thomas submitted it to the Appendix of the Congressional Record, and I have quoted it from the latter source; CR: 80-1, Appendix, July 25, 1947, 3877-3879.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 3878.



point that anyone criticizing the House Un-American Activities Committee should himself be suspect of un-American activities.

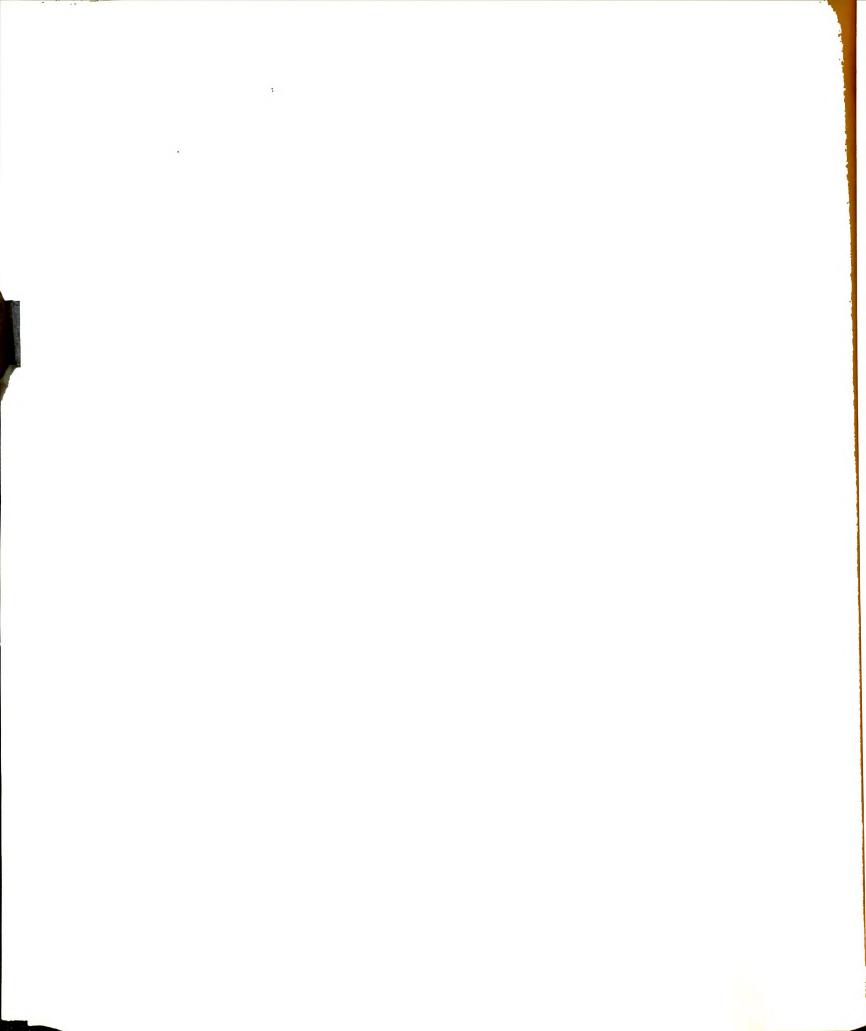
Testimony of Walter S. Steele, 1947

Toward the end of July Walter S. Steele, the chairman of the National Security Committee of the American Coalition of Patriotic, Civic, and Fraternal Societies, asked to testify in support of the proposed House bills to outlaw the Communist party. Steele was an old favorite of the Dies committee. Not only had he testified before it in the early days, but he had also been responsible for the papering of its hearing room with innumerable patriotic mementos and assorted examples of Communist propaganda.⁶¹ Steele took 173 pages of testimony to give his reasons why the proposed legislation should be passed.⁶² Of course, he ranged far beyond his announced reason for wishing to testify as he lectured on the Red menace in all segments of American life. Steele was the kind of witness who made the committee appear at its worst as the members simply gave him a free rein, or they directed him down channels more in keeping with their own particular prejudices. In view of the chairman's former assurances that the committee would be run with a businesslike efficiency, it is worthwhile to take a look at some of Mr. Steele's testimony.

Steele began by turning over to the committee a long

⁶¹ See above, page 31.

⁶² Testimony of Walter S. Steele Regarding Communist Activities in the United States, July 21, 1947.



list of state and local Communist officers from around the country. He put the number of Americans involved in Communist-front organizations at 5,000,000, a figure that Thomas admitted was the largest estimate the committee had ever received.⁶³ Steele dropped literally hundreds of names of alleged Communists and Communist sympathizers without offering much in the way of corroborating evidence. He also placed countless liberal organizations, labor unions, and magazines into the same category. He talked about subversive elements in education and supported such an allegation with a listing of the colleges and universities which included Russian studies in their curricula. Even such a spurious argument as this was allowed to go unchallenged.

Steele struck a particularly responsive chord in John Rankin when he testified about Communist activity in the Negro civil rights movement, and in spite of a gentle remonstrance from Thomas, the hearing reached an unchallenged low with the racist interjections of Rankin:

Mr. Rankin: Do you include in your statement the NAACP?

Mr. Steele: Only where I find them cooperating with other movements.

Mr. Rankin: It was organized by a man named Springarn, I believe.

Mr. Steele: Yes, Sir.

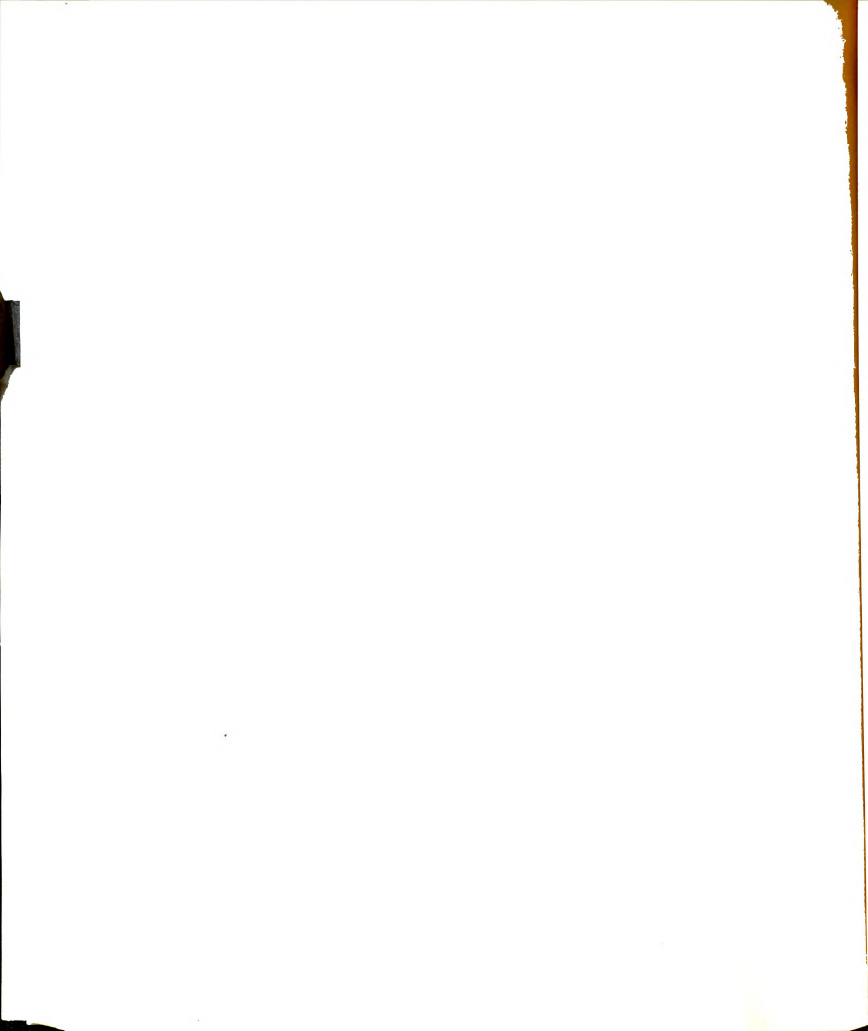
Mr. Rankin: And a man by the name of Springarn of New York is the head of it now.

Mr. Steele: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Rankin: A Jew who had no more interest in the Negro than the rest of us.

Mr. Thomas: He might have an interest in the Negro. Just because he is a Jew is no sign that he is against the Negro.

⁶³ Ibid., 7-14.



Mr. Rankin: He hasn't any interest in the Negro. He is out to cause trouble. You knew it passed a resolution condemning this committee and demanding its abolition, did you not?

Mr. Steele: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Rankin: I just wanted to know if you were aware of the fact that it is a Communist-front organization and used to promote the interest of the Communist movement throughout the country.⁶⁴

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People had never been placed on any committee list as a subversive organization, but the fact that such an allegation was simply Rankin's opinion was not brought out, and the matter was allowed to stand. Steele's additional testimony that a Negro Soviet would be set up in the South after the "revolution" inspired Rankin to further heights of invective and brought a final comment from Thomas, though this time he made no pretense of checking the Mississippi Congressman:

Mr. Rankin: You know judging from what took place in Russia, that would mean the murder of practically every white man in those states who was not willing to submit to that kind of regime and the raping of untold thousands of white women. You are aware of that, are you not? I just wondered if the people of this country realized the danger that these fronts really have to the welfare of this country?

Mr. Steele: Well, that is what the committee is trying to show.

Mr. Thomas: By exposure.

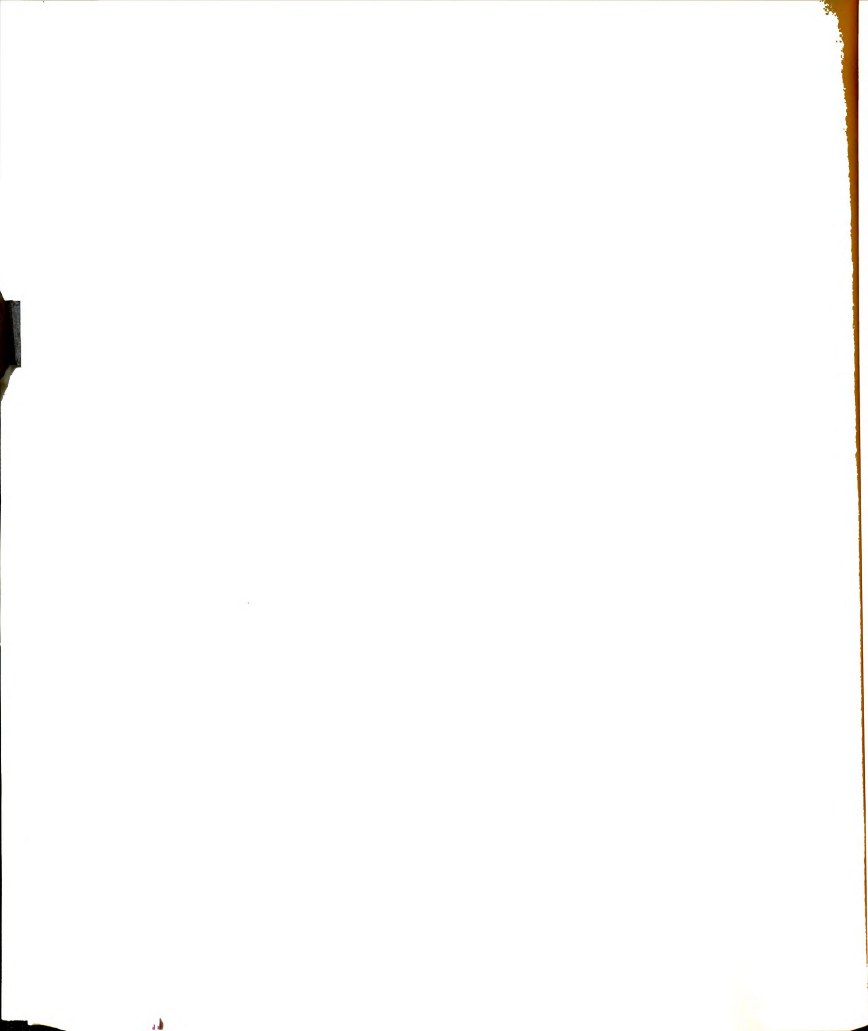
Mr. Steele: By exposure.

Mr. Thomas: No question about that.⁶⁵

Such testimony seemed incredible. Robert Carr called the Steele hearing "possibly the most irresponsible ever

⁶⁴ Ibid., 96-97.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 97-98.



presented by the Un-American Activities Committee."⁶⁶

The fact that Steele had been arraigned on the floor of the House for his alleged Nazi ties was not touched upon by the committee,⁶⁷ and he was recognized as a legitimate authority on the intricacies of the Communist movement; in fact, the chairman's final praise for the witness was most adulatory:

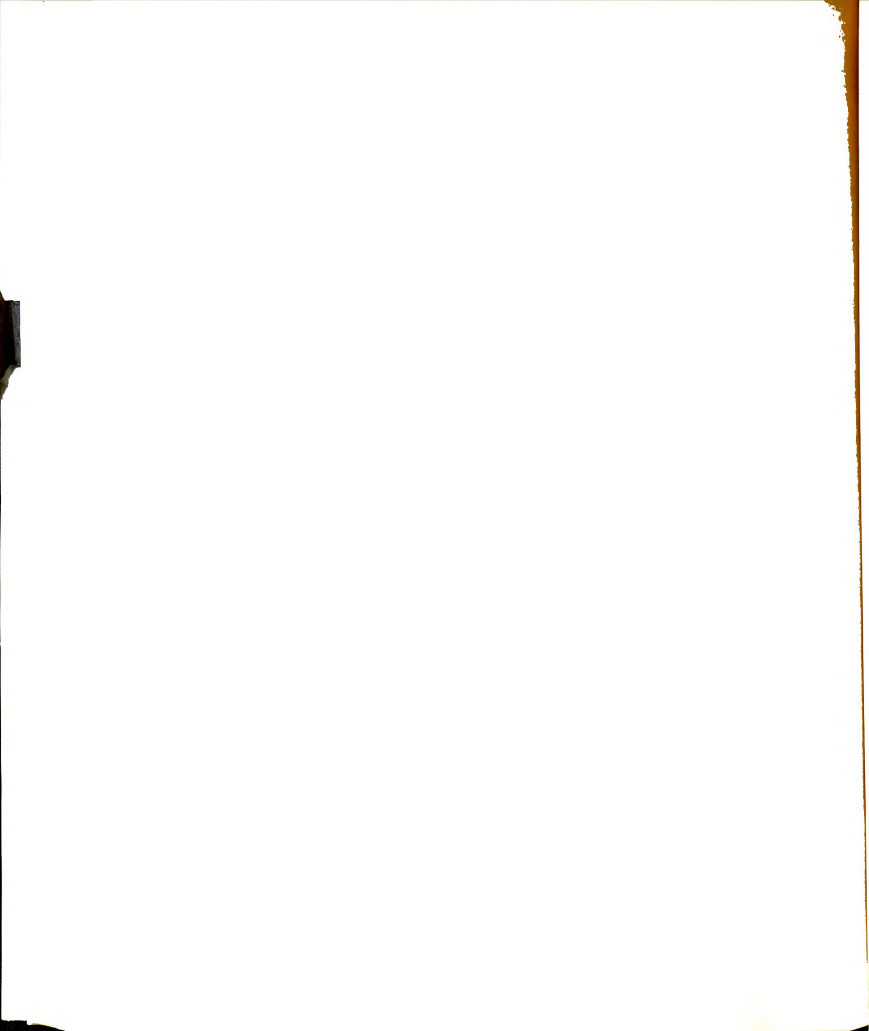
In my eight years with the committee I have never seen a more complete and more documented statement on this subject than you have presented here today. You are to be congratulated. For all of us, I just want to thank you very much.⁶⁸

The committee was back to normal. Gone were all the announced good intentions of its chairman for fair, effective hearings which would seek truth and not headlines. Nothing really had changed--except that now it was J. Parnell Thomas who was directing the show.

⁶⁶Carr, 53.

⁶⁷CR: 77-2, Mar. 11, 1942, 2283.

⁶⁸Steele testimony, 173.



CHAPTER VIII

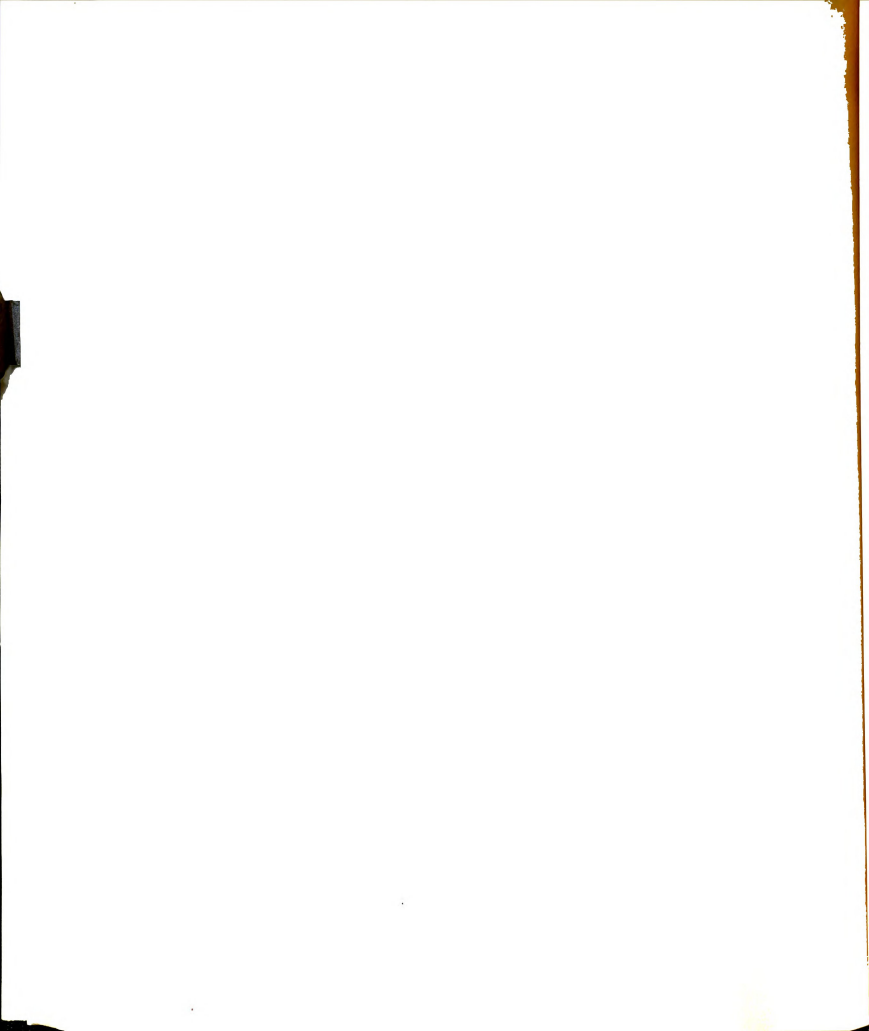
THE HOLLYWOOD HEARINGS

Unquestionably the Hollywood hearings brought the House Committee on Un-American Activities the greatest amount of publicity it had yet received in its stormy nine-year career. J. Parnell Thomas was also brought into the public limelight as never before.

The committee had long showed an inordinate interest in the film industry. As early as 1938, Life magazine carried a feature article complete with Martin Dies' allegation that Hollywood was a "hotbed" of Communist activities and pictures of suspected film stars.¹ In 1940 the motion-picture industry was investigated in a series of closed hearings which, according to August Raymond Ogden, "were a credit neither to the committee nor the manner in which they were conducted."² In 1945, when the committee was between chairmen, John Rankin forced a renewal of committee interest in Hollywood. The Mississippi Democrat announced that he had received reports that "one of the most dangerous plots ever instigated for the overthrow of this government has

¹Life, Sept. 5, 1938, 12-13.

²Ogden, 213.



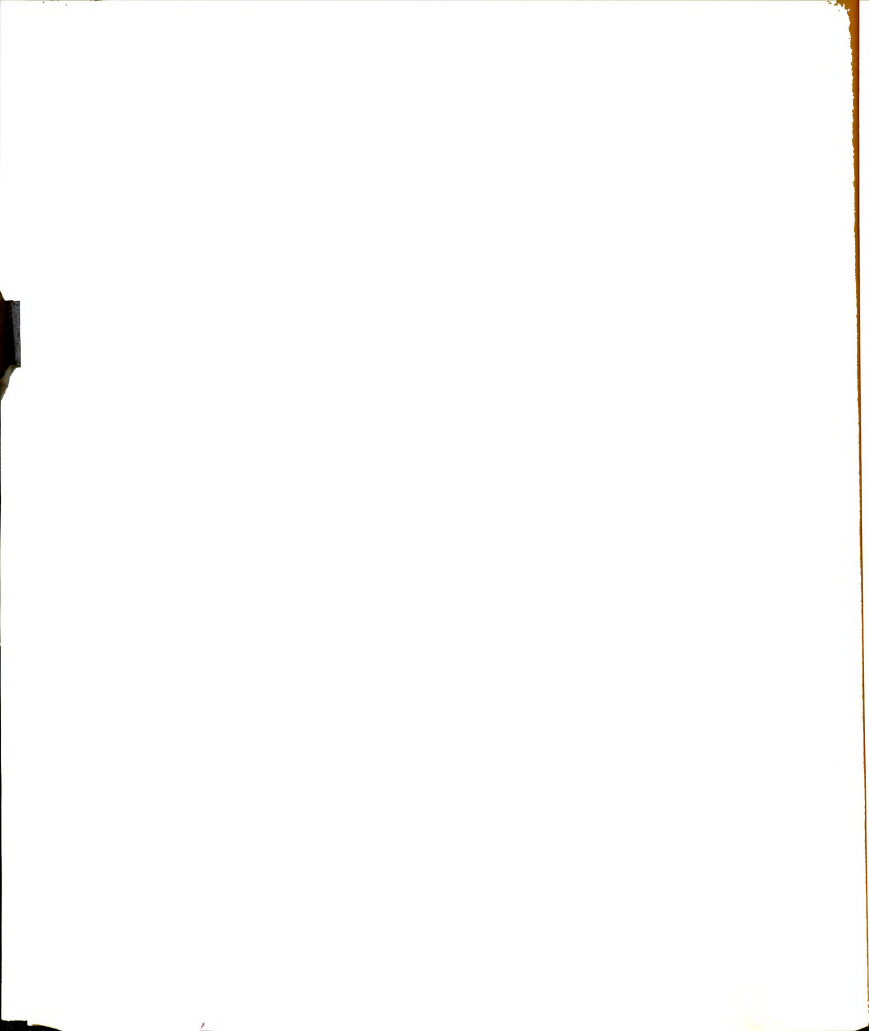
its headquarters in Hollywood."³ However, John Wood, upon his appointment to the chair, made it clear that he did not share Rankin's zeal for hunting subversives in Hollywood, and the investigation was shelved until Thomas became chairman.

One of the eight points in the committee program which Thomas had announced in late 1946 was a proposed investigation of hollywood. There seemed little doubt that he expected that such an undertaking would bring the committee and himself considerable success, and, as he later told the author, he reserved the preliminary investigation for his own personal attention.⁴

Certainly the anticipated publicity played a role in the chairman's decision to launch the Hollywood investigation, and during the course of the hearings he was most zealous in his press releases. Also the fact that these hearings were allowed to die out when the press was no longer either favorable or particularly interested seemed to support this contention. Then too there was the opportunity to connect the government with the making of certain films which supposedly favored something other than the American way of life. Finally there was something in the man himself that must have made these hearings most appealing to him. Since his earliest days in the New Jersey State

³New York Herald Tribune, July 1, 1945.

⁴Personal Interview; Thomas explained to me that as chairman he decided who would head an investigation in its preliminary stages; hence, just as he granted himself the Hollywood investigation, he later gave similar rights to Richard Nixon in the Alger Hiss case.



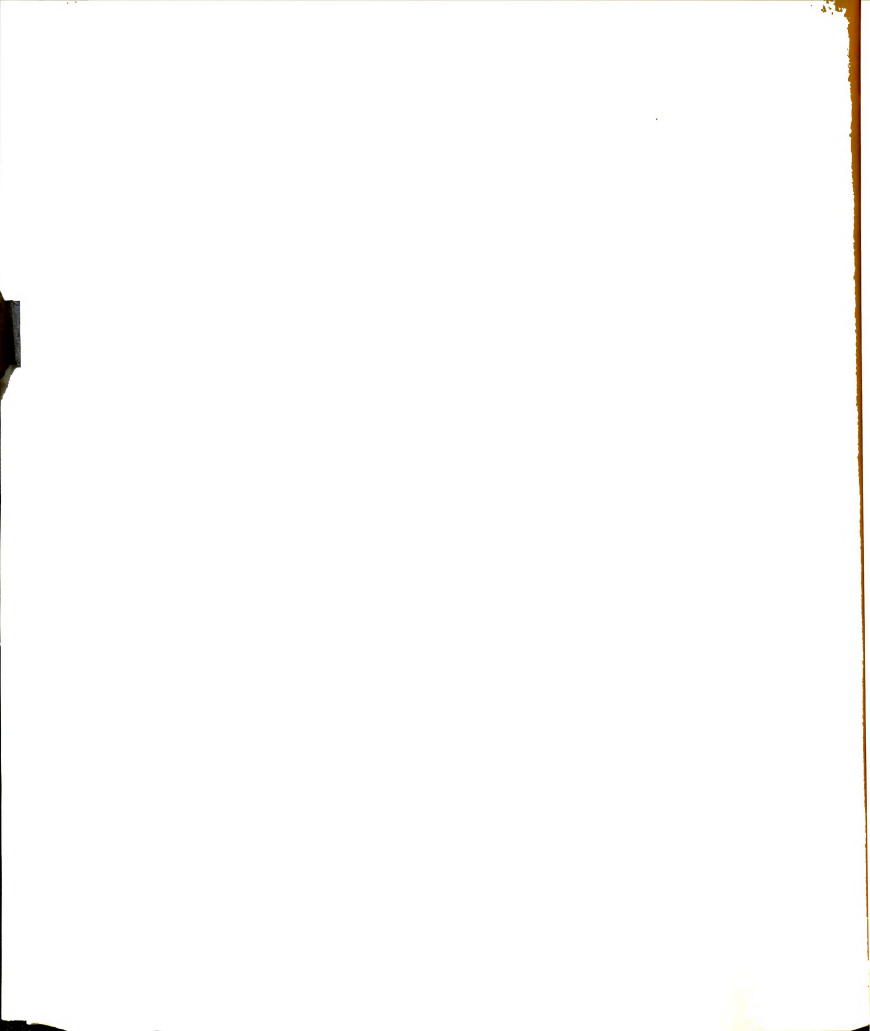
Assembly he had exhibited a keen sense for the dramatic, and his long years on the committee had made him appreciate the drama that could surround a spectacular investigation. Surely the vision of a Hollywood setting adorned with some of movieland's brightest stars and presided over by himself must have seemed almost irresistible as J. Parnell Thomas prepared for his greatest role.

The Preliminaries

On May 8, 1947, Thomas and his two-man subcommittee arrived in Los Angeles to begin a preliminary investigation into Communist activities in the film industry. According to the Los Angeles Times, Thomas held his first press conference moments after descending the steps of the Santa Fe Super Chief.⁵ The chairman announced that the subcommittee would hold closed hearings for about ten days "to complete certain phases of the so-called Eisler case which the committee has been working on for the past four months," and "to initiate an extensive and all-inclusive investigation of communistic activities and influences in the motion-picture industry." In addition, he insisted that the subcommittee would avoid publicity.⁶ This latter promise was not taken seriously by either Thomas or the press and a running account of these "closed" hearings was carried

⁵Los Angeles Times, May 9, 1947.

⁶Ibid.



in the Los Angeles papers.⁷ These preliminary hearings were held behind closed doors in the fashionable Biltmore Hotel, but at the end of each session Thomas would hold a press conference to keep newsmen abreast of the subcommittee's progress. In addition, many of the witnesses presented their own views of the proceedings to the press.

As the hearings progressed, Thomas did not always wait until his day was completed to face the press. On May 13 he met the reporters in committee chambers during a recess to declare that Hanns Eisler, the composer brother of Gerhart, had made one short film for the government.⁸ No further details were given, but this was obviously related to his previous promise that the government too was involved in the un-American activities of Hollywood.⁹

On the first day of the hearings the chairman had insisted that "many high government officials and former officials" would be called to testify before a hearing of the full committee in July.¹⁰ And in the following September he did call two State Department officials to testify on the alleged passport irregularities of Hanns Eisler.

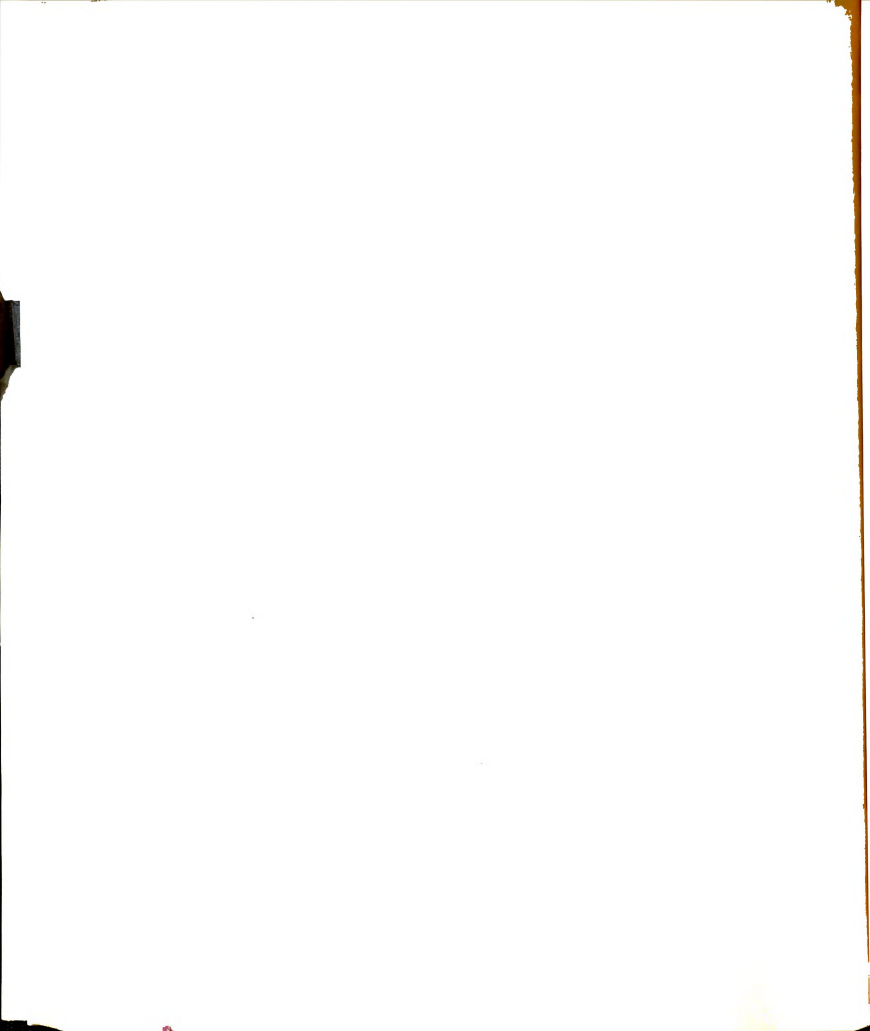
A few days later Roy M. Brewer, a union official of a stage employees local, tried to further implicate a government agency. He testified that the National Labor

⁷ Both the Los Angeles Times and the Los Angeles Herald Examiner supported these hearings with numerous pictures and sympathetic editorials.

⁸ Los Angeles Times, May 13, 1947.

⁹ Ibid., May 10, 1947

¹⁰ Ibid.



Relations Board was acting "as an accessory to the Communist party." Supposedly the NLRB had aided the Communists in blocking recognition of his union. Thomas had first given this information to the press at his impromptu meeting concerning Hanns Eisler's alleged ties with the government, but after the day's hearings Brewer himself was allowed to verify the chairman's remarks during his own conference with the press.¹¹

The biggest headlines of these preliminary hearings came on May 15; the Los Angeles Times banner read "New Dealer Forced Taylor to Enact Red Role, He Says." This was in reference to Robert Taylor who allegedly informed the subcommittee that government officials held up his navy commission until he made the pro-Soviet film, "Song of Russia."¹² Thomas concluded that the film was "Communist propaganda that favored Russia, its ideologies, its institutions, and its way of life over the same things in America," and he was ready to blame the government for its production:

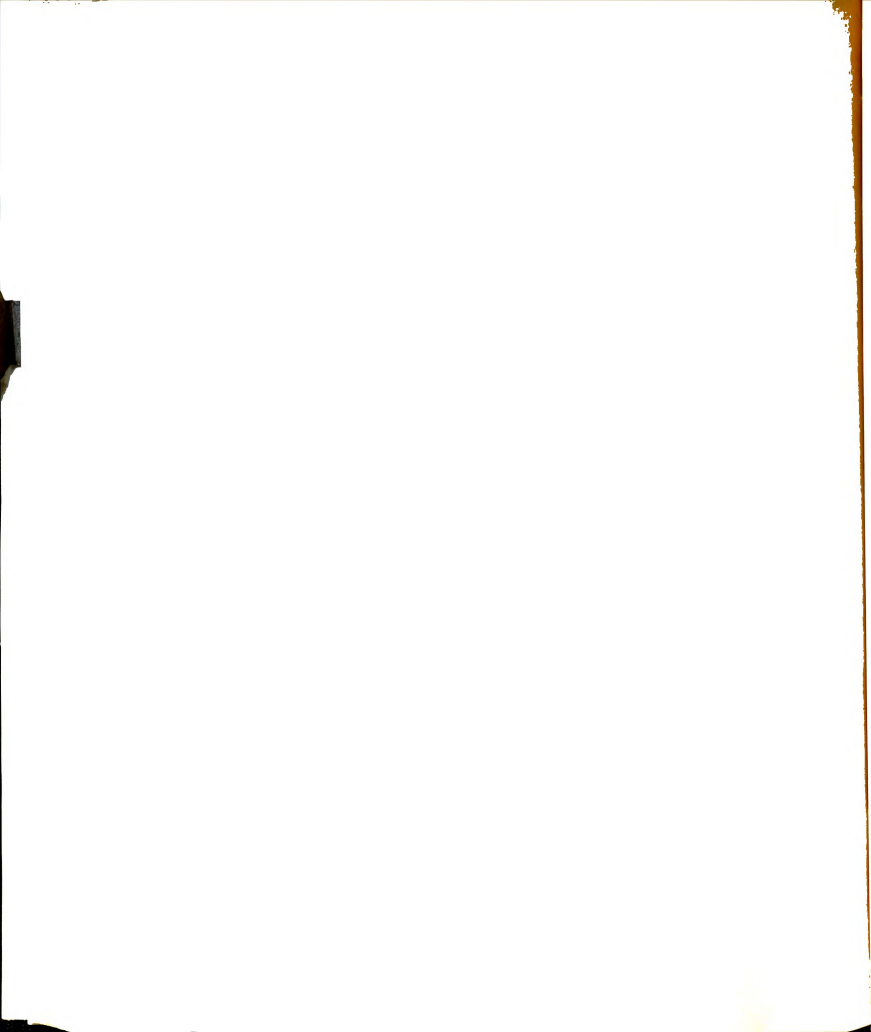
To me this is another indication that persons in the government have been aiding and abetting communism even to the extent of getting a prominent American actor to play a part in a motion picture to which he already has objected.¹³

Later in the day Stripling also gave a similar

¹¹ Ibid., May 13, 1947.

¹² Ibid., May 15, 1947. The Chicago Tribune headline was "Reveal Pro-Red Film Pressure by White House;" Tribune, May 17, 1947.

¹³ New York Times, May 15, 1947.



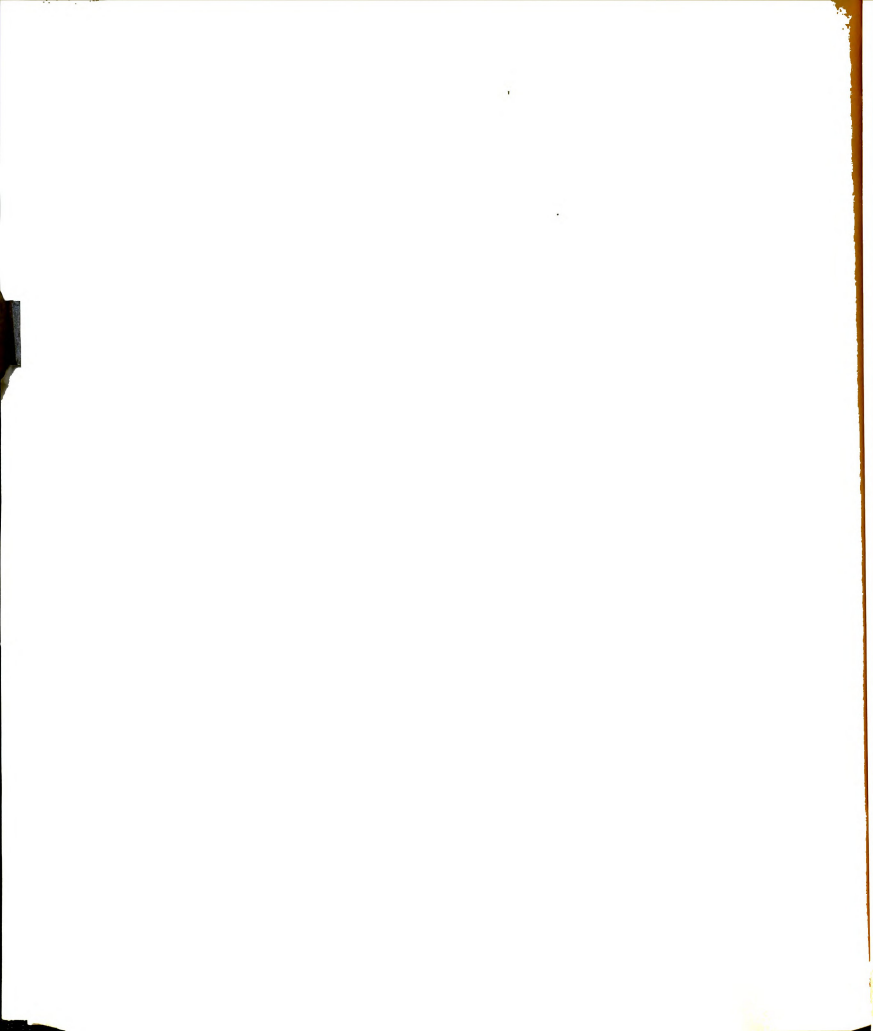
release to the press, but of more interest was an interview with Robert Taylor himself. Taylor had ascribed the government's intervention to the War Production Board, but upon being questioned about this by Donald Nelson, the wartime chief of the board, Taylor acknowledged that he had made a mistake and had meant one of the government's information agencies.¹⁴ Taylor was to have more difficulty with his story when he presented it to the full committee in the fall. Nor did he ever try to clarify why he had waited until 1943 if he were really that anxious to serve his country; however, he did end his comments with a classic warning to his fellow actors: "I am very strongly against communism and I think its influence is serious enough that more actors should become aware of it."¹⁵

Two days later Thomas summed up the preliminary testimony with the acknowledgment that he was "amazed" with what he had found in Hollywood. The New York Times quoted him as saying that "ninety percent of the Communist infiltration" was in the screen writing field and that "the Federal Government had abetted the work."¹⁶ Without any specifics he was able to carry the latter allegation all the way to the White House:

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., May 17, 1947.



A very outstanding point that came up not once but many times was the influence of the Government in aiding the Communist conspiracy...We have recorded testimony that even the White House exerted influence on certain people in Hollywood to have certain pro-Russian motion pictures filmed during the regime of the late President Roosevelt.¹⁷

However, in the fall not even his most cooperative witnesses were able to support the chairman's claims of White House pressure.

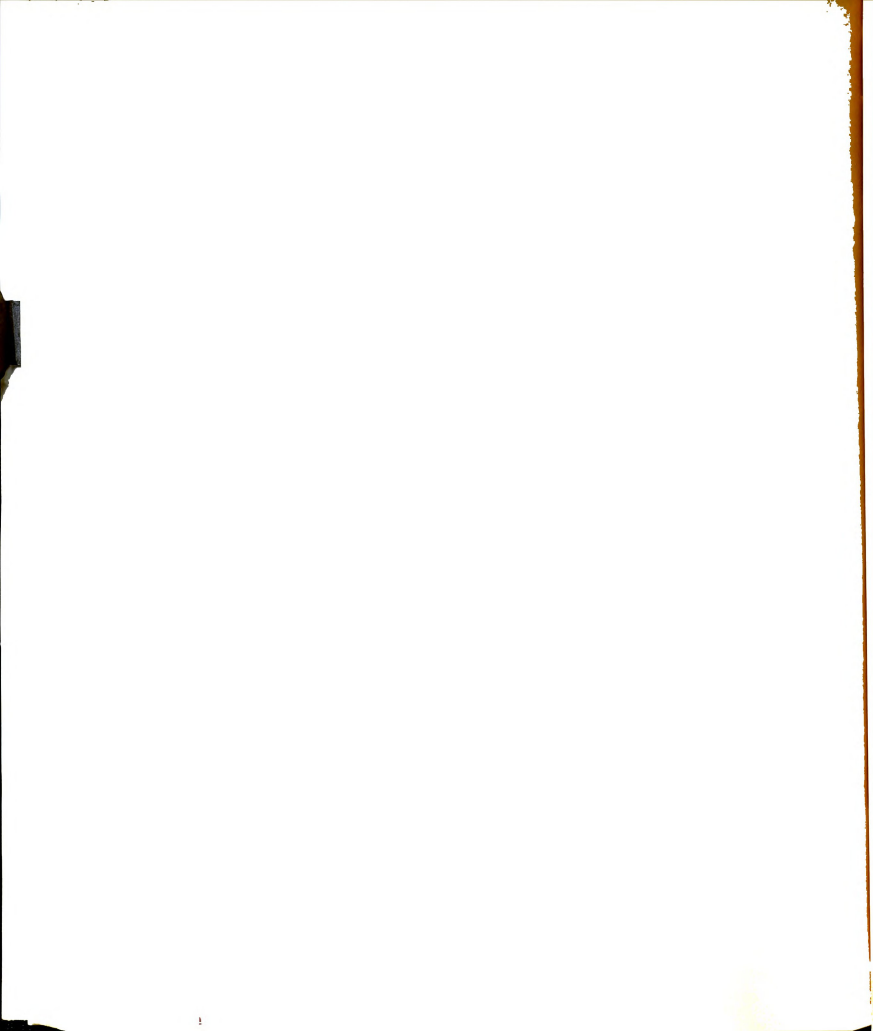
The Los Angeles hearings came to an end on May 16. McDowell left "to inspect Texas border stations," and Thomas moved on to San Francisco to continue his inquiry into the activities of West Coast Communists.¹⁸ It had been a hectic week for Hollywood, and not all the criticism had emanated from the energetic chairman of the Committee on Un-American Activities. During the heat of the hearings the local papers carried an article from the Soviet weekly publication, Culture and Life, which accused the motion-picture industry of propagandizing only the capitalistic way. The Soviet editor had concluded that "the best defense against communism is the circulation of American motion pictures."¹⁹ It was a week in which Hollywood could seemingly please no one.

How effective were these early hearings? The New York Times refused to take them seriously, pointing out

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸San Francisco Chronicle, May 17, 1947; a check of the Chronicle for the last weeks in May turned up the announcement of Thomas' arrival in San Francisco but nothing much after that. Perhaps the activities of the subversive elements in the Bay City were not quite so evident.

¹⁹Los Angeles Times, May 13, 1947.



that if "dangerous ideas can be circulated by example without preaching, then the answer would be that the way of life which Hollywood popularizes in its pictures is strongly anti-Communist. The glamor and the gunplay and the sex and the psychiatry are not conspicuous features of the planned life which communism has set out to impose on a classless society."²⁰ A few days later Thomas F. Brady, the Times' Hollywood correspondent, wrote that the film industry had not been particularly upset by the presence of Thomas and his subcommittee:

The investigation, although initially frightening to the motion picture industry, has actually had the effect of calming almost everyone except the most determined alarmists....Specific charges of Communist doctrine in films were so few and so farfetched that even the most conservative members of the industry did not take them seriously.²¹

However, when Thomas turned his report of the investigation over to Congress the following month, his language seemed confident enough:

There is no question as to the serious inroads that the Communists have made in the motion-picture industry, and it presents a problem which can only be corrected by complete exposure on the part of the Committee on Un-American Activities and by prompt action by studio heads.²²

The report further recommended that the full committee hold public hearings in Washington, and that this investigation should "determine the responsibility and extent of the

²⁰ New York Times, May 20, 1947.

²¹ Ibid., May 25, 1947.

²² CR: 80-1, Appendix, June 6, 1947, 2687-2688.



influence and interference on the part of Government agencies or officials in the production of flagrant Communist propaganda films."²³ Thomas had originally stated that one of the reasons for these preliminary hearings was to finish the Eisler case, but in the report the only reference to either Gerhart or Hanns Eisler was the acknowledgment that Hanns would be called before the whole committee on June 16 in Washington.

Hanns Eisler Hearing

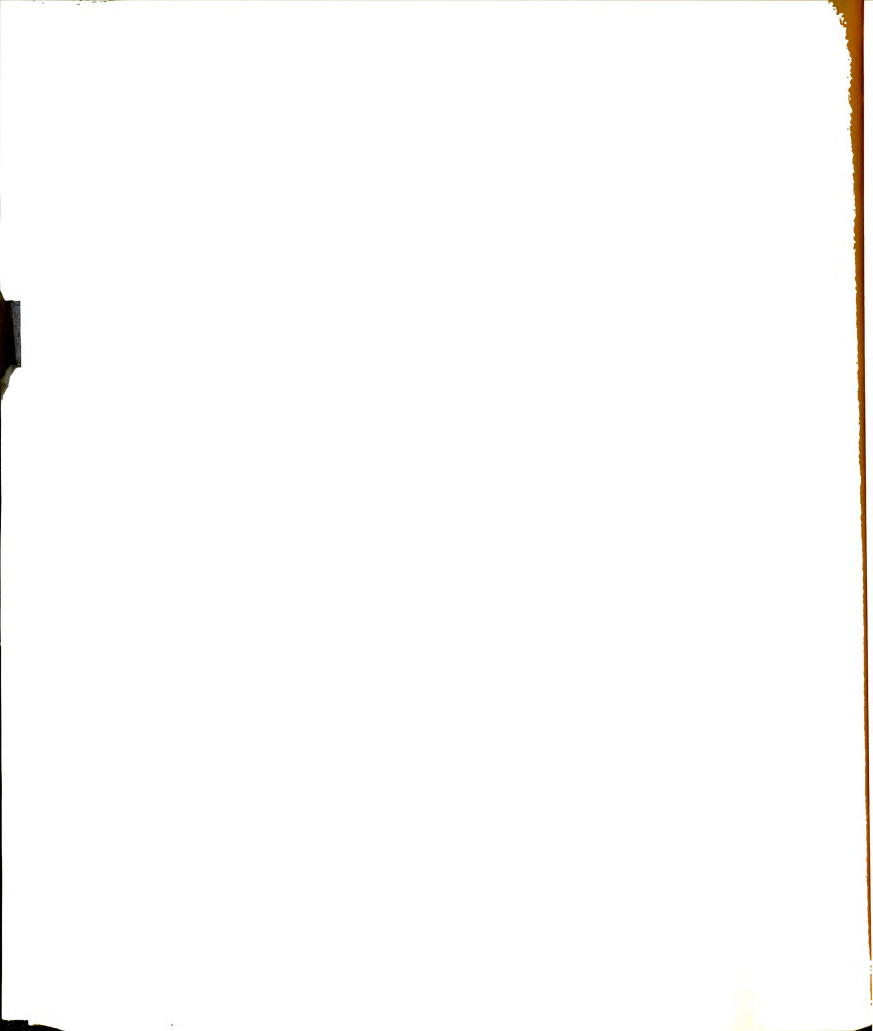
Hanns Eisler had been called before the subcommittee in Los Angeles, but Thomas had quickly dismissed him because "he sought to evade and confuse the issues."²⁴ The chairman then promised that Eisler would be hailed before the whole committee, and this was finally accomplished in late September.²⁵

The younger Eisler was a transitional figure for the committee which attempted not only to implicate him with his brother Gerhart in the international conspiracy to take over the United States, but also to show that he was one of the Hollywood figures who was participating in the subversion of the movie screens. More specifically, the committee proposed to expose the function of the International Music

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Times, May 13, 1947.

²⁵ Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States (Regarding Hanns Eisler), Sept. 24-26, 1947.



Bureau which Eisler had founded and to investigate why Eisler had been permitted to go in and out of the country when the immigration laws stated that a Communist was not to be allowed entry. The latter question would provide the committee with another opportunity to badger the State Department and the administration.

Like most unfriendly witnesses Eisler was refused the right to read his prepared statement before giving testimony. Eisler was a musical composer of international reputation who had written the musical scores for several movies; yet the committee spent little time on his Hollywood activities or on the subject of any subversive activities in which Eisler might have indulged. What the committee wanted to know was whether Eisler had ever been a member of the Communist party and whether he had obtained his passport and reentry visa on illegal grounds.

Eisler testified that he was not a member of the Communist party but that in 1926 he had made such an application in Germany and then had allowed the matter to drop.²⁶ The committee, however, accepted this as proof that he had once been a Communist, and that his subsequent swearing to the immigration officials that he had never been a member of the Communist party was a lie.²⁷

²⁶ Ibid., Sept. 24, 1947, 13.

²⁷ On the first day of the hearing Joseph Savoretti, an immigration and naturalization officer, testified that Eisler had sworn he had never been a member of the Communist party and did not know anything about it; ibid., 51-54.



Before investigating the question of illegal entry any further, Stripling attempted to show that the International Music Bureau, which had been largely organized by Eisler, was trying to bring about a world revolution and to establish a proletariat dictatorship. This seemed like a rather sizeable undertaking for a music bureau, but the chief counsel did not offer any details other than the fact that Eisler had composed many workers' songs and was obviously sympathetic to the labor movement.

Nothing further was mentioned about Eisler's music until Representative McDowell felt it necessary to question one of his songs because it dealt with the repealing of the anti-abortion laws:

Mr. McDowell: Well, great poetry as we are taught in America has nothing to do with that kind of truck. Among other things there is a song in there apparently dedicated or written because of the laws prohibiting abortion.

Mr. Eisler: Yes.

Mr. McDowell: In German?

Mr. Eisler: Yes.

Mr. McDowell: This song ridicules the law.

Mr. Eisler: Yes.

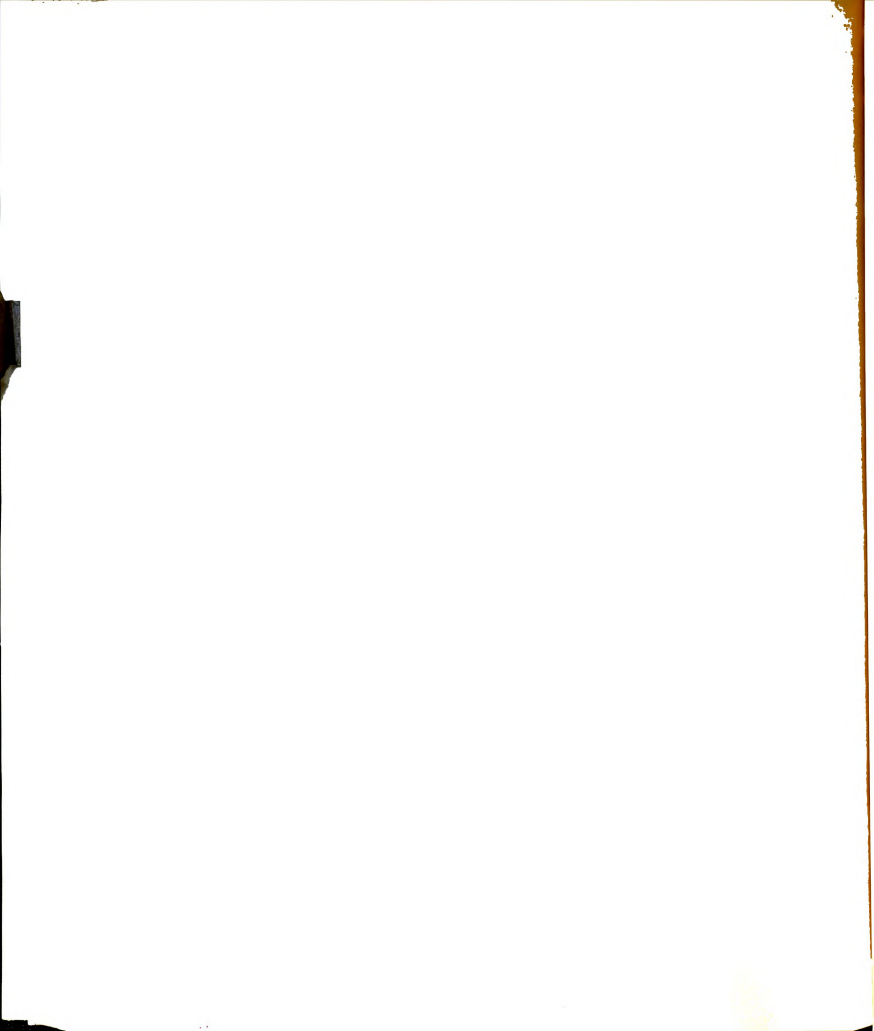
Mr. McDowell: Opposing the prohibition of abortions.

Mr. Eisler: Yes.

Mr. McDowell: In other words this song would, I presume, in your Communist fashion of thinking, urge that the law opposing abortion be disregarded.²⁸

Thomas brought a merciful end to this line of questioning with his suggestion that "we don't get very deep into the question of abortion," but he did not try to stop John Rankin's labeling of Eisler's compositions as "filth" because they did not adhere to the "American

²⁸ Ibid., 59.



line." However, Eisler himself countered with the observation that most of his work was still in untranslated German.²⁹

On the afternoon of the first day Sumner Welles, who had served as Under Secretary of State from 1937 to 1943, was called to the stand to testify on Hanns Eisler's visa difficulties with the State Department. Stripling produced a letter dated January 11, 1939, from Eleanor Roosevelt asking Welles to investigate why Eisler was not being allowed an extension on his visa to permit him to stay in this country.³⁰

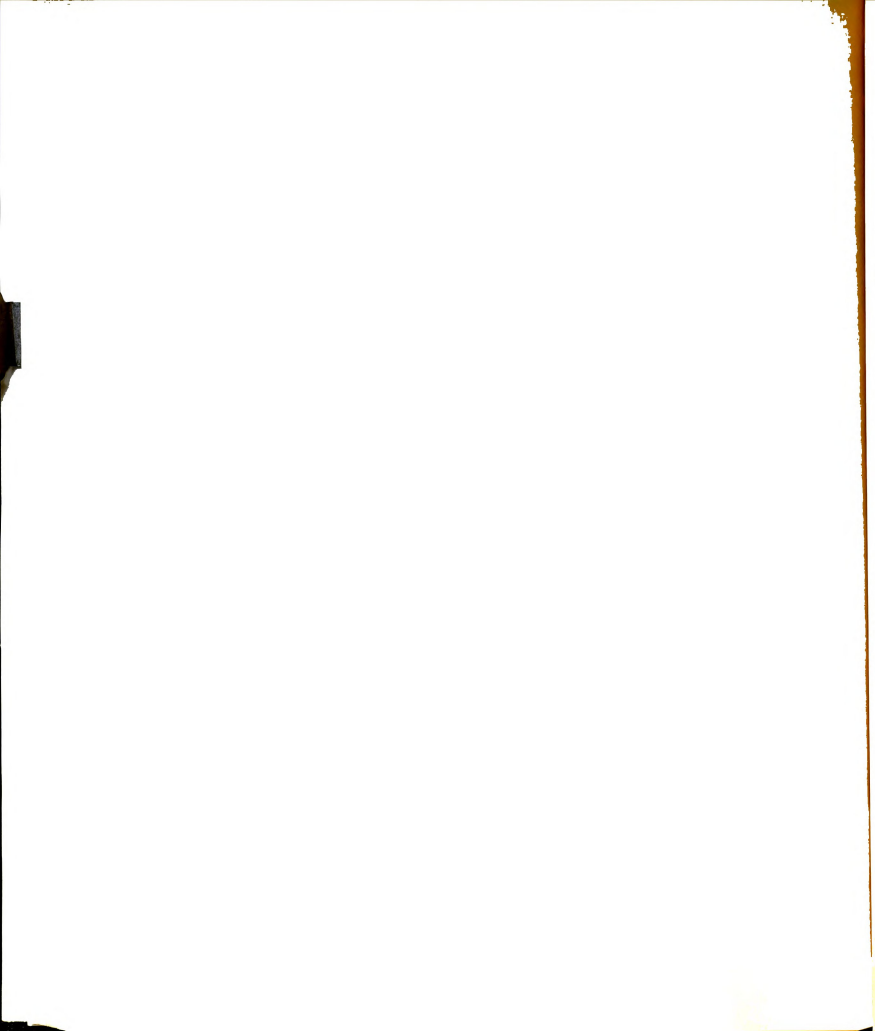
The chairman and his chief counsel obviously hoped to show collusion between the First Lady and Welles, and it was again emphasized that no Communists were then to receive a visa. Welles tried to explain that Eisler's political interests had not been the matter in question but rather that Mrs. Roosevelt had been interested in Eisler as an artist, and he insisted that she had exerted no undue pressure on him to act on Eisler's behalf.³¹

The next day George S. Messersmith, an Assistant Secretary of State between 1937 and 1940, became the second high-ranking government official to be cross-examined by the committee. He too was asked why Eisler had been granted a visa, and both Thomas and Rankin tried once more to badger

²⁹ Ibid., 60.

³⁰ Ibid., 64.

³¹ Ibid., 64-73.



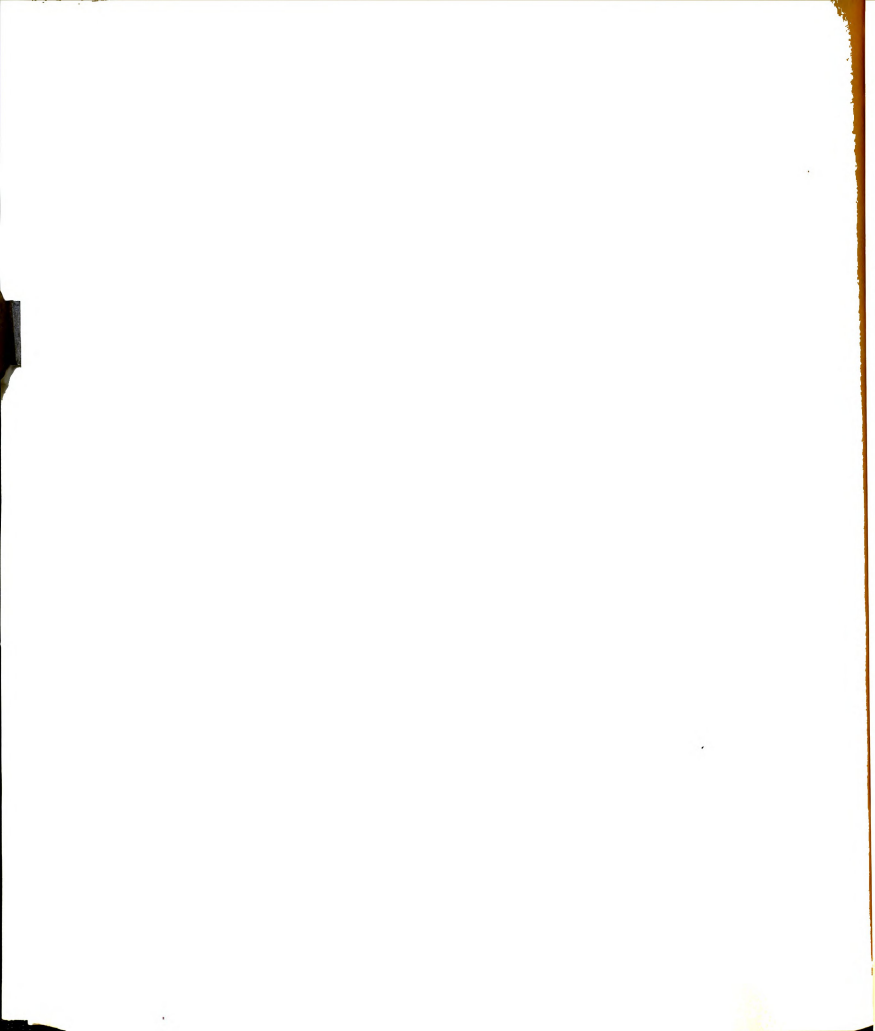
a witness into admitting that Mrs. Roosevelt's influence had been responsible for the granting of Eisler's visa.

The committee tried also to show that Messersmith himself was of questionable background. Several organizations were listed that Messersmith either belonged to or had addressed. But the committee seemed to be stretching its resources when it cited in evidence the fact that the witness had received and answered letters from the Nation and the New Republic.³² In addition, it was pointed out that as a State Department official Messersmith had been active in helping political refugees from Nazi Germany. The committee wondered if some of these individuals might not have been Communists, and they expressly asked Messersmith if he had inquired into their political backgrounds before he had granted them admission into the United States.³³

The obvious attempt to harrass Welles and Messersmith left the impression that the committee was much more interested in embarrassing the two former New Deal officials and the administration that had appointed them than it was in investigating the possible subversive nature of Hanns Eisler's activities in the United States. The committee had established that Eisler had written songs glorifying the worker and that he had once filed application for the Communist party in Germany. Beyond that nothing had been said about his activities in the movie industry; nor would his

³²Ibid., Sept. 25, 1947, 132.

³³Ibid., 133.



name come up again during the subsequent Washington hearings on the motion-picture industry.³⁴

The Hollywood Hearings, Washington D.C.

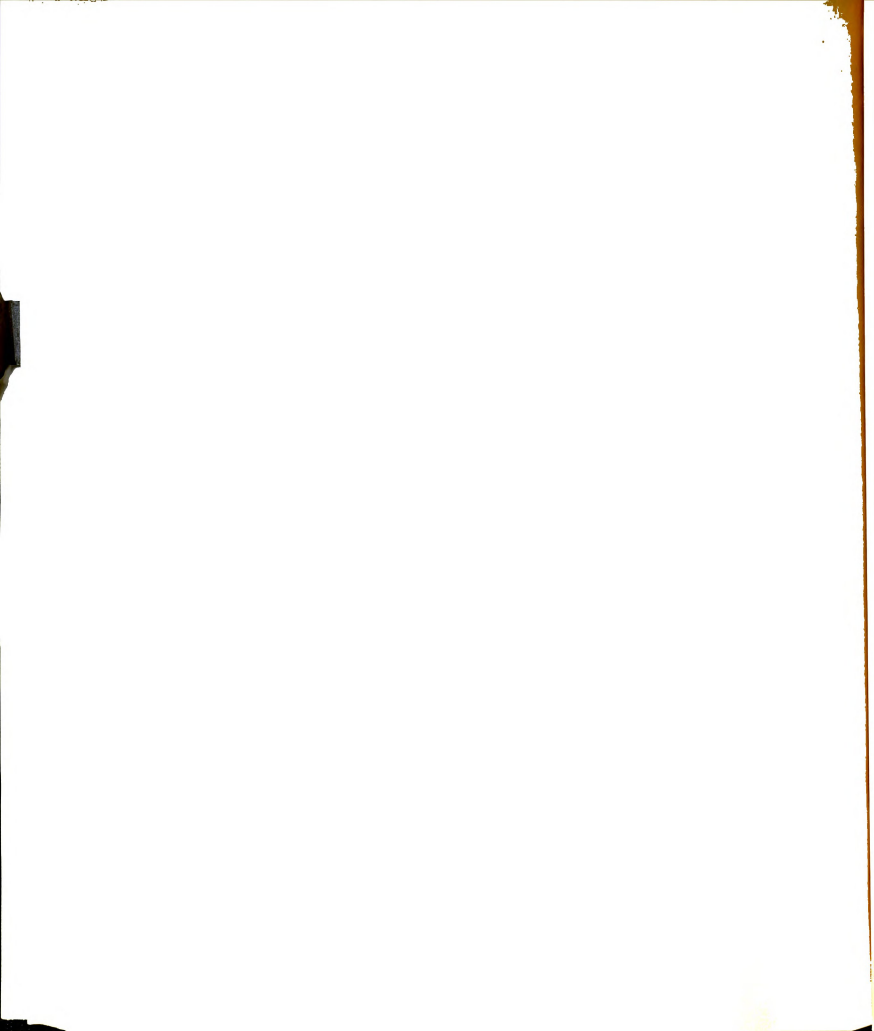
The nine-day Washington hearings earned the committee and J. Parnell Thomas their most sensational coverage. In an atmosphere of a Hollywood first-nighter the newsreel and television cameras covered the movements of the great and near great of Hollywood as they paraded through the witness box. The Washington Post called it "the show of the year," and indeed it was as the committee, in the words of Max Lerner, "tried to track down the footprints of Karl Marx in movieland."³⁵

The hearings opened with a lengthy, and rather arbitrary, statement by Thomas. The chairman not only emphasized the magnitude and importance of the task facing the committee, but also the very real danger which he felt the committee had already uncovered in Hollywood:

With such vast influence over the lives of American citizens as the motion-picture industry exerts, it is not unnatural--in fact, it is very logical--that subversive and undemocratic forces should attempt to use this medium for un-American purposes....That Communists have made such an attempt in Hollywood and with considerable success is already evident to this committee from

³⁴ On August 7, 1948, Hanns Eisler was served a Federal court order calling for his deportation. The charge was that he, like his brother, had concealed his membership in the Communist party at the time he had applied for an immigration visa; Times, Aug. 8, 1948.

³⁵ PM, Oct. 22, 1947.



its preliminary investigative work.³⁶

Thomas also used the opportunity to censure some of his old enemies and to present his general views on the Communist movement:

The problem of Communist infiltration is not limited to the movie industry. That even our Federal Government has not been immune from the menace is evidenced by the fact that \$11,000,000 is now being spent to rid the Federal service of Communists. Communists are also firmly entrenched in control of a number of large and powerful labor unions in the country....Communists for years have been conducting an unrelentless (sic) 'boring from within' against American democratic institutions. While never possessing a large numerical strength, the Communists nevertheless have found that they could dominate the activities of unions or other mass enterprises in this country by capturing a few strategic positions of leadership.³⁷

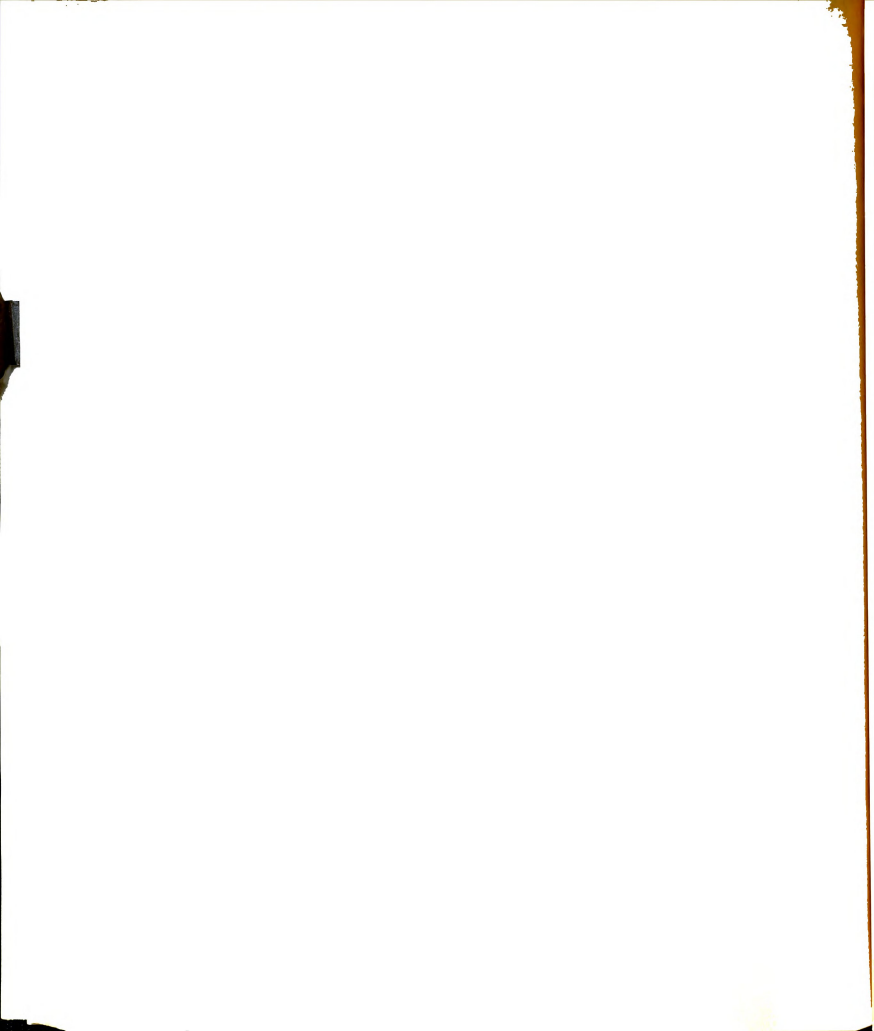
He concluded his opening remarks with the usual promise that the hearings would be "fair and impartial...all we are after are the facts."³⁸ Nothing was said about what the committee would do with "the facts" except, of course, to expose this latest menace to our national well-being.

The committee strategy soon became apparent. Chairman Thomas allowed Strippling to direct the testimony of several leading Hollywood personalities who then told of Communist activity in the movie industry. These friendly witnesses included such top-ranking producers as Jack L. Warner, Louis B. Mayer, and Walt Disney; such directors as

³⁶ Hearings Regarding the Communist Infiltration of the Motion Picture Industry, Oct. 20-24, 27-30, 1947, 1.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 3.



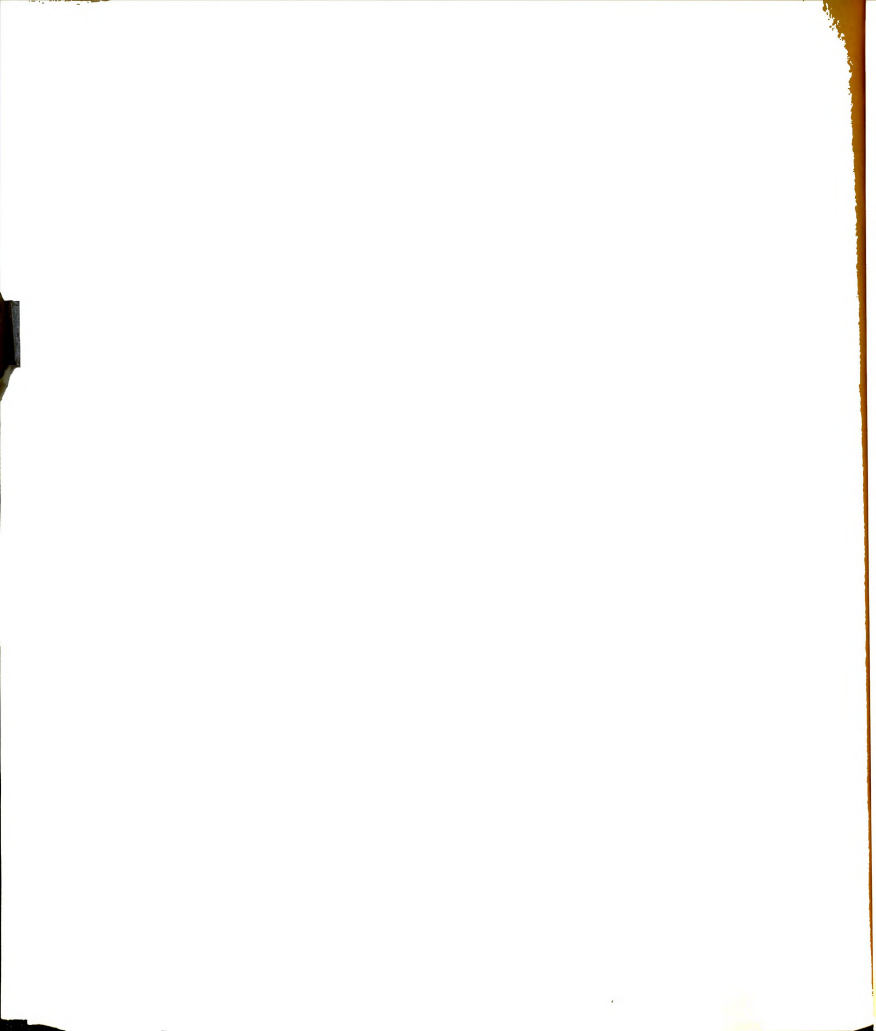
Sam Wood and Leo McCarey; writers such as Rupert Hughes and Morrie Ryskind; and, above all, such famed actors as Robert Taylor, Gary Cooper, George Murphy, Ronald Reagan, and Adolph Menjou. Included also were Lela Rogers, the mother and manager of Ginger, and the writer, Ayn Rand, two ladies who had long been waging their personal crusade against communism. On the other hand, several film-land personalities suspected of Communist propaganda activities were subpoenaed. They were asked specific questions, which, when they refused to answer, were answered for them by the committee's own investigator, Louis Russell.

The first few days of hearings were taken up by the committee's attempt to show how the Communists had introduced propaganda into Hollywood films, with four pictures receiving special notice. The first witness to testify was Jack L. Warner.³⁹ Warner generously offered the use of the family savings to establish "a pest-removal fund...to ship to Russia the people who don't like our American system of government and prefer the communistic system to ours."⁴⁰ But Warner was not so cooperative when it came to one of his films, "Mission to Moscow," which the committee was citing as an example of Communist propaganda in a Hollywood picture:

If the making of "Mission to Moscow" in 1942 was a subversive activity, then the American Liberty ships

³⁹Testimony of Jack L. Warner, Oct. 20, 1947, 7-54.

⁴⁰Ibid., 10.



which carried food and guns to Russia and the American naval vessels which convoyed them were likewise engaged in subversive activities. The picture was made only to help a desperate war effort and not for posterity.⁴¹

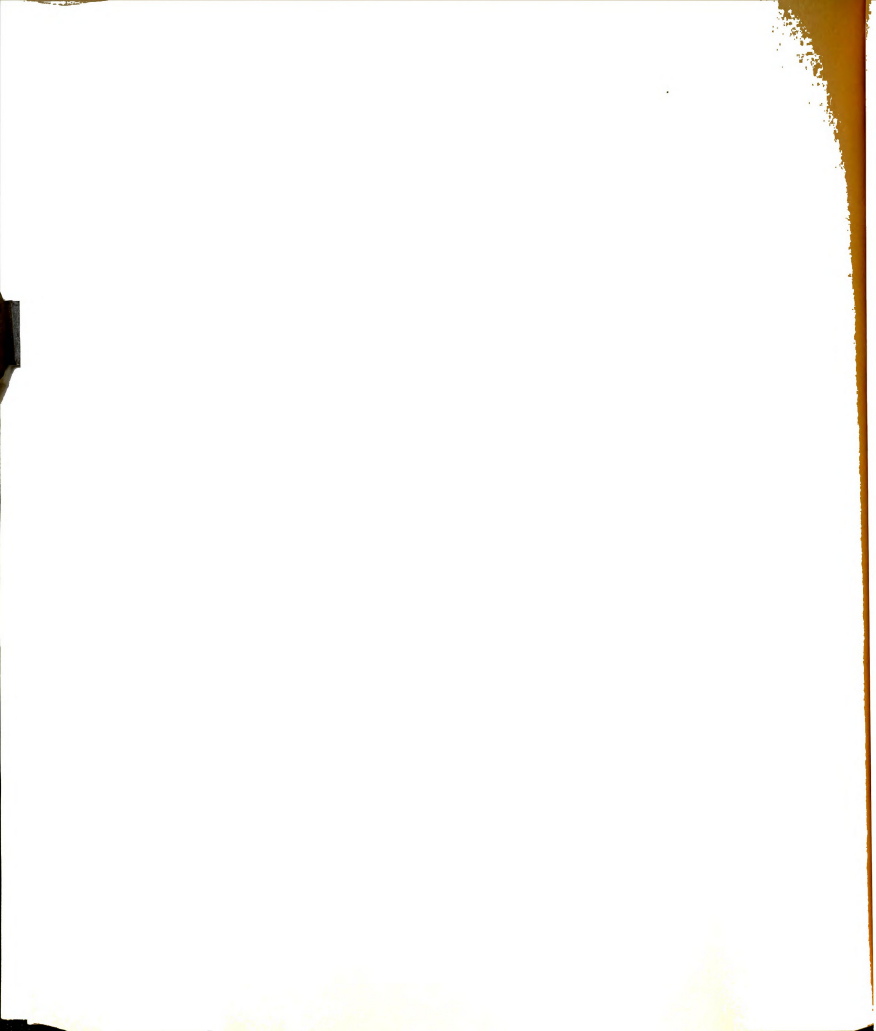
Mr. Warner was trying to judge his film in the light of the time in which it was made, but the committee had seldom showed a willingness to evaluate anything in its true time perspective. This became ludicrously obvious when Stripling asked Warner, "Well, due to the present conditions in the international situation, don't you think it was rather dangerous to write about such a disillusionment as was sought in that picture?"⁴² Unfortunately, Warner and several of the producers who followed him had not been as farsighted as the committee would have preferred, and the fact that the government might have encouraged such pictures to create a better understanding with one of our wartime allies continued to be evaluated in cold-war terms.

On subjects other than his own movies Warner was quite willing to tell the committee what it wanted to hear. He testified that writers did try to inject lines of propaganda into scripts and that he had fired them for this. He also claimed that ninety-five percent of the attempted Red infiltration into Hollywood was through the Screen Writers Guild.⁴³ The latter organization would take up a great deal of the committee's time, and membership in which

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 39.

⁴³ Ibid., 48.



would usually be considered an indication of un-American behavior.

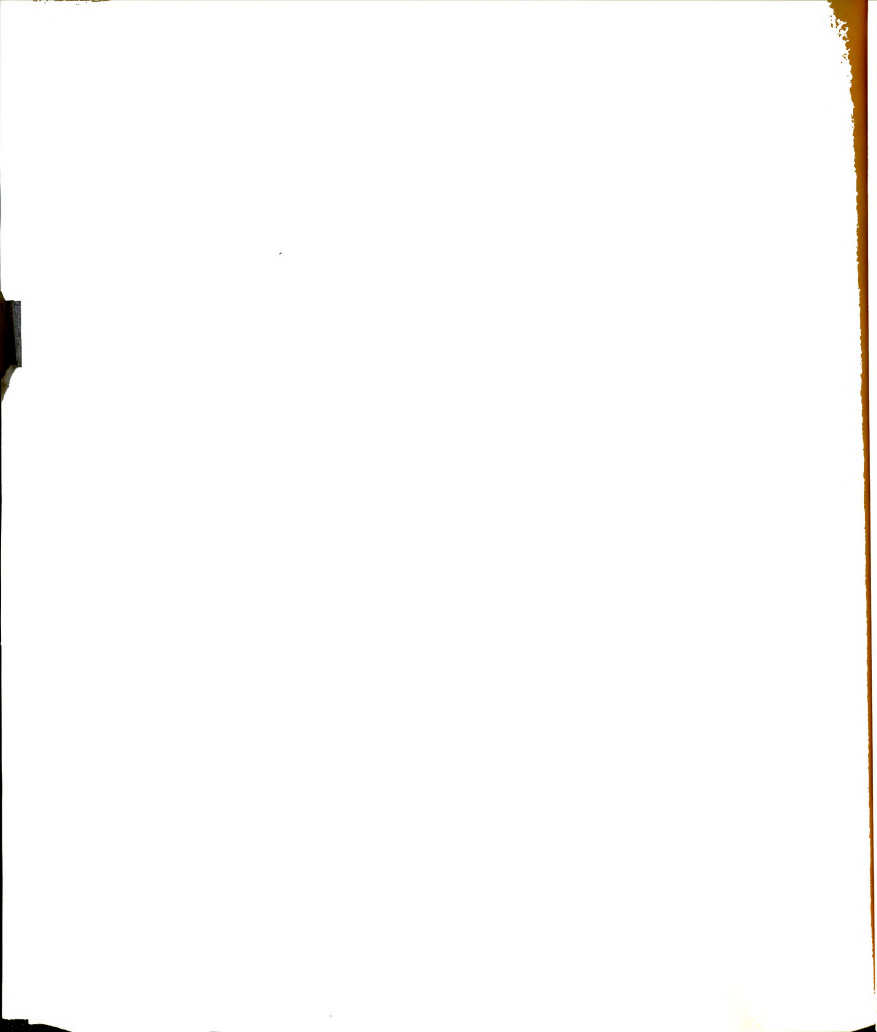
On the afternoon of the first day Samuel Grosvenor Wood, an independent producer-director of some thirty years, testified on alleged Communist attempts to infiltrate the Screen Directors Guild.⁴⁴ Wood had been the first president of the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals, an organization aimed at thwarting the Communists in the movie industry to which many of the friendly witnesses belonged. Wood, though obviously sympathetic to the aims of the committee, denied that the Communists were exercising any degree of influence in the making and producing of movies; however, he did provide a new twist to the investigation when he suggested that the Communists were trying to "unsell America" by not writing patriotic American themes into their movies.⁴⁵ In the forthcoming days Chairman Thomas would often interrupt the testimony to ask the witness if he did not think that Hollywood should make more movies showing the "American way."

Wood provided a note of levity when he was asked by Stripling how one identified a Communist: "If you wanted to drop their rompers you would find the hammer and sickle on their rear ends, I think."⁴⁶ This was scarcely the kind of testimony that would make the committee's case against

⁴⁴ Testimony of Sam Wood, Oct. 20, 1947, 54-69.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 57-61.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 67.



Hollywood more convincing; yet Thomas had only praise for Wood's testimony:

Mr. Wood, to use the slang expression, you really lay it on the line. If the great, great majority of persons in industry, labor, and education showed the same amount of courage that you show we would not have to worry about communism or fascism in this country. In other words, you've got guts.⁴⁷

Louis B. Mayer followed Wood on the stand.⁴⁸ Mayer and his film "Song of Russia" were examined, as the committee tried once again to cite a specific example of Red propaganda. "Song of Russia," which the New York Times called "a harmless musical film containing more things American than Russian,"⁴⁹ starred Robert Taylor and Tchaikowsky's music, a rather ungainly combination. In the spring hearings Taylor had supposedly testified that the government had held up his commission and entrance into the navy until he made this movie. Thomas had cited this as a glaring example of government pressure on the movie industry.

Mayer denied that there had been any government interference, and later he submitted a letter from the Office of War Information to the Department of the Navy which stated that MGM Studios had asked for a delay in the induction of Taylor to permit the completion of the picture. The letter went on to say that the Office of War Information believed that the script would serve a useful purpose in the

⁴⁷ Ibid., 68.

⁴⁸ Testimony of Louis B. Mayer, Oct. 20, 1947, 69-82.

⁴⁹ Times, Oct. 21, 1947.



war effort and that the film "had no political implications, being designed to acquaint the American people with the people of one of our Allied Nations."⁵⁰

Robert Taylor's own testimony, given two days later, must have been an embarrassment to the committee chairman. The film star now confessed that he did not think that "Song of Russia" was made at the suggestion of the government, and he admitted that he had not been forced to make the picture.⁵¹ Again too the committee looked foolish when it allowed one of its special investigators, H. A. Smith, to ask Mayer if the picture showed conditions as they existed in 1947.⁵² As the movie was filmed in 1943, this was highly unlikely.

To finish his defense of "Song of Russia," Mayer cited several reviews from some leading papers:

New York Post: A pretty little romance with a made-in-America back-drop of Russia...cozy, clean, luxuriously musical film.

London Daily Sketch: ...turned out to be strictly an American anthem.

Washington Post: It is one film about Russia which will probably be little assailed as propoganda.

New York Herald Tribune: Russia itself has all too little to do with 'Song of Russia.'⁵³

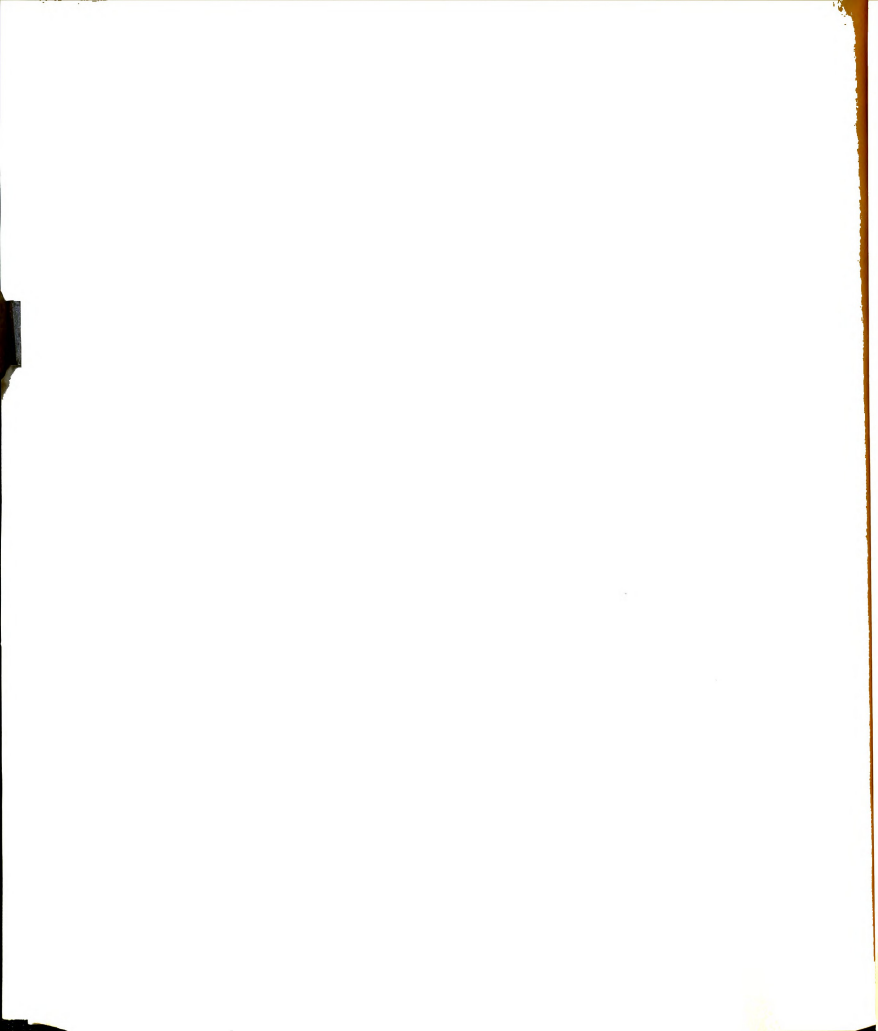
This scarcely sounded like the pro-Russian film that Chairman Thomas had earlier cited as an example of a subver-

⁵⁰ Mayer testimony, Oct. 20, 1947, 32.

⁵¹ Testimony of Robert Taylor, Oct. 22, 1947, 166.

⁵² Mayer testimony, Oct. 20, 1947, 76.

⁵³ Ibid., 81.



sive Hollywood picture produced under White House pressure, and to refute Mayer's testimony he now called one of the committee's own film critics to the stand. Ayn Rand qualified not only as a movie expert, but the fact that she had lived in Russia until 1926 made her an acceptable judge of that country, though one would have thought of an earlier period than the one in which the committee was interested.⁵⁴

Miss Rand was vehemently anti-Communist, a fact that seemed to cloud her judgment on the subject. She insisted that the very picture of the hammer and sickle in the "Song of Russia" made her so sick that she could not understand how "native Americans" permitted this.⁵⁵ The fact that the movie showed happy Russian children and smiling Russian people was also cited by her as proof of the film's unreliability. Such an allegation resulted in the following exchange between Committeeman McDowell and Miss Rand:

Mr. McDowell: You paint a very dismal picture of Russia. You make a great point about the number of children who were unhappy. Doesn't anybody smile in Russia anymore?

Miss Rand: Well, if you ask me literally, pretty much no.

Mr. McDowell: They don't smile?

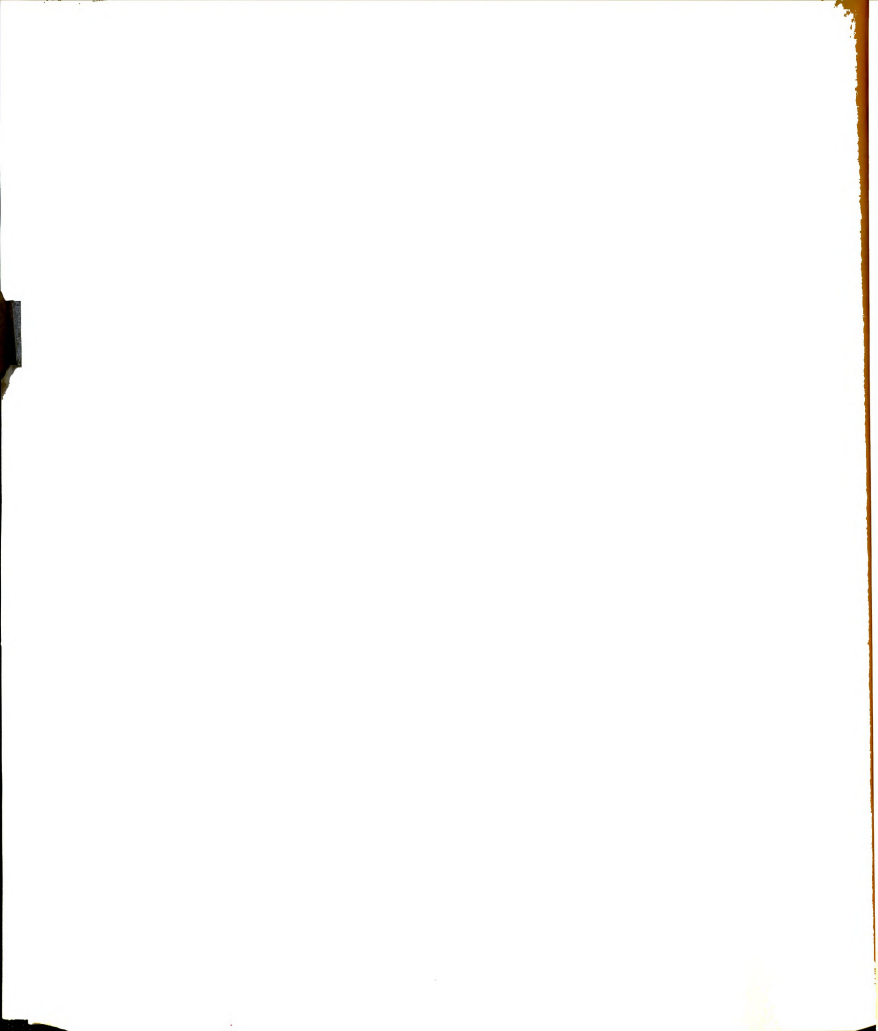
Miss Rand: Not quite that way, no. If they do, it is privately and accidentally. Certainly it is not social. They don't smile in approval of their system.⁵⁶

Miss Rand's final objection to the film was that it had not attacked the Soviet Union as she felt any "honest"

⁵⁴ Testimony of Ayn Rand, Oct. 20, 1947, 82-90.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 83.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 90.



American film should, a point with which Chairman Thomas readily agreed.⁵⁷

So ended the first day of the fall hearings. Four rather entertaining witnesses had been heard, two movies were examined for subversive content, and the newspapers had their headlines. But it was only the beginning.

The committee heard three witnesses on the second day, and all three willingly testified on the significant inroads the Communists were making into the movie industry. The first, Adolph Menjou, was another self-styled expert on un-American activities who had not only studied the workings of communism abroad but who had also determined "its probable effects on the American people if they [sic] ever gain power here."⁵⁸ Menjou testified to the Communist propaganda in certain movies, but he admitted that it was difficult to recognize because "it was so subtle that it was never obvious;" nor was he more specific when asked if he actually knew any Communists:

Mr. Menjou: I know a great many people who act an awful lot like Communists.

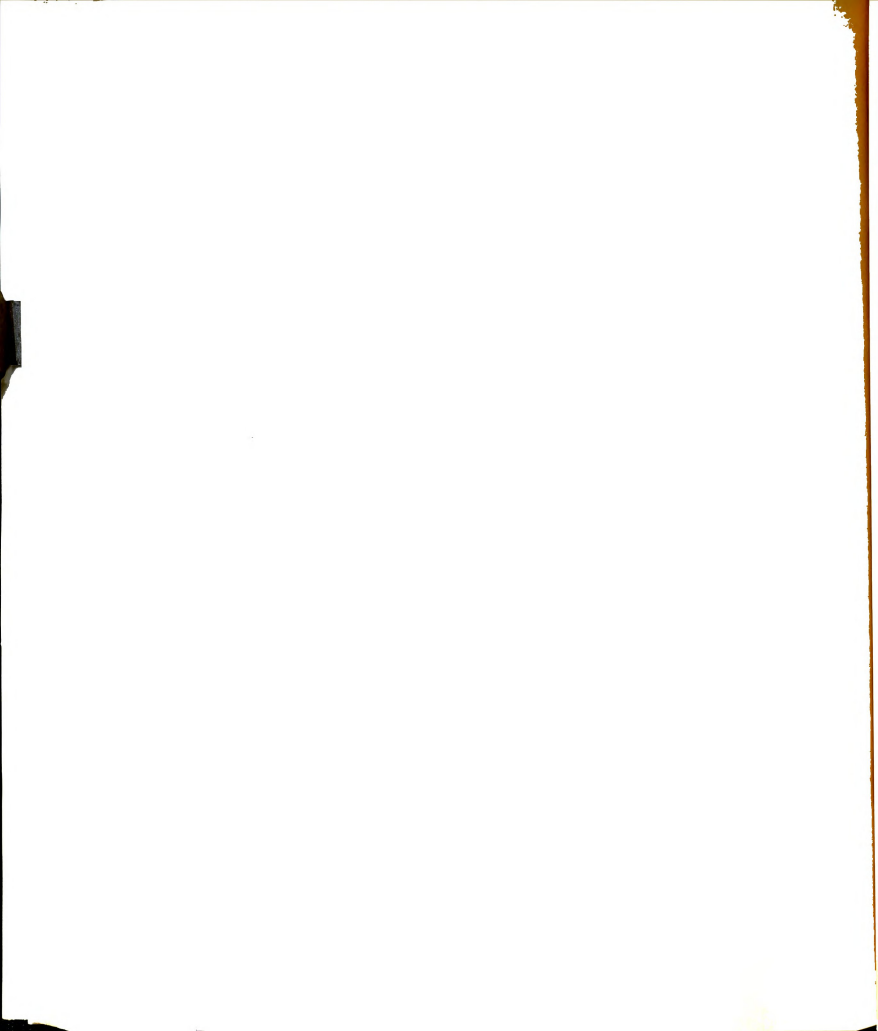
.....

Mr. Stripling: As an actor, Mr. Menjou, could you tell the committee whether or not an actor in a picture could portray a scene which would in effect serve as propoganda for communism or any other un-American purpose?

Mr. Menjou: Oh, yes. I believe that under certain circumstances a communistic director, a communistic writer, or a communistic actor even if he were under orders from the head of the studio not to inject communism or un-Americanism or subversion into pictures,

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Testimony of Adolph Menjou, Oct. 21, 1947, 91-108.



could easily subvert that order, under the proper circumstances, by a look, by an inflection, by a change in the voice. I think it could be easily done. I have never seen it done, but I think it could be done.⁵⁹

The fact that Menjou admitted he had never seen an example of what he was describing but only "thought" it could be done was scarcely the kind of proof the committee should have been seeking; likewise, Menjou's later comment that anyone applauding or listening to Paul Robeson should be ashamed of his Americanism brought no challenge from the committee.⁶⁰ After stating that he was quite sure that Stalin had poisoned Lenin, Menjou concluded his testimony with the promise to move to Texas if the Reds came "because the Texans would kill them on sight."⁶¹

John Charles Moffitt followed Menjou to the stand.⁶² Unlike Menjou, who admitted that the only real Communist he had ever met had been the Russian ambassador to England, Moffitt had seen Communists everywhere. Moffitt had been a motion picture reviewer for Esquire magazine and as such he qualified as one of the reliable critics on the subject of subversive films which the committee had promised.

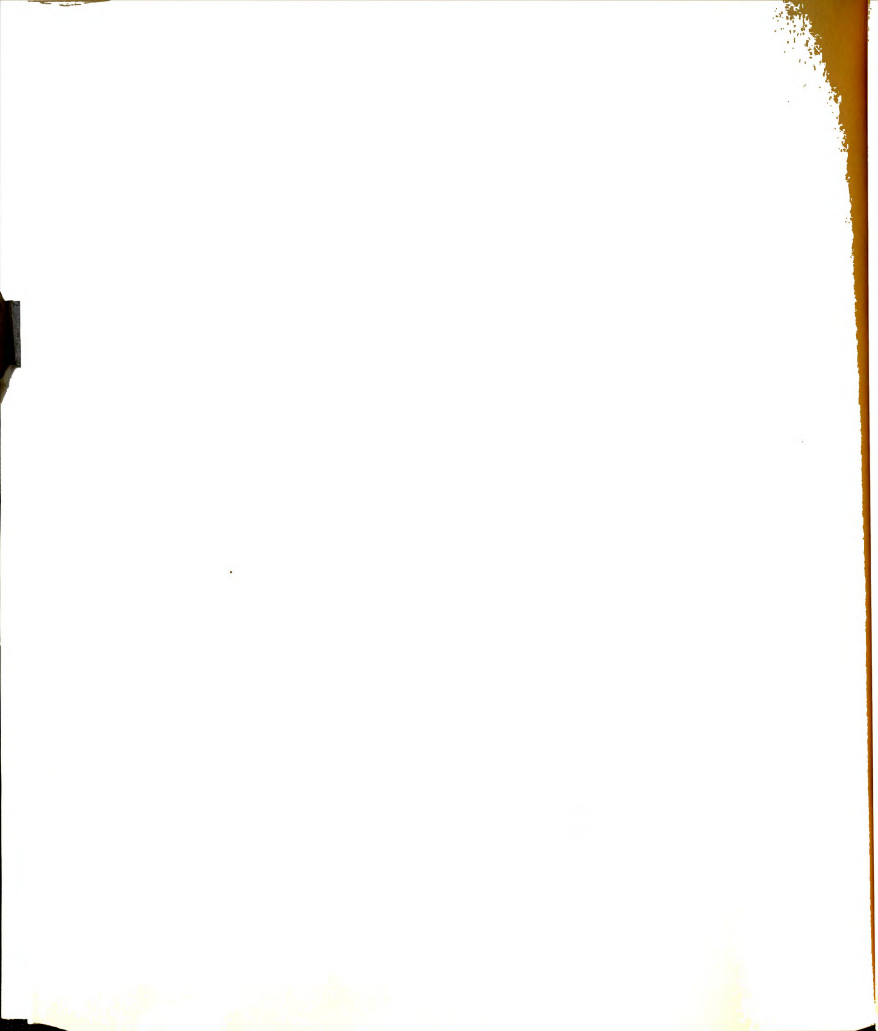
Moffitt's testimony extended all the way from Hollywood to New York. He statistically declared that "forty-four out of one hundred of the best plays produced on Broadway

⁵⁹ Ibid., 94.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 104.

⁶¹ Ibid., 106.

⁶² Testimony of John Moffitt, Oct. 21, 1947, 108-127.



from 1936 through the season of 1946 have contained material to further the Communist Party line....233 other plays produced during the same period favor the party line."⁶³ No specific examples were offered; and the witness, under Stripling's gentle prodding, admitted that he had read only the condensed versions in the Burns Collection of Ten Best Plays; and as to the other 233 plays cited he confessed that he had not read them all.⁶⁴ Moffitt later volunteered that the number of novels "that contained the Communist line during that same period is not complete but the proportions are the same or worse than those of Broadway."⁶⁵

When Moffitt finally returned to the subject of Hollywood, it was to explain how the Communist line was so subtly interjected into pictures. He claimed that he had heard John Howard Lawson, a member of the Screen Writers Guild, give the following lecture to aspiring young actors:

It is your duty to further the class struggle by your performance. If you are nothing more than an extra wearing white flannels on a country club veranda, do your best to appear decadent; do your best to appear to be a snob; do your best to create class antagonism. If you are an extra on a tenement street do your best to look down trodden, do your best to look a victim of existing society.⁶⁶

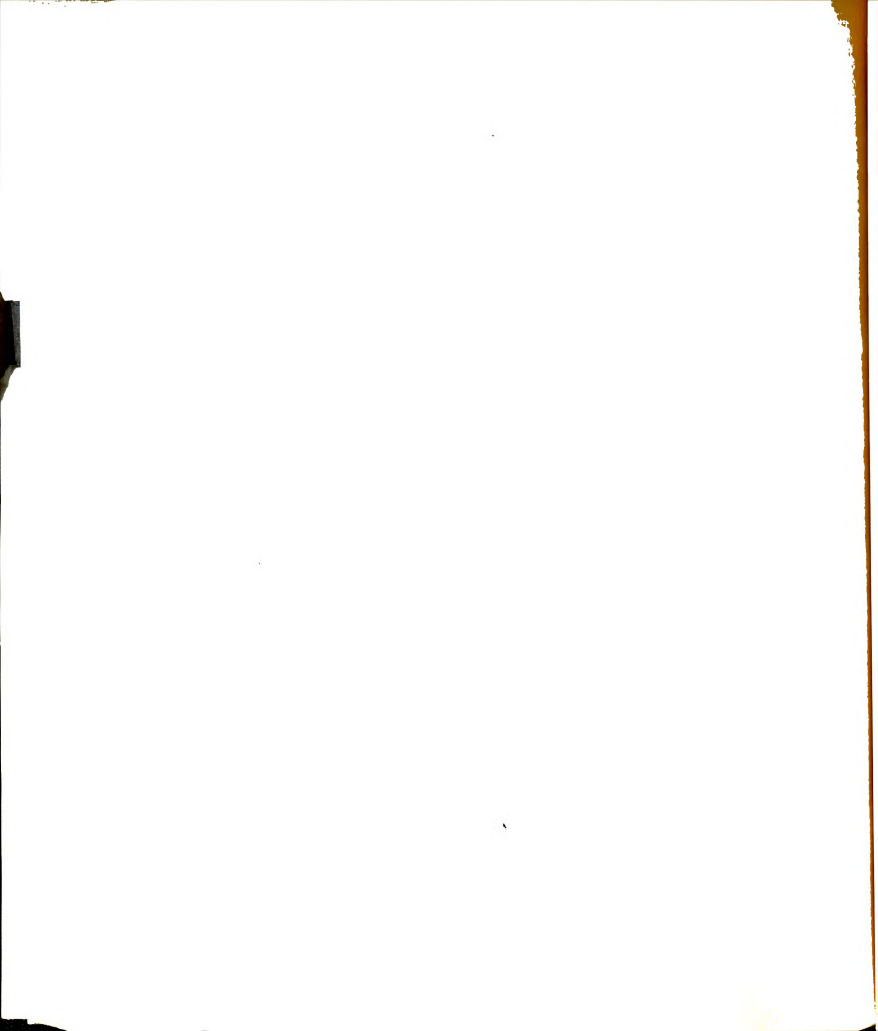
But when asked about who was responsible for such behavior during the actual filming, Moffitt seemed at a loss:

⁶³ Ibid., 114.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 115.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 112.



I think that many a time an actor plays that five minutes without knowing the significance of what he is doing. I think on many occasions--I think on practically every occasion that I know of the producer, both the associate producer and the studio heads, was in complete ignorance of what was done. I think very often the director may not know.⁶⁷

Indeed, in the last analysis it seemed that only Mr. Moffitt and the writer who perpetrated the deed knew what was happening, and this appeared harmless enough. It was remarkable that an individual so lacking in subtlety in his own character could be so adroit at discovering the subversive nuances in the actual films.

The final witness of the day, Ruppert Hughes, testified about a different kind of Communist subversion.⁶⁸ Hughes, a screen writer, insisted that no anti-Communist pictures could be made because of the fear of "a conspiracy to wreck the theaters, put stinkpots in the theaters, parade in front, picket them, and everything else."⁶⁹ When Hughes claimed that the directors who might have produced anti-Communist pictures were thus scared into silence, he was interrupted by an eager Thomas:

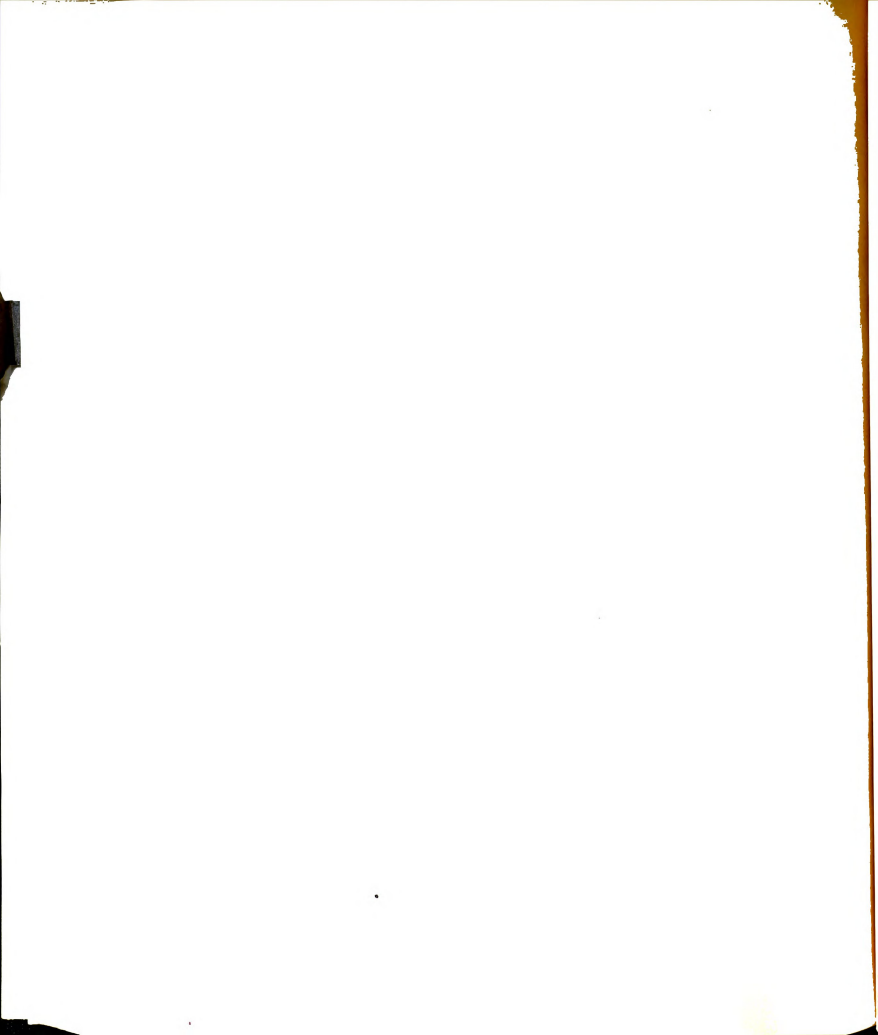
Mr. Hughes, you may have brought in a new point that we have not had given to us before, and that is the main reason why the producers do not show anti-Communist films, because of the fear they would have that the Communists would go there and disrupt the audience in the theater and in that way they would not make any money as a result of showing these pictures.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Ibid., 121.

⁶⁸ Testimony of Ruppert Hughes, Oct. 21, 1947, 128-134.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 132.

⁷⁰ Ibid.



The next day Committeeman Richard Nixon, referring back to the Hughes testimony, made a telling rebuttal to this type of argument and effectively brought it to an end:

If those tactics--the stench bomb, the pickets and the usual tactics which are used by the Communists when they don't like what is going on in the theater, or in any kind of a building--were used, wouldn't that be the finest advertising that a motion picture could get and wouldn't that probably make the picture from the standpoint of the public acceptance?⁷¹

Unfortunately Nixon attended few of these hearings on Hollywood. His abilities at cross-examining could have been put to effective use; but, as Thomas later told the author, Nixon felt rather uncomfortable with the committee investigating one of his state's most important industries.⁷²

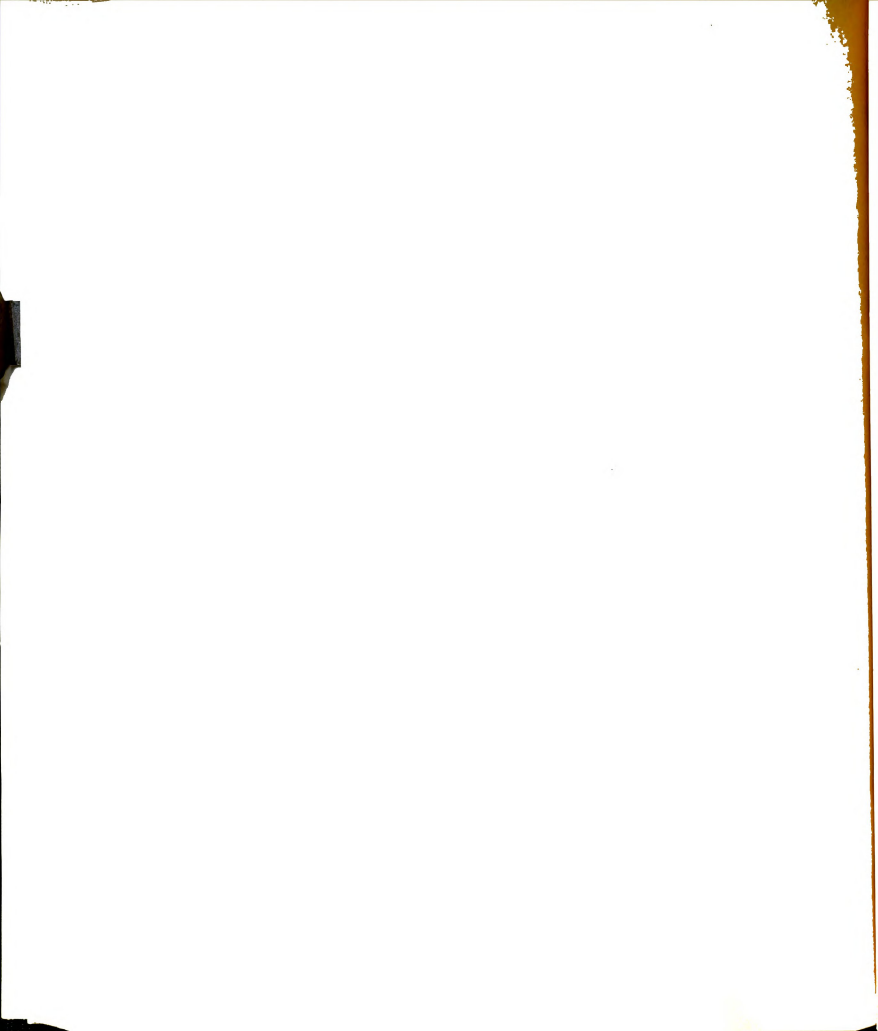
Hughes' final comment on personal liberties brought a fitting close to another hectic and confusing day: "I am the utmost believer in tolerance there ever was, but it is not tolerance to permit people to do things to destroy tolerance."⁷³

The third day of the hearings pretty much followed the pattern of the first two. Four sympathetic witnesses were heard, but little in the way of new evidence was added. Stripling continued to handle the major share of the questioning with the other committee members interrupting from time to time to make comments or to pose questions of their own. Thomas too seemed content to let Stripling handle the

⁷¹Hollywood hearings, Oct. 22, 1947, 145.

⁷²Personal Interview.

⁷³Hughes testimony, 134.

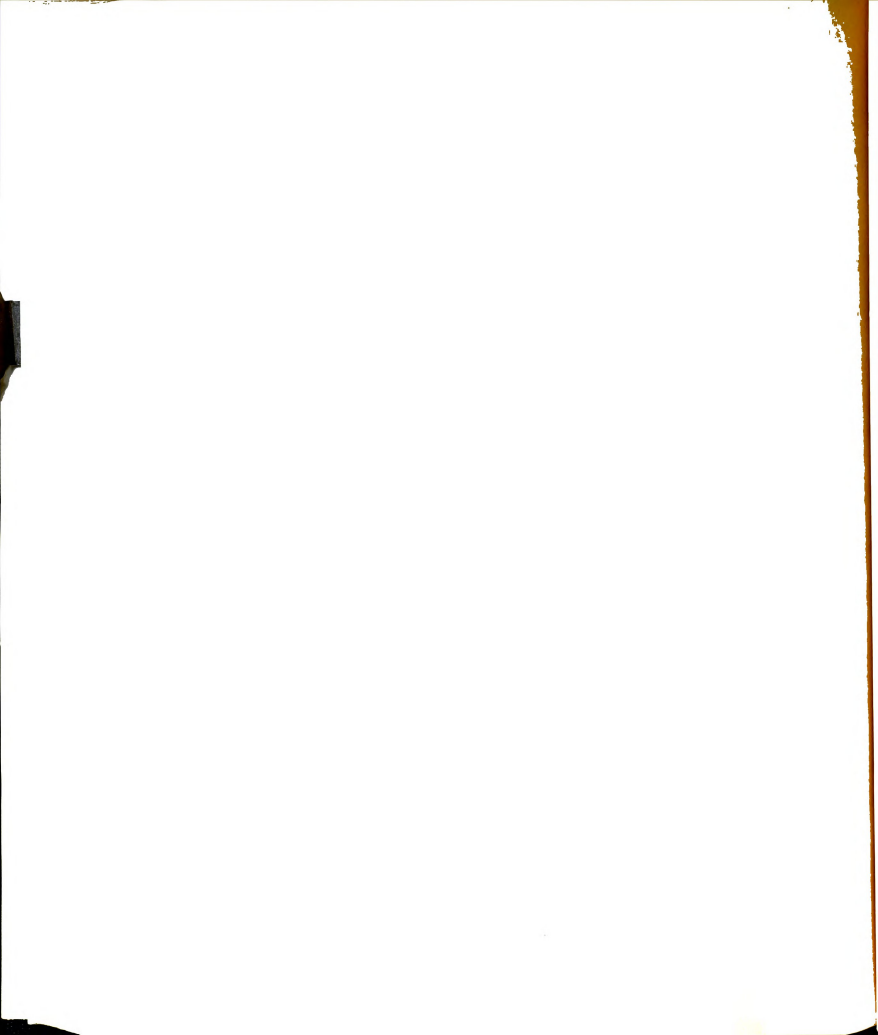


testimony of the friendly witnesses; the chairman would wait for those of a more hostile nature before giving Srippling much of a helping hand; for the time being he was content to handle the press releases. The hearings were carried on the front pages of most papers, and here it was the chairman who was quoted, not his chief counsel.

A good example of this occurred in the October 22 papers. This was the day after the Menjou-Moffitt-Hughes testimony. Menjou did have his picture on the front pages of the Washington Post and the Chicago Tribune, but the headlines belonged to Thomas.⁷⁴ The chairman had stated that the committee would soon produce evidence that "at least seventy-nine persons in Hollywood" had engaged in subversive activity. In addition, he promised a surprise witness for the following week with evidence on how data on an Army supersonic plane had fallen into Communist hands through a Hollywood literary agent. Even the New York Times seemed excited about such disclosures, and its page-one headline read "Seventy-Nine in Hollywood Found Subversive, Inquiry Head Says;" and the subheadline added "Evidence of Communist Spying Will Be Offered Next Week, Thomas Declares."⁷⁵ It mattered not that the "surprise witness" turned out to be the committee's own Louis Russell and that his information had been known to

⁷⁴ Post and Tribune, Oct. 22, 1947.

⁷⁵ Times, Oct. 22, 1947.



the FBI for years;⁷⁶ the committee and its chairman had their headlines, and with his promise of greater future disclosures Thomas had adroitly diverted the public's attention from the immediate hearings which had certainly been somewhat less than convincing.

Robert Taylor was the main attraction as the committee went into its third day of hearings.⁷⁷ As already noted, Mr. Taylor was a rather confused witness on the subject of whether the government had actually intervened in his "Song of Russia." The rest of his testimony also suffered from inconsistency. It appeared that Taylor was only ready to take his cues at committee direction, but when these became confused so did Mr. Taylor:

Mr. Stripling: Mr. Taylor, do you consider that the motion picture primarily is a vehicle of entertainment and not of propaganda?

Mr. Taylor: I certainly do. I think it is the primary job of the motion-picture industry to entertain; nothing more, nothing less.

Mr. Stripling: Do you think the industry would be in a better position if it stuck strictly to entertainment without permitting political films to be made, without being so labeled?

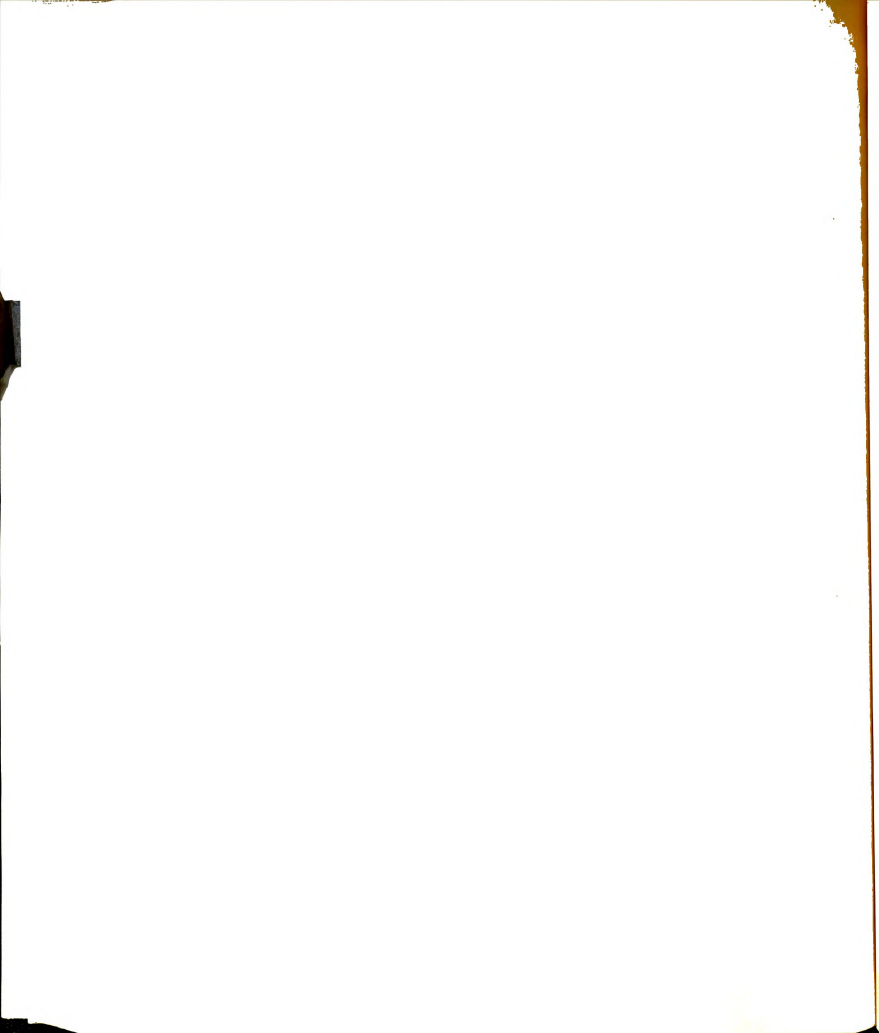
Mr. Taylor: I certainly do.⁷⁸

The above testimony was given in reference to alleged Communist attempts to subvert the film industry. When it came time for some Thomas-approved propaganda, Mr. Taylor was forced to contradict himself:

⁷⁶ Post, Oct. 31, 1947; according to the Post by the time Russell appeared as the so-called "surprise witness," he had already appeared before the committee eleven times, usually to present evidence against recalcitrant witnesses.

⁷⁷ Testimony of Robert Taylor, Oct. 22, 1947, 164-171.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 168.



Mr. Thomas: Mr. Taylor, are you in favor of the motion-picture industry making anti-Communist pictures giving the facts about communism?

Mr. Taylor: Congressman Thomas, when the time arrives--and it might not be long--when pictures of that type are indicated as necessary, I believe the motion-picture industry will and should make anti-Communist pictures. When that time is going to be I don't happen to know but I believe they should and will be made.⁷⁹

Robert Taylor had often been publicized as one of the chairman's prize witnesses, but the inadequacy of his testimony made it increasingly evident that Thomas had picked a weak star for top billing. Taylor had proved especially embarrassing with his about-face on the issue of government pressure, and he ended his testimony by confiding to a New York Times' reporter that he had never knowingly worked with a Communist.⁸⁰

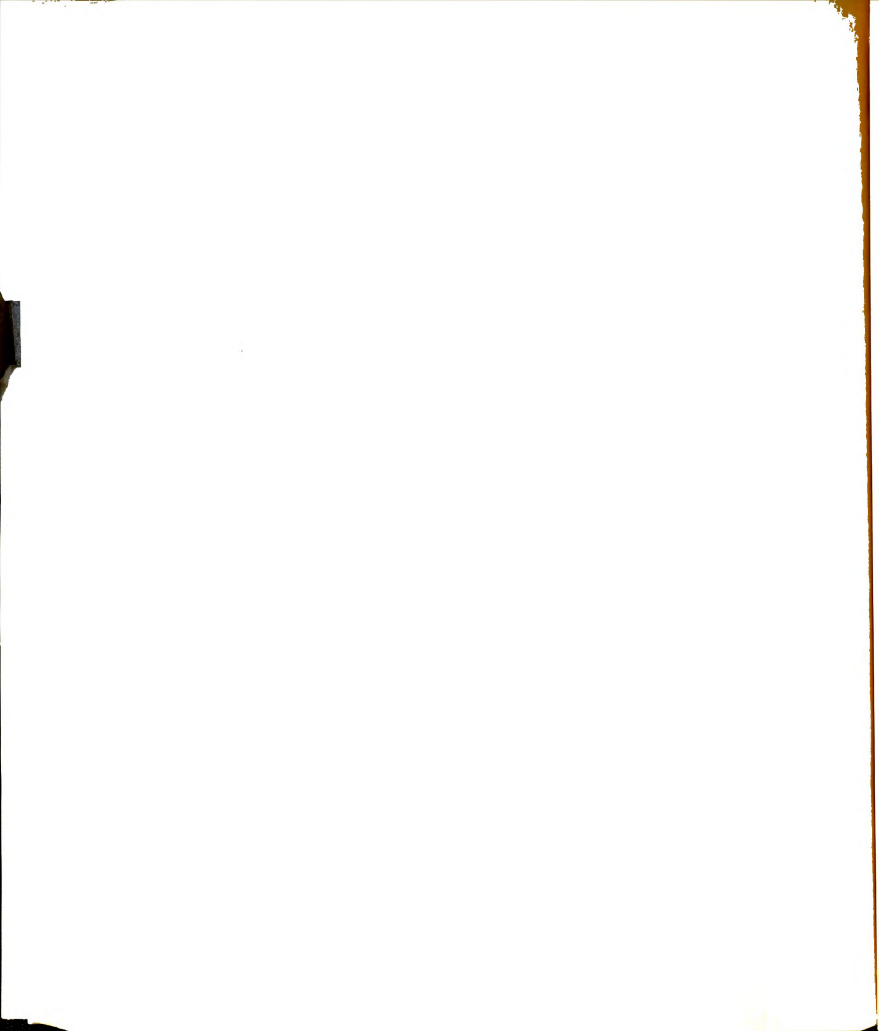
The last two witnesses of the day did not take up much of the committee's time. Howard Rushmore was an ex-Communist who had served as film critic for the Daily Worker and was quite willing to testify on Communist intentions in Hollywood.⁸¹ He did force the committee to take notice when he insisted that the Communist party considered that ninety-nine percent of the actors were "political morons," a statistic that seemed to take on some substance in view of much of their testimony.⁸²

⁷⁹ Ibid., 170.

⁸⁰ Times, Oct. 23, 1947.

⁸¹ Testimony of Howard Rushmore, Oct. 22, 1947, 171-181.

⁸² Ibid., 177.



Morrie Ryskind provided a bit of comic relief at the end of another exhausting day. Ryskind felt he qualified as an expert on the workings of the Communist movement because, among other reasons, he and his wife had been duped into joining and contributing to Communist-front organizations.⁸³ He later admitted that "you'd have to be deaf and dumb not to know there are Communists in Hollywood. And even then if you used your nose, you'd know the odor was still there."⁸⁴ But other than his admission of his own culpability little new was added.

The fourth day of the hearings saw more of Hollywood's finest parade through the witness stand, and once again all proved to be friendly witnesses. Robert Montgomery, Gary Cooper, George Murphy, and Ronald Reagan headed-up Thursday's all-star cast.

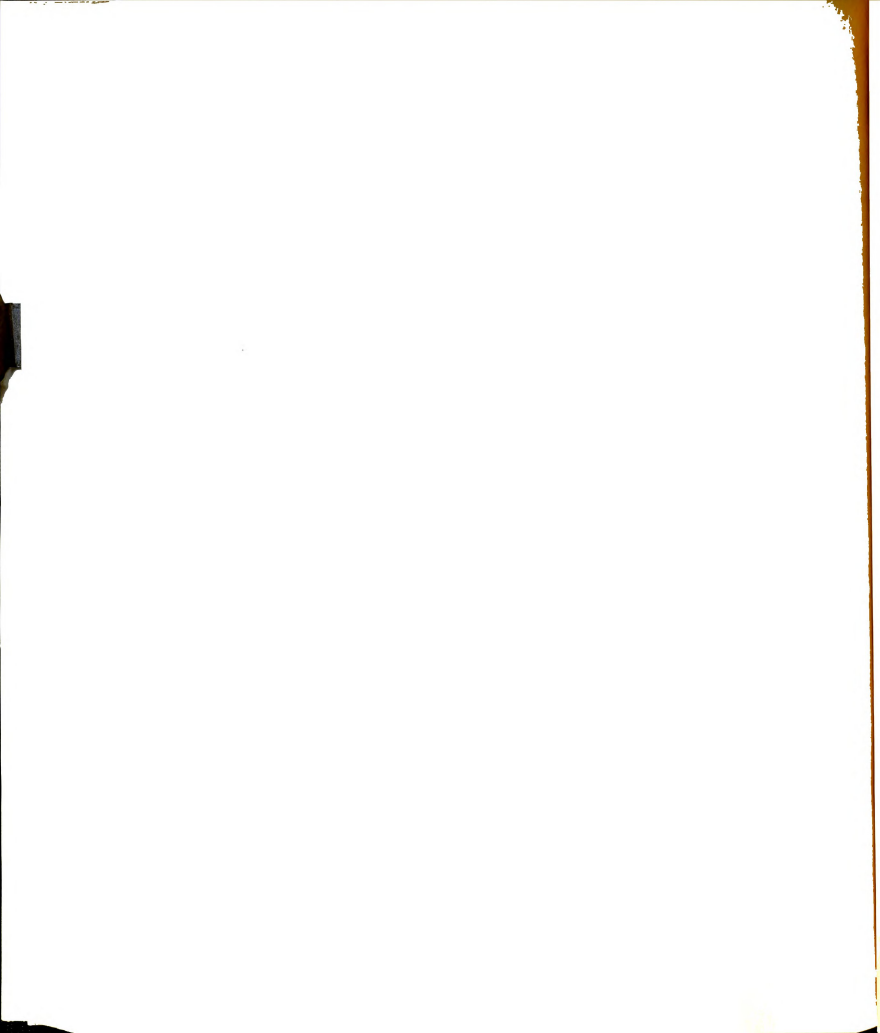
Robert Montgomery, though strongly anti-Communist, testified that the Communists had never dominated the Screen Actors Guild;⁸⁵ George Murphy likewise defended the Actor's Guild though he did advocate outlawing the Communist party and the making of anti-Communist films;⁸⁶ Ronald Reagan, then the president of the Screen Actors Guild, acknowledged that he had "heard" from reliable sources that certain

⁸³ Testimony of Morrie Ryskind, Oct. 22, 1947, 181-188.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 187.

⁸⁵ Testimony of Robert Montgomery, Oct. 23, 1947, 187-196.

⁸⁶ Testimony of George Murphy, Oct. 23, 1947, 207-213.



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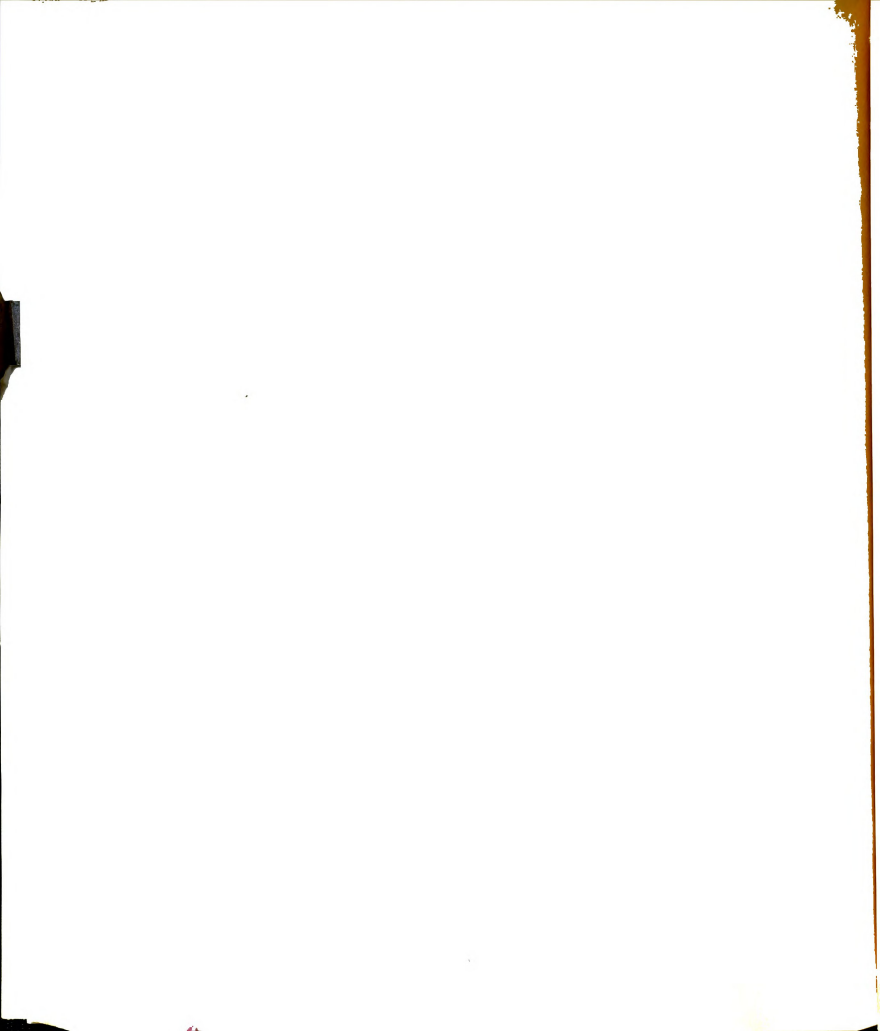
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⁸⁵ Testimony of Robert Montgomery, Oct. 23, 1947, 187-196.

⁸⁶ Testimony of George Murphy, Oct. 23, 1947, 207-213.



members of the Guild were Communists.⁸⁷ Reagan followed this with a warning which seemed curiously out of step with his own willingness to repeat hearsay evidence:

I hope that we are never prompted by fear or resentment of communism into compromising any of our democratic principles in order to fight them. The best thing to do in opposing those people is to make democracy work.⁸⁸

Gary Cooper tried to be of help to the committee when he testified that he had turned down quite a few scripts because he "thought they were tinged with Communist ideas;" but, even with Thomas encouraging him, he could not recall any specific examples.⁸⁹

One of the most striking things about the entire hearings was the fact that these Hollywood stars were considered experts on the workings of communism by Thomas and the committee. Each of them was asked for his opinion on the proposed legislation to outlaw the Communist party. In response to just such a question from the chairman, Gary Cooper candidly manifested how unqualified he was to venture any kind of an opinion on the subject of communism:

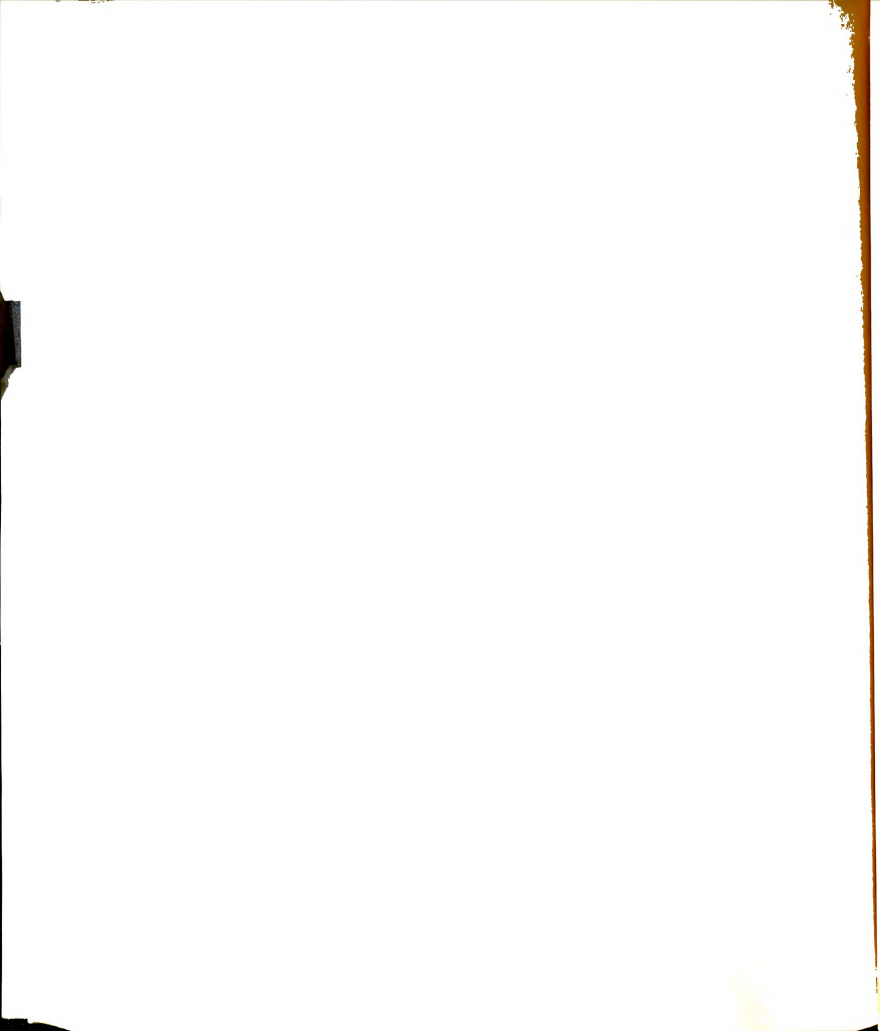
I think it would be a good idea, although I have never read Karl Marx, and I don't know the basis of communism, beyond what I have picked up by hearsay. From what I hear, I don't like it because it isn't on the level. So I couldn't possibly answer that question.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Testimony of Ronald Reagan, Oct. 23, 1947, 213-218.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 218.

⁸⁹ Testimony of Gary Cooper, Oct. 23, 1947, 218-224.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 224.



It also became increasingly evident that most of these actors, even with Stripling or Thomas leading them through a well-worn script, were curiously out of their element when on the stage of the Committee on Un-American Activities.

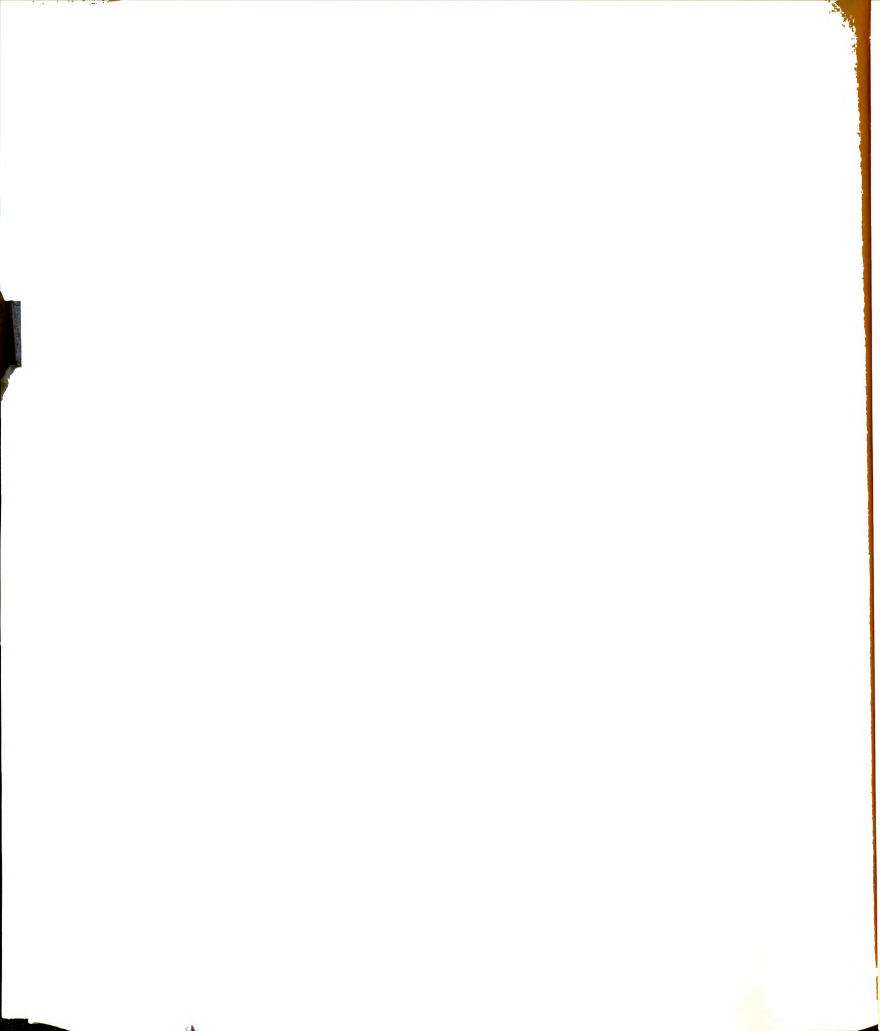
On Friday Mrs. Lela Rogers, the mother and manager of Ginger, and the loudest feminine voice in the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals, provided the committee with some testimony which left no doubt about her own anti-Communist convictions.⁹¹ She testified that one of the screen writers whom she knew to be a Communist was Clifford Odets. When asked on what she based her accusation, she replied, "I have here a column of Mr. O. O. McIntyre, datelined January 8, 1936, in which Mr. McIntyre says Mr. Clifford Odets, play writer, is a member of the Communist party. I never saw that denied."⁹²

Mrs. Rogers also took Odets to task for writing and directing the screen version of "None But the Lonely Hearts." When McDowell asked for specific examples of Communist propaganda in the movie, Mrs. Rogers' answer, though lengthy, was a classic in its hazy ambiguity and its tortured syntax:

I can't quote the lines of the play exactly but I can give you the sense of them. There is one place in which--it is unfair, may I say, to take a scene from its context and try to make it sound like Communist propaganda, because a Communist is very careful, very clever, and very devious in the way he sets the film.

⁹¹Testimony of Lela Rogers, Oct. 24, 1947, 229-237.

⁹²Ibid., 231.



If I were to give you a line from that play straight out you would say, 'What is wrong with that line?' unless you knew that the Communist is trying in every way to tear down our free-enterprise system, to make the people lose faith in it, so that they will want to get something else--and the Communists have it waiting for them.

I will tell you of one line. The mother in the story runs a second-hand store. The son says to her, 'You are not going to'--in essence, I am not quoting this exactly because I can't remember it exactly--he said to her, 'You are not going to get me to work here and squeeze pennies out of little people poorer than I am.'

Now, laid upon the background of--that's the free-enterprise system--trade, and we don't necessarily squeeze pennies from people poorer than we are. Many people are poorer and many people are richer.

As I say, you find yourself in an awful hole the moment you start to remove one of the scenes from its context.⁹³

If Mrs. Rogers was getting herself into "an awful hole," the committee did not seem to notice, and her advice too was solicited on the subject of outlawing the Communist party:

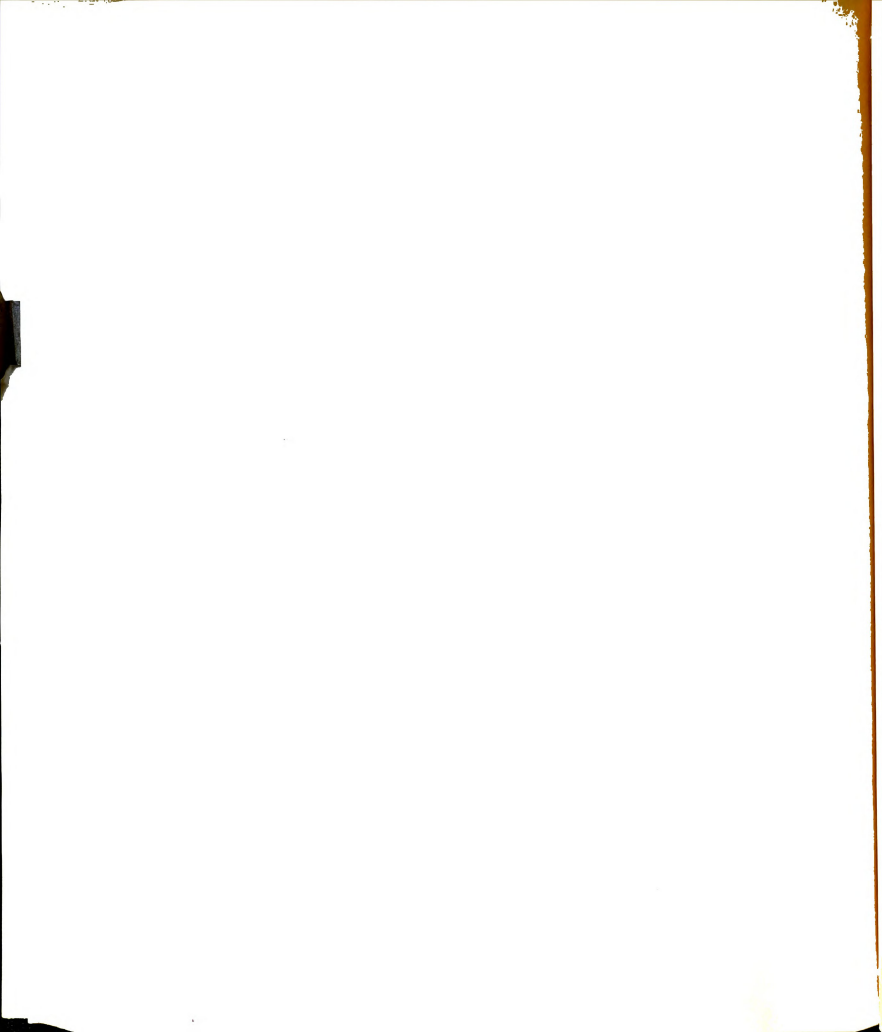
Well, I would suggest that the Congress of the United States immediately enact such legislation as will preserve the Bill of Rights to the people for whom it was designed.⁹⁴

When she also tried to explain how the Communists could be so effective in Hollywood when they comprised only about one percent of the movie population, she engaged in the following interesting exchange with Committeeman Richard Vail:

Mr. Vail: But, in other words, to be effective on the Hollywood scene wouldn't you imagine that they have to have greater numerical strength, greater than one percent.

⁹³Ibid., 233.

⁹⁴Ibid., 234.



Mrs. Rogers: You are thinking like an American, sir.

Mr. Vail: That is the way I like to think.

Mrs. Rogers: That is right, and you should, and that is why it is so hard for the Americans to understand.⁹⁵

That Thomas and his committee could, with complete sincerity, present such a witness was remarkable in itself, but the fact that they accepted her testimony almost without challenge seemed even more extraordinary. Committeeman McDowell summed it up when he called Lela Rogers "one of the outstanding experts on communism in the United States, and particularly in the amusement industry;"⁹⁶ but, pathetically enough, it was her industrious testimony that seemed amusing.

The last of the sympathetic notables was Walt Disney.⁹⁷ He had testified before the committee on previous occasions and it knew what to expect. Disney told of Communists trying to organize his studio workers who, according to Mr. Disney, were opposed to any attempts at such pressure. Disney too had an interesting way of judging one's Americanism as in the following case concerning one of his employees he had recently fired:

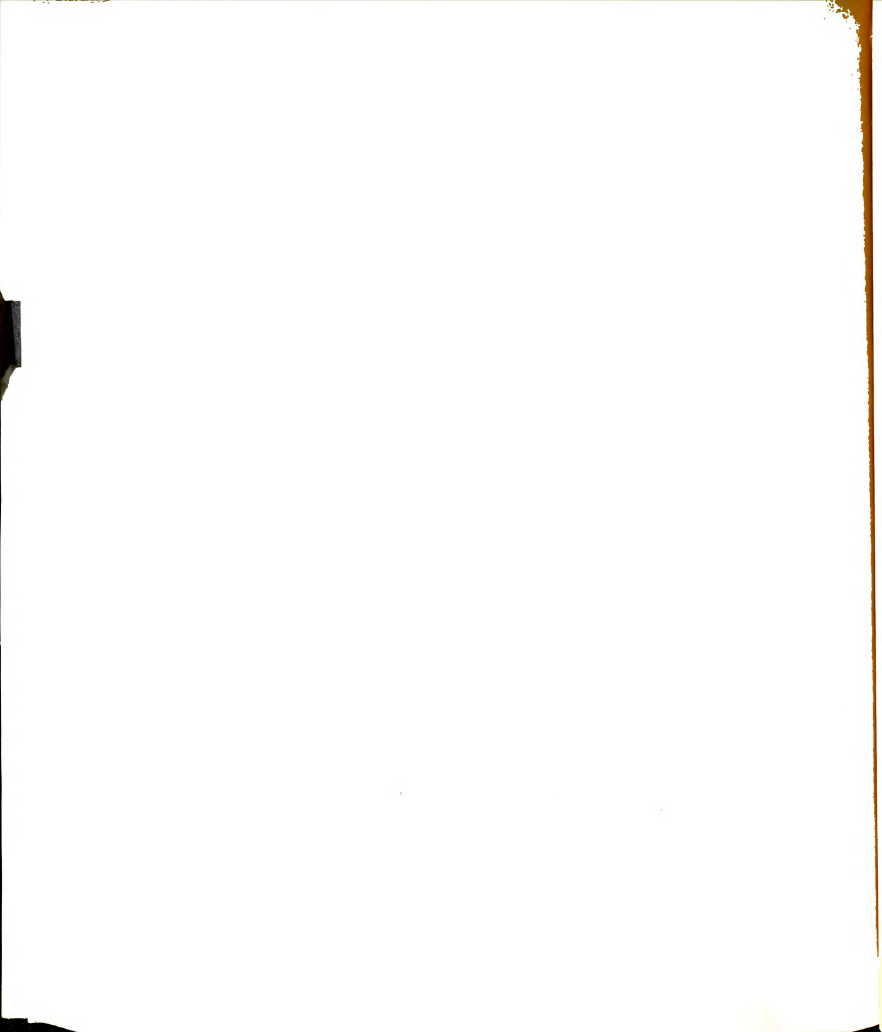
I looked into his record and I found, number one, that he had no religion; and, number two, that he had spent considerable time at the Moscow Art Theater studying art direction or something.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Ibid., 235.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 237.

⁹⁷ Testimony of Walt Disney, Oct. 24, 1947, 280-286.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 284.

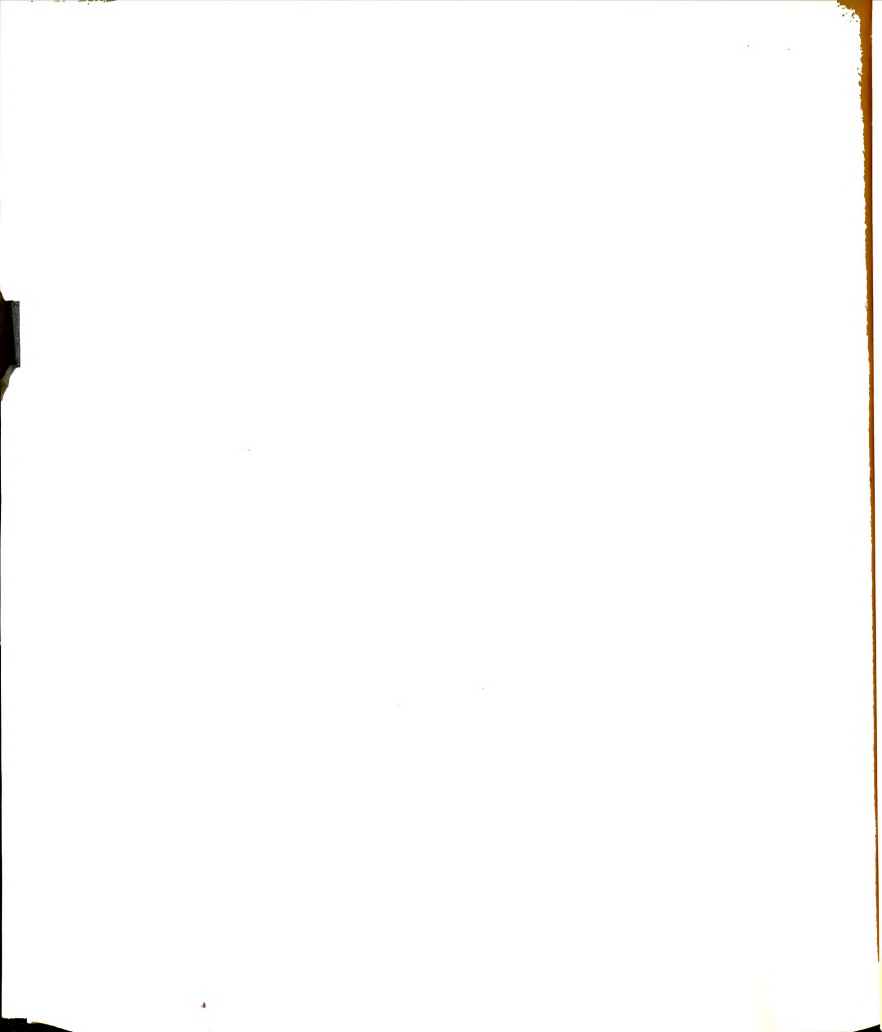


So ended the parade of stars. They had testified that there were Communists in Hollywood, and some of them had found the Reds to be a real and active threat to the film industry and to the country as a whole. But most of them, while willing to testify to their own anti-Communist feelings, either denied that the Communists had made any real headway in the film industry, or through their testimony they gave clear evidence that they did not know enough about the subject to comment thereon. It must have been evident to Thomas and the committee that they would have to do more to convince the American people, and, accordingly, the next step was to put on the stand some of the individuals suspected of being part of the Communist conspiracy in movie-land.

The first of the unfriendly witnesses was John Howard Lawson, a well-known screen writer and the man whom John Charles Moffitt had accused of instructing young actors on the art of looking subversive in their film roles.⁹⁹ Lawson's experience as a witness can be examined in detail, for, with minor variations, it was to be repeated in the cases of the other nine witnesses accused of being Communists by the committee.

Upon being sworn in, Lawson produced a written statement and asked permission to read it; however, Thomas decided that the first line "convinced" him that the state-

⁹⁹Testimony of John Howard Lawson, Oct. 27, 1947, 287-304.



ment was improper and should not be read.¹⁰⁰ Lawson was an uncooperative and, at times, unruly witness. He charged that it was the committee which was on trial before the American people rather than himself, and that it had no right to inquire into his associations with any organization. A blustering Thomas interrupted and the first of several angry exchanges between the chairman and his witness ensued:

Mr. Thomas: Mr. Lawson, you will have to stop or you will leave the witness stand. And you will leave the witness stand because you are in contempt. That is why you will leave the witness stand. And if you are just trying to force me to put you in contempt, you won't have to try much harder. You know what has happened to a lot of people that have been in contempt of this committee this year, don't you?

Mr. Lawson: I am glad you have made it perfectly clear that you are going to threaten and intimidate the witness, Mr. Chairman.¹⁰¹

A short time later, when Lawson was asked if he were a member of the Communist party, he and the chairman launched into another noisy exchange--to the credit of neither:

Mr. Thomas: Mr. Lawson--

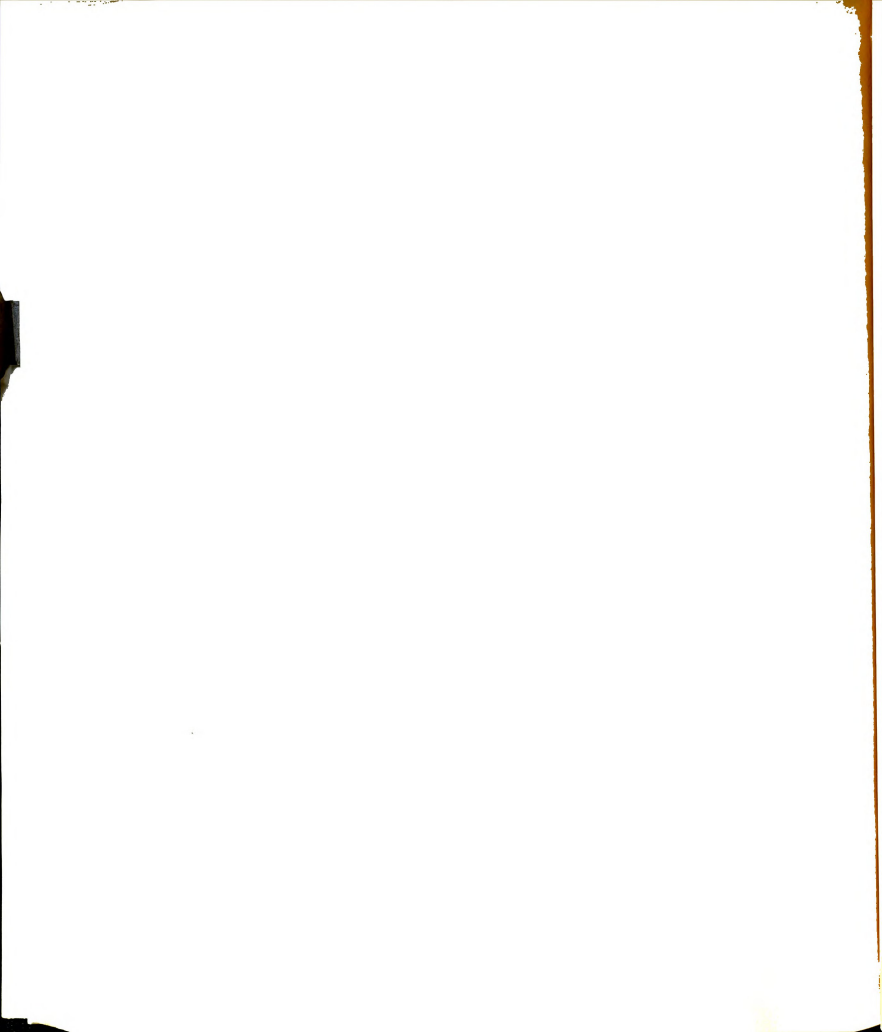
Mr. Lawson: You permit me and my attorneys to bring in here the witnesses that testified last week and you permit us to cross-examine these witnesses, and we will show up the whole tissue of lies.

Mr. Thomas: (pounding gavel) We are going to get the answer to that question if we have to stay here for a week. Are you a member of the Communist party, or have you ever been a member of the Communist party?

Mr. Lawson: It is unfortunate and tragic that I

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 287.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 292.



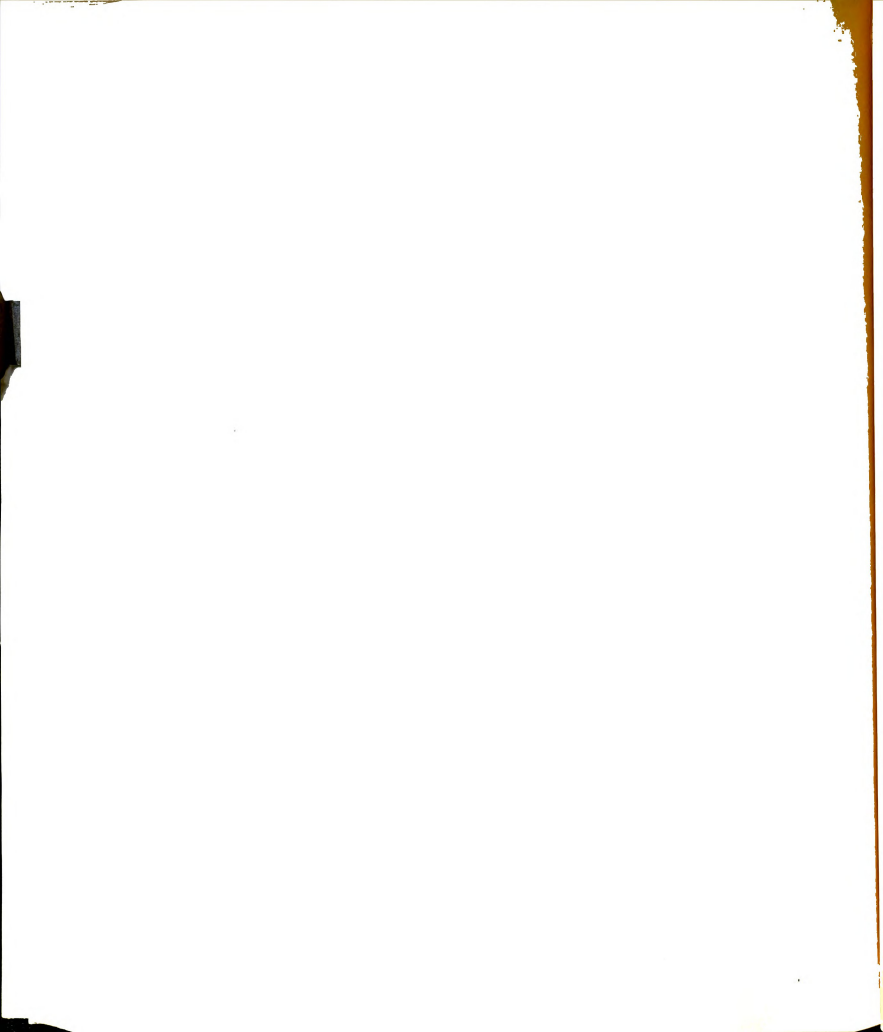
have to teach this committee the basic principles of Americanism.¹⁰²

To be sure Lawson did nothing to help his own cause by engaging in these petty shouting matches with Thomas. But it was also quite clear that the chairman was not going to afford him the same latitude in his remarks that he had the friendly witnesses. With Lawson and the other accused Communists who followed him to the stand, a simple "yes" or "no" answer was often demanded to the questions, and when this was not forthcoming, the witnesses were replaced on the stand by the committee's own investigator.¹⁰³

Chairman Thomas called Louis Russell to the stand to present the committee's case against Lawson. After producing a copy of the Communist party membership card of Lawson, Russell read a six-page document detailing the committee's evidence against the accused. This consisted of a listing of front organizations to which he allegedly either joined or actively supported; writings which the committee considered questionable; praises given to the witness by Leftist newspapers and magazines; and sundry other details. With Lawson, as with most of the other unfriendly witnesses, the Leftist sympathies seemed quite apparent; yet nothing was ever brought out about how he

¹⁰² Ibid., 294.

¹⁰³ The other nine witnesses who followed Lawson, and who were also cited for contempt, were Dalton Trumbo, Albert Maltz, and Alvah Bessie, Oct. 28, 1947, 329-394; Samuel Ornitz, Herbert Biberman, Edward Dmytryk, and Adrian Scott, Oct. 29, 1947, 402-468; and Ring Lardner Jr. and Lester Cole, Oct. 30, 1947, 479-491.



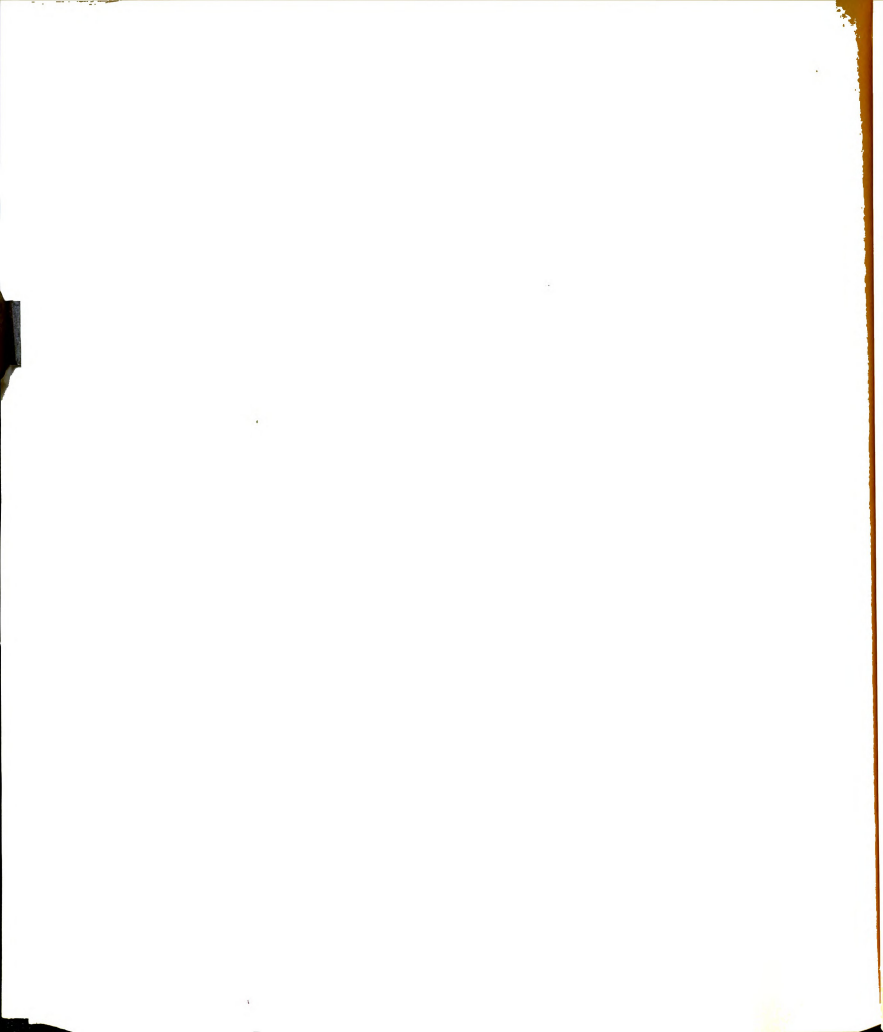
or his colleagues were subverting the film industry; nevertheless, with the copies of the membership cards the committee had given incontestable proof that there were Communists in Hollywood.

The story behind these cards was a fascinating one as Thomas told it to me.¹⁰⁴ He had worked for closer ties with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and three of the committee's investigators, including Louis Russell, were former FBI agents.¹⁰⁵ According to Thomas, it was especially Russell who had always found the backdoor of the Bureau open to him. But in the case of the membership cards he professed that it was someone still in the Bureau who had turned them over to him. As Thomas related it, one night he had received a call from one of J. Edgar Hoover's most trusted lieutenants urging him to a secret meeting with the high-ranking official some place outside of Washington. The place chosen was the fourteenth floor of the old Adelphia Hotel in Philadelphia where, with utmost secrecy, Thomas was given the cards. The official refused to touch anything in the room and indicated a fear that the room might be wired; however, Thomas did not speculate on who might have been responsible for this.

The source of the copied membership cards was never

¹⁰⁴ Personal Interview.

¹⁰⁵ Besides Russell, H. A. Smith and A. B. Leckie were former FBI agents. Thomas made mention of this himself on the first day of the hearings; Hollywood hearings, Oct. 20, 1947, 4-7.



divulged during the hearings though several of the lawyers for the defense made such inquiries. Nor were the witnesses allowed to examine the evidence which the committee was using against them. Dalton Trumbo, one of the accused screen writers, in addition to asking to see the evidence, accused the committee of having previously turned over parts of it to the press:

Mr. Trumbo: I understand that members of the press have been given an alleged Communist party card belonging to me. Is that true?

Mr. Stripling: That is not true.

Mr. Thomas: You are not asking the question--

Mr. Trumbo: I was.

Mr. Thomas: The Chief Investigator is asking the questions.

Mr. Trumbo: I beg your pardon.

Mr. Thomas: Are you or have you ever been a member of the Communist party?

Mr. Trumbo: I believe I have the right to be confronted with any evidence which supports this question. I should like to see what you have.

Mr. Thomas: Oh. Well, you would!

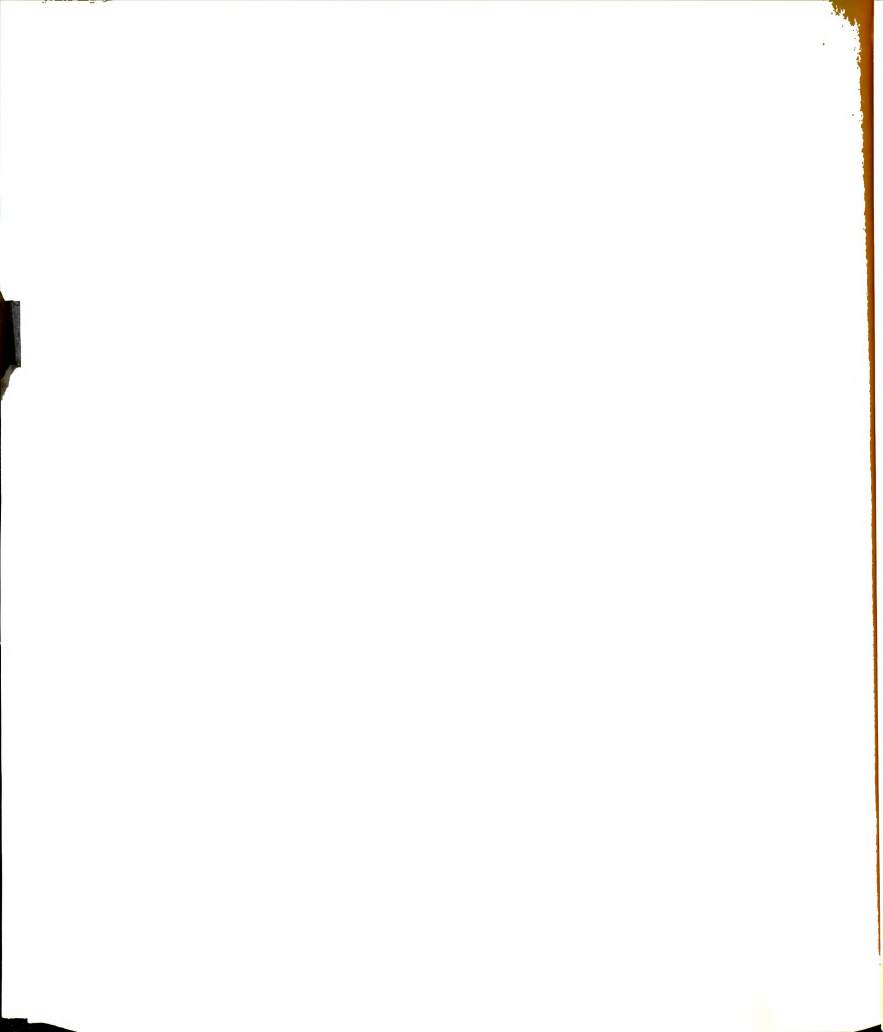
Mr. Trumbo: Yes.

Mr. Thomas: Well, you will, pretty soon. The witness is excused. Impossible.¹⁰⁶

With the increased criticism of the committee by hostile witnesses, Chairman Thomas had found it necessary to interject more of himself into conduct of the actual hearings, and this would become increasingly evident as the hearings drew to a close.

Dalton Trumbo later tried to explain why the "Unholy Ten," as Thomas called them, refused to answer the committee's questions on whether they belonged to the Communist party or to the Screen Writers Guild. In a short

¹⁰⁶Testimony of Dalton Trumbo, Oct. 28, 1947, 334.



pamphlet called The Time of the Toad, Trumbo wrote that he and his accused colleagues felt that if they gave in on any point, they would only help the committee to more unwarranted power.¹⁰⁷ Trumbo also intimated that the Communist registration cards might have been forged. The cards the committee submitted into evidence had "Communist Party of America" printed on them, but he insisted that this was not the name of the party in 1944 when most of these cards were allegedly issued.¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately he did not expand on this latter charge. In May, 1944, the Communist party had changed its name to the American Communist Political Association and so it appeared on the fall ballot. It was not until the following year that it again took its previous name.¹⁰⁹

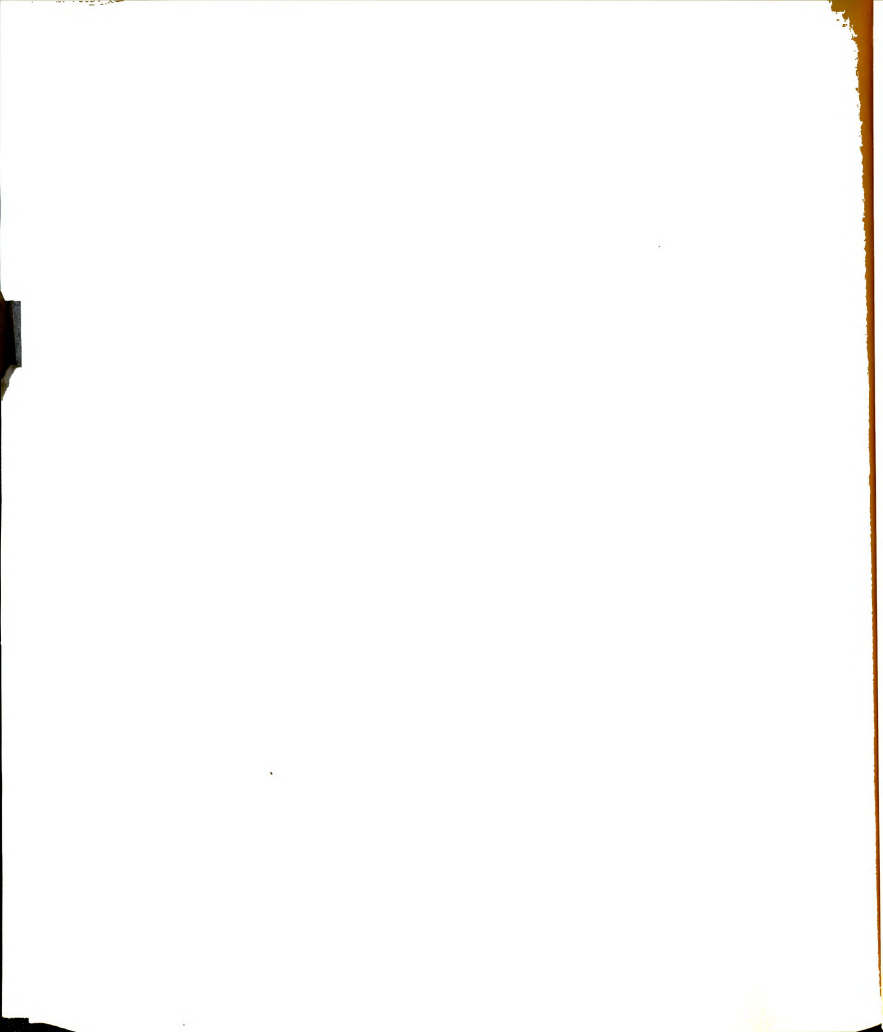
One of the members of the Screen Writers Guild not to be cited for contempt by the committee was the organization's president, Emmet G. Lavery.¹¹⁰ Lavery freely admitted his membership in the Guild and proved most willing to answer the committee's questions; however, he also insisted on the right to challenge some of the previous testimony. Lavery ably defended his guild and refused to agree that the few Communists in the guild presented such a danger

¹⁰⁷ Dalton Trumbo, The Time of the Toad; a Study of the Inquisition in America by One of the Hollywood Ten (Hollywood, 1949).

¹⁰⁸ ibid.

¹⁰⁹ World Almanac, 1945.

¹¹⁰ Testimony of Emmet G. Lavery, Oct. 29, 1947, 419-459.



that they had to be expelled:

I don't know why you rate so highly the influence of Mr. Maltz, Mr. Lawson, Mr. Trumbo. They are able men. They are articulate men. And they are competent screen writers. But they are only a few of a membership of some nine hundred.¹¹¹

When Committeeman Richard Vail responded by asking if Lavery did not think that it was as vital that "the American citizen be as militant in America as these Communists are militant throughout the world," Lavery provided an answer that might well have inspired some soul searching on the part of the committee:

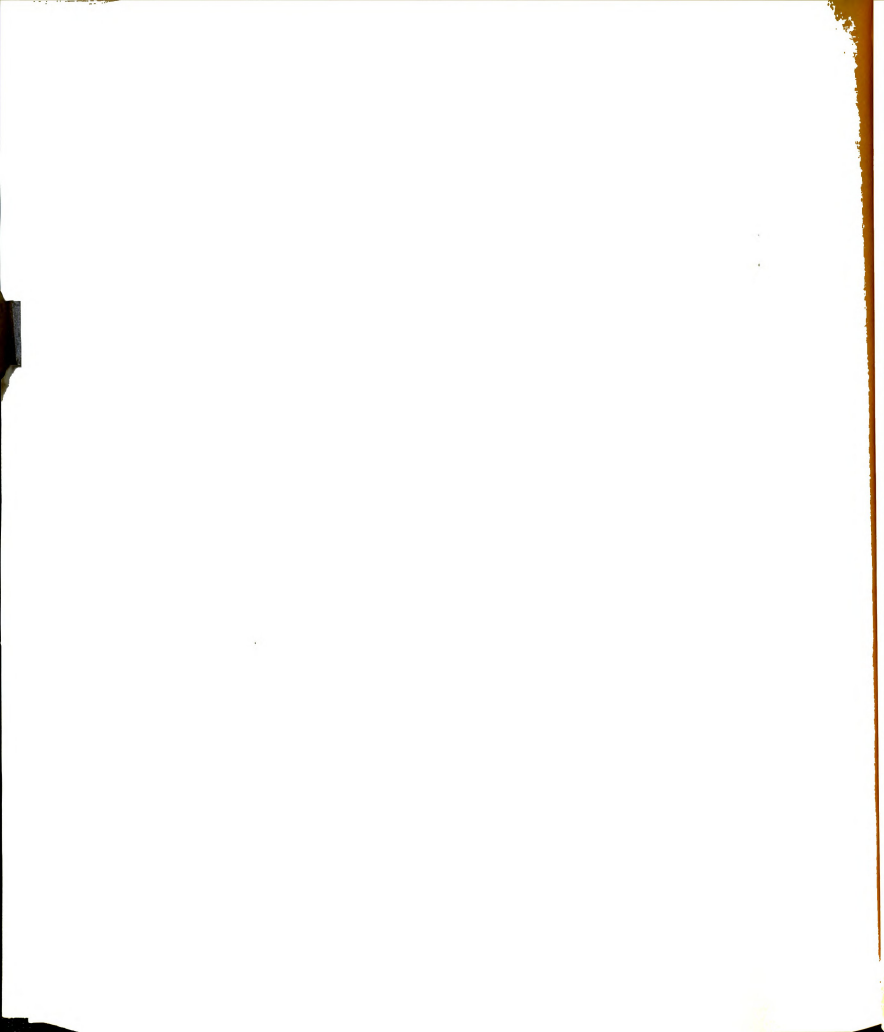
Mr. Congressman, I think there is a better way to do it. I think that if we are to keep harping on the note of fear, it is like the old-fashioned revival or the old-fashioned mission, where you scare the devil out of the parishioners for a week, and after that they are rather accustomed to the notion of fear....I don't think it is enough to make people afraid. I think the problem of all citizens and this Congress is how to make people aware of the active love that they have.... I think the challenge of the theater and the screen is to project an American way of life...that vitalizes the whole tradition of which we are a part.¹¹²

Another witness who was able to criticize the hearings and escape contempt proceedings was Eric Allen Johnston, the president of the Motion Picture Association of America.¹¹³ Men like Lavery and Johnston were able to challenge the committee precisely because they avoided the degrading verbal slugging matches which some of their colleagues had indulged in with the committee chairman. Johnston made some

¹¹¹ Ibid., 451.

¹¹² Ibid., 453.

¹¹³ Testimony of Eric Johnston, Oct. 27, 1947, 304-328.



particularly telling points on the subject of Hollywood films. He reaffirmed the rather obvious fact that American movies were banned in Communist countries precisely because they were so American. He also disputed the chairman's previous disclosure that Communist propaganda films were being produced as a result of White House pressure as not even the most sympathetic witnesses had supported this singular allegation. Finally he asked Thomas and the committee to publish the list which they purportedly had of all subversive films made in the last eight years. Johnston concluded with the warning that we could only protect our freedoms by being truly free:

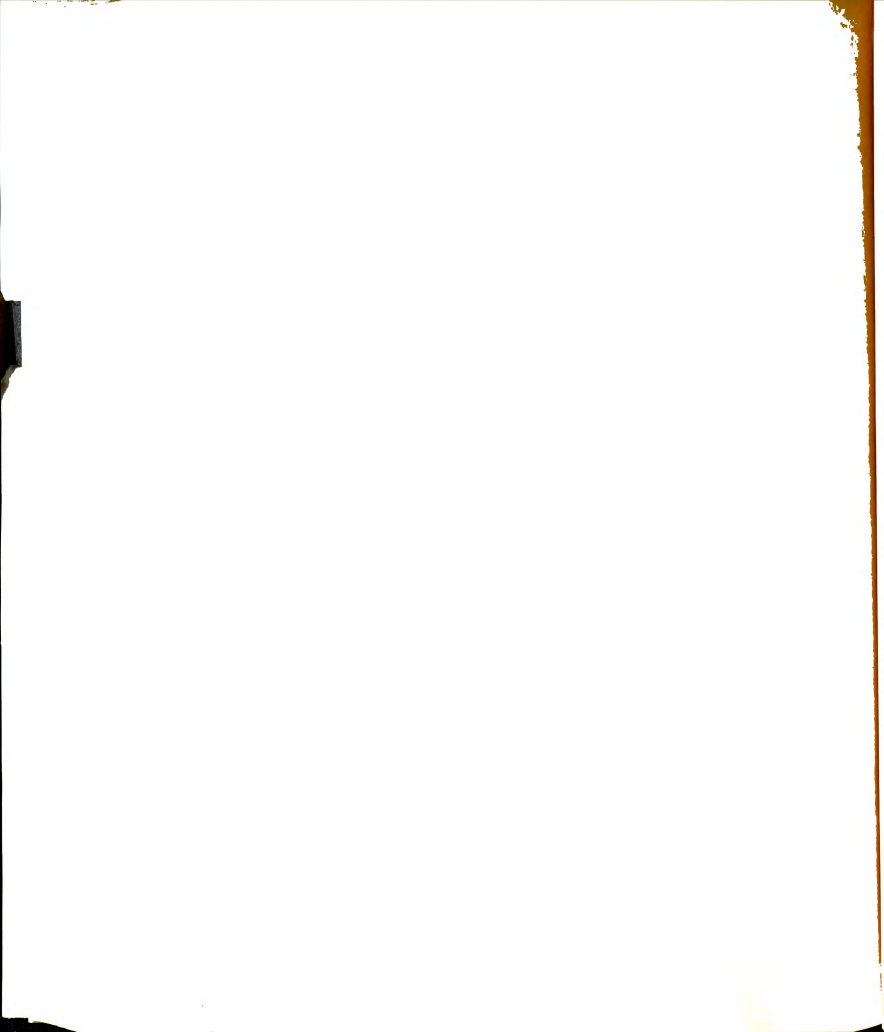
Gentlemen, I maintain that preservation of the rights of the individual is a proper duty for this Committee on Un-American Activities. This country's entire tradition is based on the principle that the individual is a higher power than the state; that the state owes its authority to the individual and must treat him accordingly.

Expose communism, but don't put any American who isn't a Communist in a concentration camp of suspicion. We are not willing to give up our freedoms to save our freedoms.¹¹⁴

Chairman Thomas predictably ignored Johnston's arguments and admonished him for not having done a better job of cooperating with the committee.¹¹⁵ Stripling then tried to exploit the fact that Johnston had employed one Edward Cheyfitz, a former Communist. Johnston had obviously anticipated such a move by the committee, and he had prepared himself. He freely admitted that he had hired Cheyfitz

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 308.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 309.



but pointed out that Cheyfitz himself had already become disillusioned with the party, having left it in 1939. In addition, Johnston had rounded up several character references for his employee, ranging from a corporation vice-president to a Catholic bishop.¹¹⁶

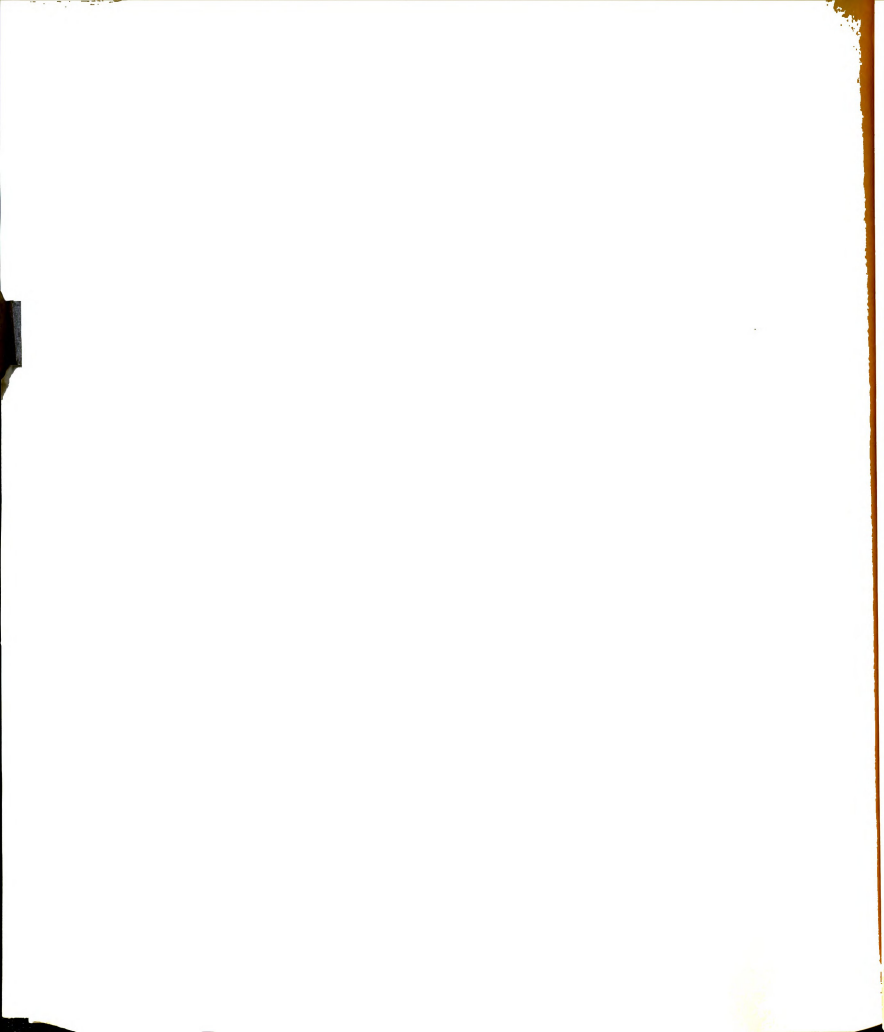
By the end of the day Johnston had earned the cautious praise of committee members Vail and McDowell for his candid testimony. The only two members of the committee who had been faithful in their attendance during the hearings were perhaps losing their enthusiasm for the chase, but Chairman Thomas was now ready to carry on alone.

He brought the Johnston testimony to a close with an impassioned speech in which he reaffirmed that exposure was the foremost function of the committee and in this he would not be deterred "whether you got glamour girls out there or whether you have got a lot of funds behind you or not, if there are Communists in that industry, we are going to expose them."¹¹⁷ It was not quite evident who was actually trying to block his investigation, but he finished with the characteristic promise that even greater exposures would soon be forthcoming:

If you will just sit around here every day this week you will see more exposure and more spotlighting of Communists than you have ever seen before. What you heard this morning, what you saw this morning, was just

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 317-321.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 328.



typical of what you are going to hear and see all the rest of the week and maybe some of next week.¹¹⁸

As the committee went into its final days, Thomas seemed to be a man clutching at elusive straws. Certainly he was aware that the hearings had not gone as he had hoped. The press had become increasingly critical, and his two most faithful committeemen now seemed to be seeking an understanding with the final witnesses--to salvage something from a lost cause. Stripling, of course, remained faithful, but more and more it was the chairman himself who carried on the fight. He had always answered his critics by shouting them down or impugning their honesty, and now he stepped up his charges and called for further investigations.

On October 28 he allowed a telegram to be read into the record which seemed to give an indication of his increasing personal need for support. It was from movie star Leo Carrillo, but it was scarcely a convincing appraisal of the situation:

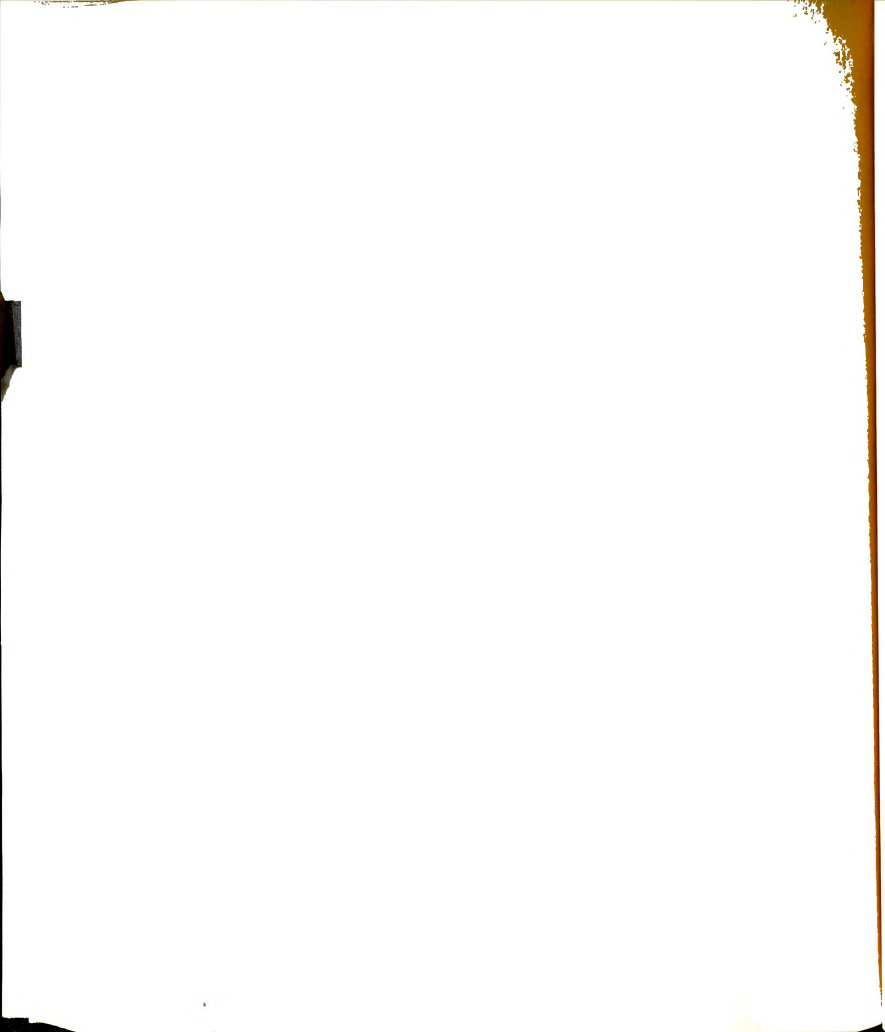
Congratulations on your splendid courage. Communist rattlesnakes are bent on inoculating the mind (sic) of our American youth. Clean out the rats. You are not injuring our industry. You are helping to keep them (sic) American. Bless you.¹¹⁹

On the following day, Thomas claimed that once again vested interests were trying to undermine his work:

I am proud to say that this committee has not been swayed, intimidated, or influenced by either Hollywood glamour, pressure groups, threats, ridicule, or high-

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Hollywood hearings, Oct. 28, 1947, 394.



pressure tactics on the part of high-paid puppets and apologists for certain elements of the motion-picture industry. The people are going to get the facts just as I announced on the opening day.¹²⁰

When Dore Schary, an executive producer in the film industry, took the stand on the day before the hearings ended, Thomas used the testimony as a warning for those who would criticize what the committee was doing.¹²¹ Schary had irritated the chairman when he told him that the Supreme Court had ruled that it was unconstitutional to refuse employment to anyone because of his political views:

Mr. Thomas: Have you ever heard of Rip Van Winkle?

Mr. Schary: Yes, Sir, many years ago.

Mr. Thomas: Well, I want to tell you something.

If some people in the United States don't wake up and get out of the long sleep we will find some of the difficulties here that they have encountered in France and Italy and Yugoslavia and Poland and Finland and some of these South American countries. It is the Rip Van Winkle opinion that has been permitting communism to grow throughout the world the way it has.¹²²

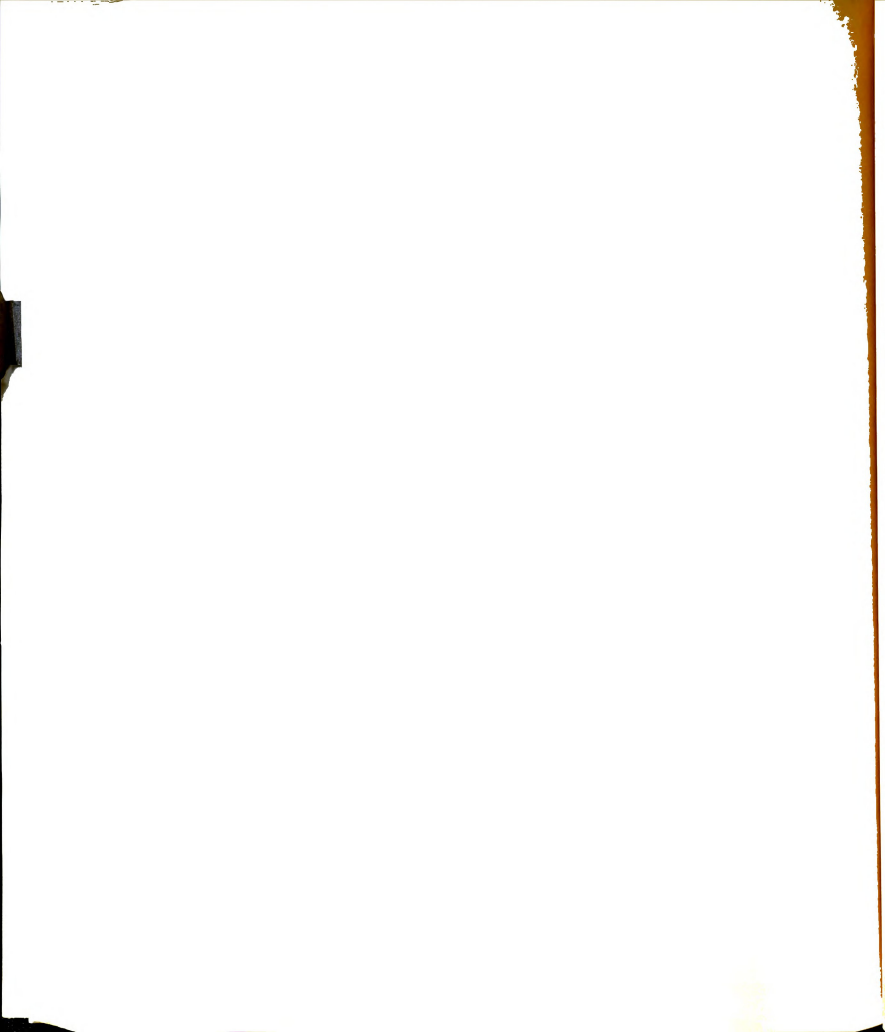
Thomas seemed almost paranoid with his unrelenting assertion that those who did not agree with his work were either asleep or themselves witting or unwitting pawns in the hands of the un-American elements he was trying to expose and with his continual insistence that these same un-American elements were trying to undermine his investigation.

The mystery witness whom Thomas had promised showed up the last day of the hearings; but, as mentioned above, he turned out to be Louis Russell, the committee's well-known

¹²⁰ Ibid., Oct. 29, 1947, 401.

¹²¹ Testimony of Dore Schary, Oct. 29, 1947, 469-478.

¹²² Ibid., 472.



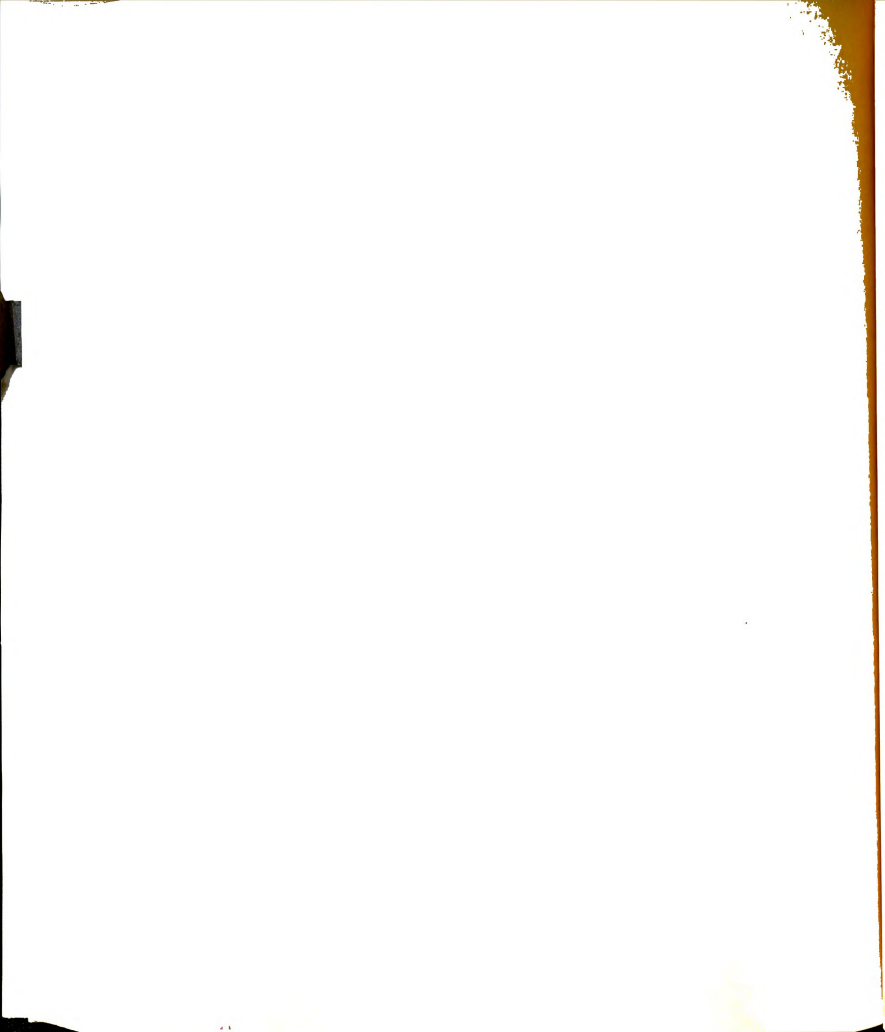
chief investigator. Russell's testimony had nothing to do with the Communist conspiracy in Hollywood but dealt instead with alleged wartime atomic espionage in the Radiation Laboratory of the University of California at Berkeley.¹²³ Thomas had promised that this testimony would "pull the fuse off an atom bomb," and it would prove of future interest to the committee, but for the moment it served only to confuse the press and public alike.

Thomas then added to the general confusion with his abrupt announcement that the nine-day hearing had come to an end. He called it the conclusion of the "first phase," and he promised that evidence would soon be presented against other "prominent people associated with the motion-picture industry." He especially emphasized that the committee was "not adjourning sine die, but will resume hearings as soon as possible."¹²⁴ In the forthcoming months the chairman would make several other references to future Hollywood hearings; in fact, as late as 1966, sixteen years after his formal resignation from the committee, he confided to the author that he had again been investigating the film industry, and this time he really "had the goods" on the Communists and their infiltration.¹²⁵ This too was

¹²³ Testimony of Louis Russell, Oct. 30, 1947, 504-521.

¹²⁴ Hollywood hearings, Oct. 30, 1947, 522.

¹²⁵ Personal Interview. Thomas intimated that he had been sent of this recent trip to Hollywood by the committee itself, but he confessed that he was not supposed to talk about it.



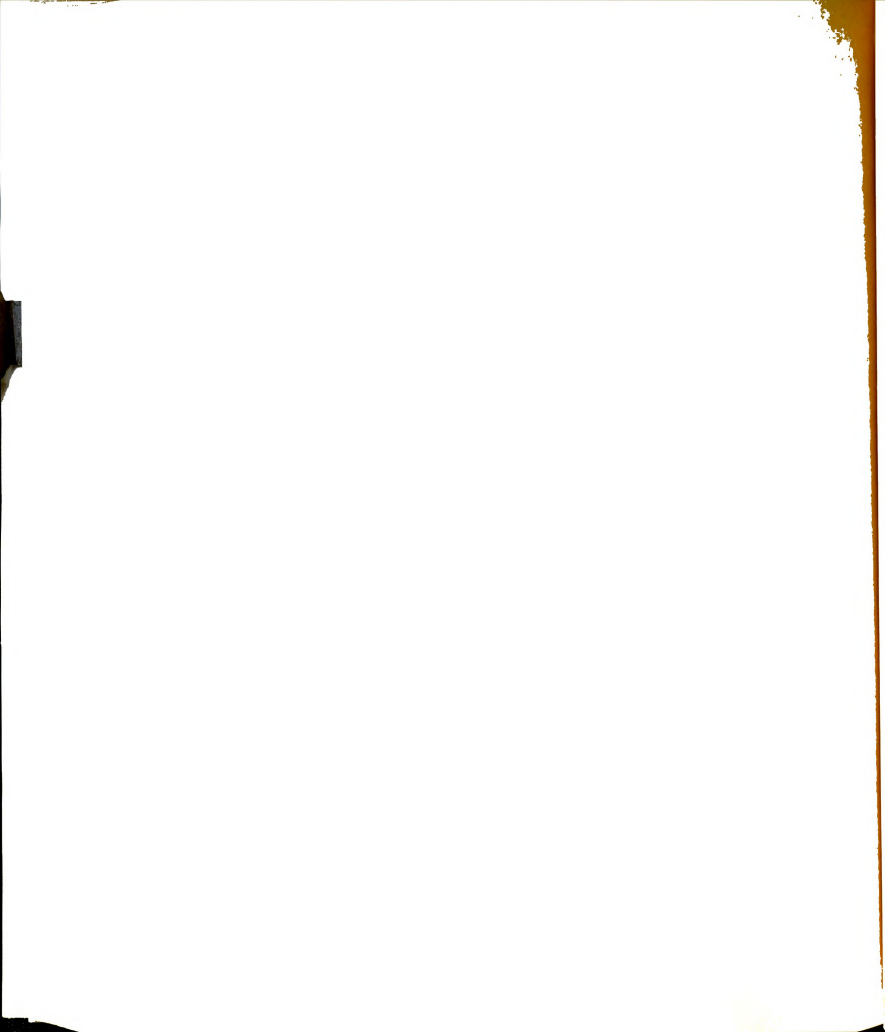
a man who refused to realize that his investigations had not borne the fruit he had promised his followers.

What had happened to bring the hearings to their sudden close? Other witnesses had been subpoenaed, and by the chairman's own admission there were still sixty-eight individuals in Hollywood whom he could prove were either "members of the Communist party or who had records of Communist affiliations." In addition, he had promised to make public a list of specific films containing subversive propaganda.

Members of the committee's staff later told Robert Carr that the hearings were adjourned because the committee had evidence that Communist sympathizers were planning a demonstration in Washington against the investigation, and the committee decided to frustrate this move by bringing the hearings to a temporary close.¹²⁶ Stripling referred to this in his The Red Plot Against America, but he also admitted that "the entire hearing was taking on the overtones of a broken record."¹²⁷ His later admission seemed more realistic. The committee simply had nowhere to go. Thomas, like Dies before him, had always emphasized the importance of exposure and the accompanying publicity which made it possible. But as the hearings wore on, it was not just the liberal or radical papers which were becoming more critical, but also many of the more staid and judicious publications,

¹²⁶Carr, 74.

¹²⁷Stripling, Red Plot, 71.



as indicated in the following examples:

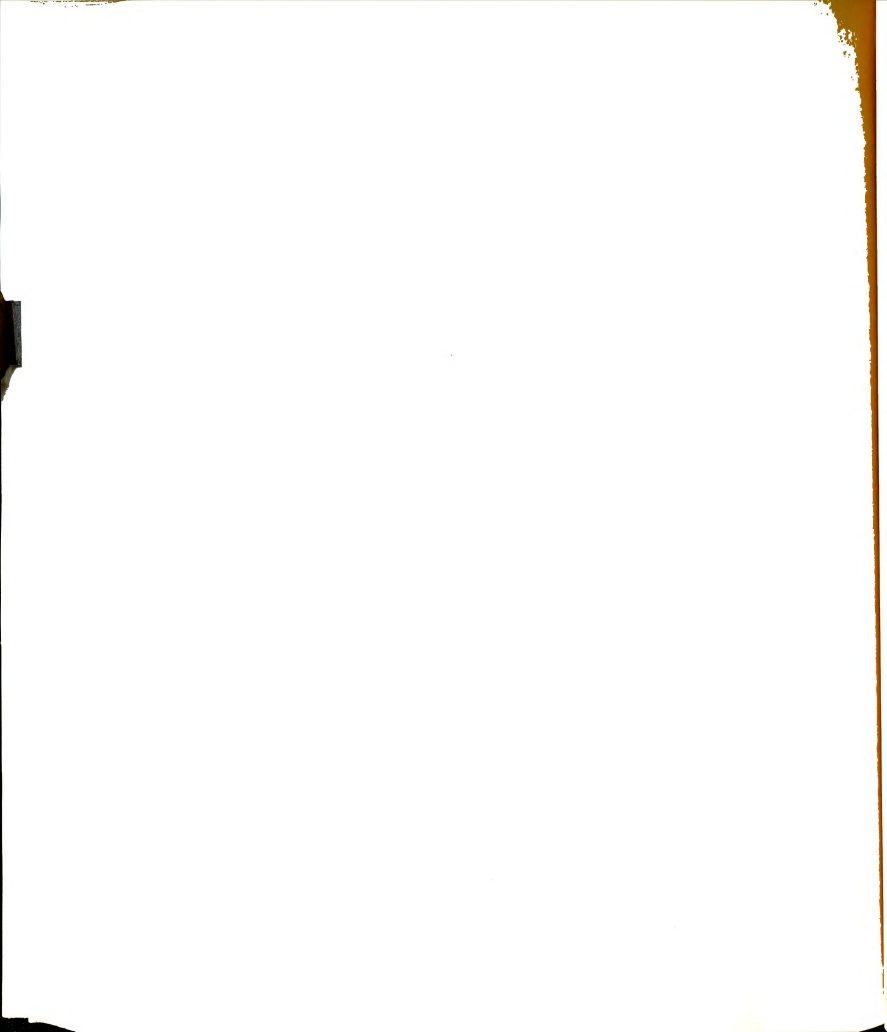
New York Times (Oct. 23): We do not believe that the committee is conducting a fair investigation. We think the course on which it has embarked threatens to lead to greater dangers than those with which it is precisely concerned.

Washington Post (Oct. 25): Thomas has accused witness after witness in the industry of Communist sympathies without, as yet, the presentation of a shred of supporting evidence.

New York Herald Tribune (Nov. 1): This (Russell's final testimony) may be taken--perhaps ungraciously--as Mr. Thomas's confession that the Hollywood investigation has been producing a good deal of nonsense and very little else.

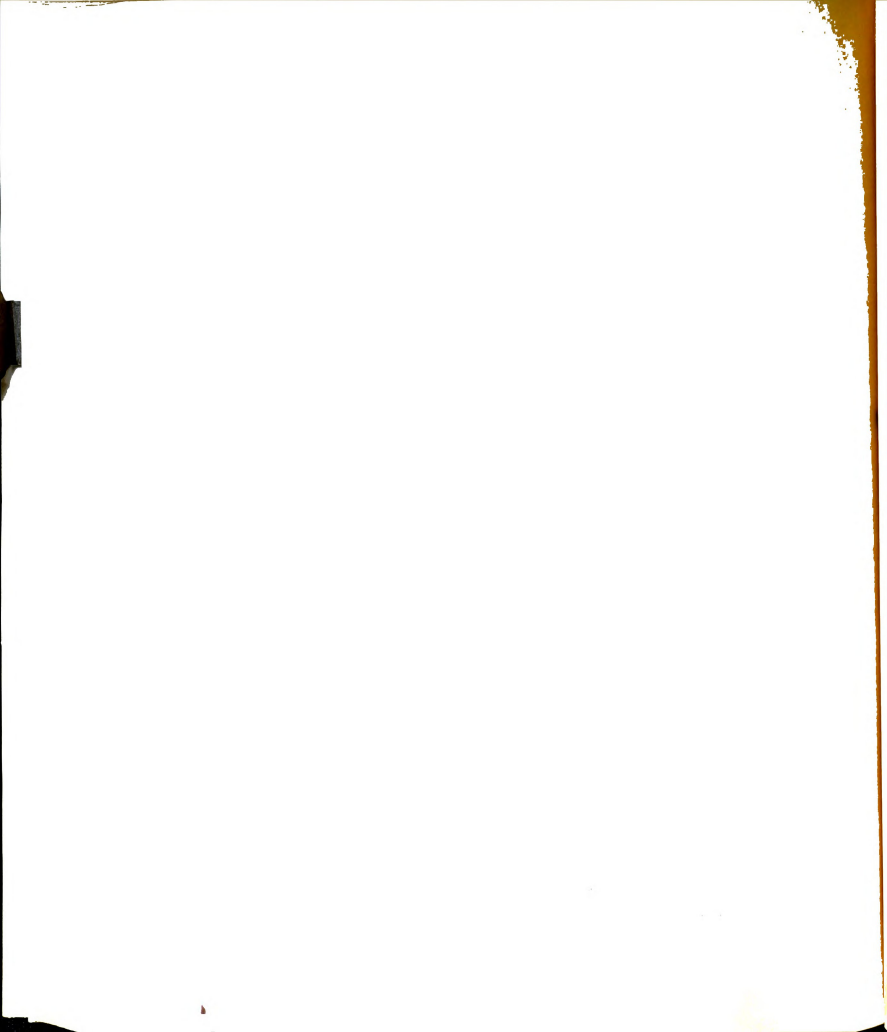
Thomas had promised to uncover the vast Communist conspiracy which was trying to subvert the film industry and the government pressure which was supposedly making the job easier; however, the results had not measured up to the promises. He had succeeded, with the quiet aid of the FBI, in singling out a handful of probable Communists from the more than 30,000 employees in the movie industry, but he had failed to show that these individuals had influenced the industry in any subversive or dangerous manner.

Perhaps the most striking proof that the committee itself felt the hearings had been inadequate and inconsequential was the fact that no formal report was published on its findings. Apart from statements concerning the contempt proceedings against the "Unholy Ten," the only later reference made to the investigation was a single sentence in the annual report published more than a year later: "While the committee could not within the limits



of its time and resources examine every single phase of Communist activity in the industry, the outlines and the pattern of such activity was clearly disclosed."¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Report of the Committee on Un-American Activities to the United States House of Representatives, Eightieth Congress, Dec., 31, 1948, 9.



CHAPTER IX

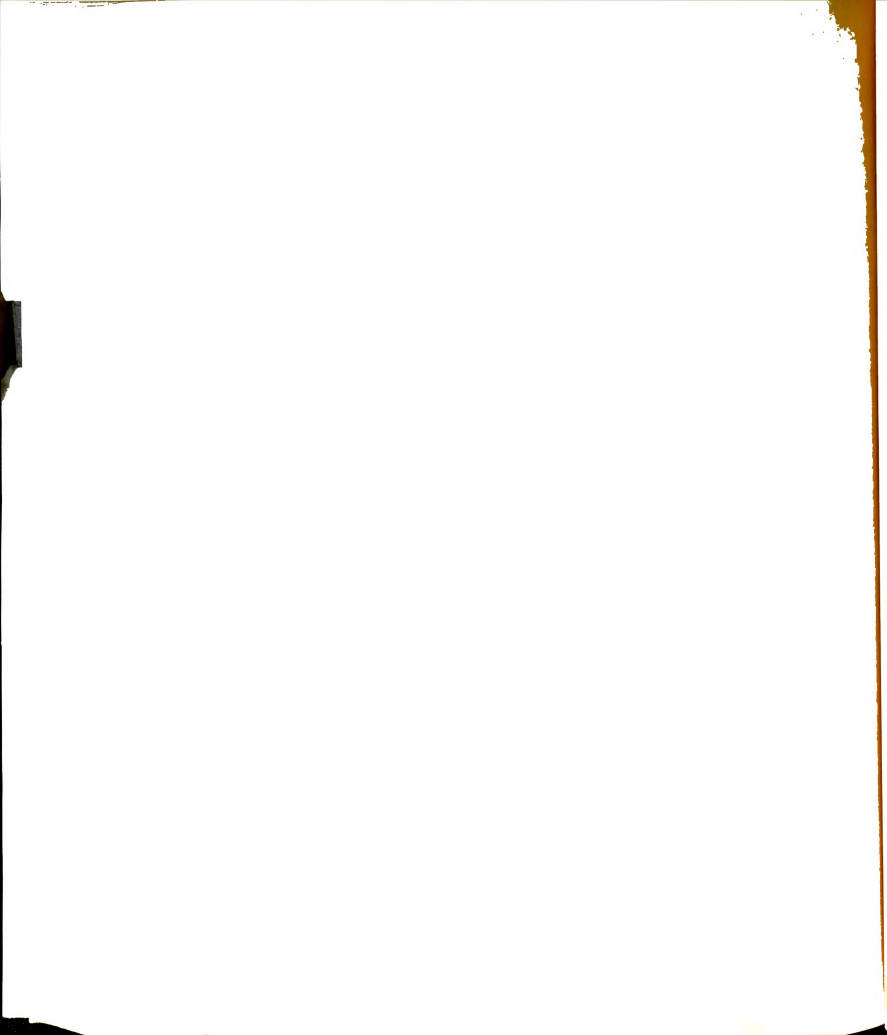
THOMAS AND THE SCIENTISTS

During his years on the permanent Committee on Un-American Activities, J. Parnell Thomas gave considerable attention to the subject of Communist activity in the national defense programs and especially in the area of atomic energy. This culminated in his persistent charges against Dr. Edward U. Condon, whom Thomas repeatedly described as "the weakest link in our security system." Condon would be publicly pilloried by Thomas for over two years without ever receiving the opportunity to defend himself before the committee. The actual charges against Condon were first leveled in 1947, but their roots stemmed back to 1946 when Condon and Thomas stood on opposite sides of the controversy over peacetime control of atomic energy.

Atomic Energy Bill, 1946

The problem of whether civilians or the military should control atomic energy was the subject of a series of heated Congressional debates in 1946. In June the Senate passed a bill setting up an Atomic Energy Commission under civilian control;¹ in the following month the resolution

¹The Atomic Energy or McMahon Bill (S. 1717) passed the Senate on June 1, 1946; CR: 79-2, 6098.



was debated in the House. Thomas, still a member of the Military Affairs Committee, led the opposition to the bill, labeling it "undoubtedly the most dangerous bill ever presented to the Congress in the history of the United States," and in his hand he had a report which was to explain why civilians could not be trusted with the control of atomic energy.²

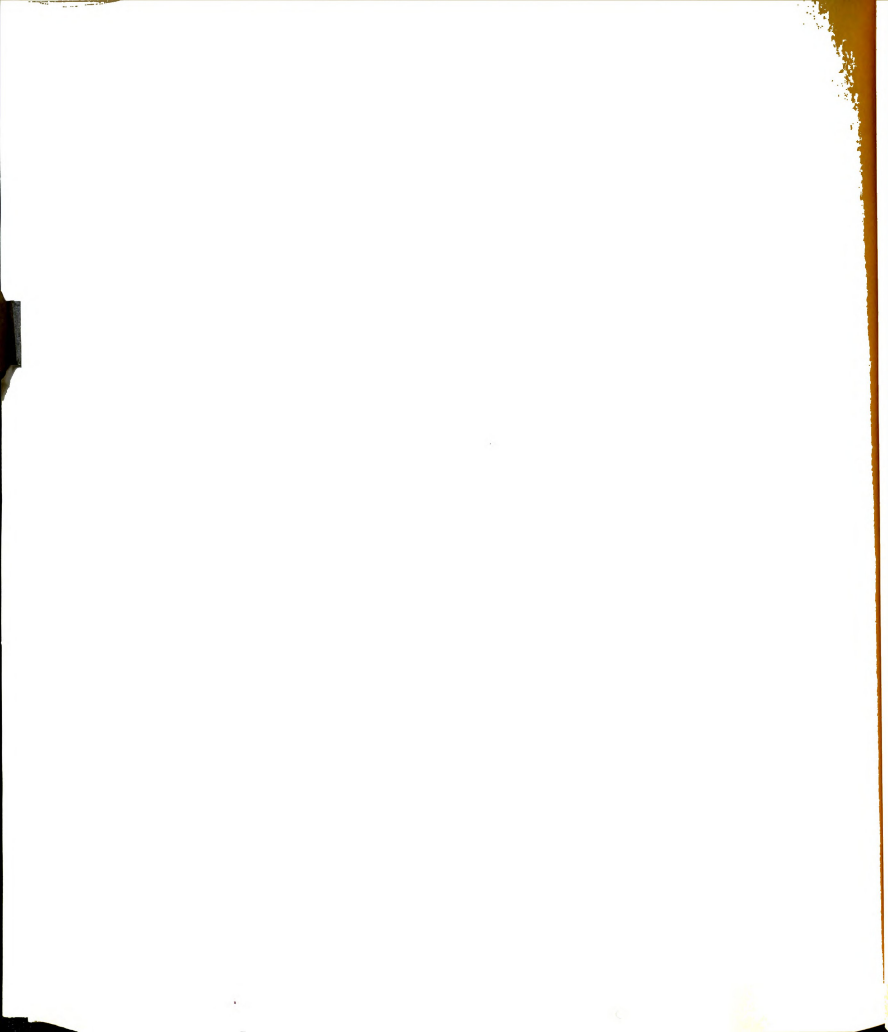
A few days before the House debate a so-called preliminary report signed by Ernie Adamson, then the committee's chief counsel, appeared in the papers.³ The report charged that the Oak Ridge center of atomic research was the scene of secret activities which endangered the nation's security. It claimed that many of the scientists in the project were security risks and that most of them belonged to two societies which were devoted to the creation of some form of world government and to the support of international civilian control of the manufacturing of atomic materials. Finally the report stated, without explanation, that the CIO was making a desperate attempt to unionize all workers on the reservation.⁴

There can be little doubt that Thomas had worked closely with Adamson on this report, and now he used it to support his arguments against civilian control of atomic

²CR: 79-2, July 15, 1946, 9001.

³New York Times and Chicago Tribune, July 12, 1946.

⁴The complete text of Adamson's preliminary report can be found in CR: 79-2, July 17, 1946, 9257-9258.



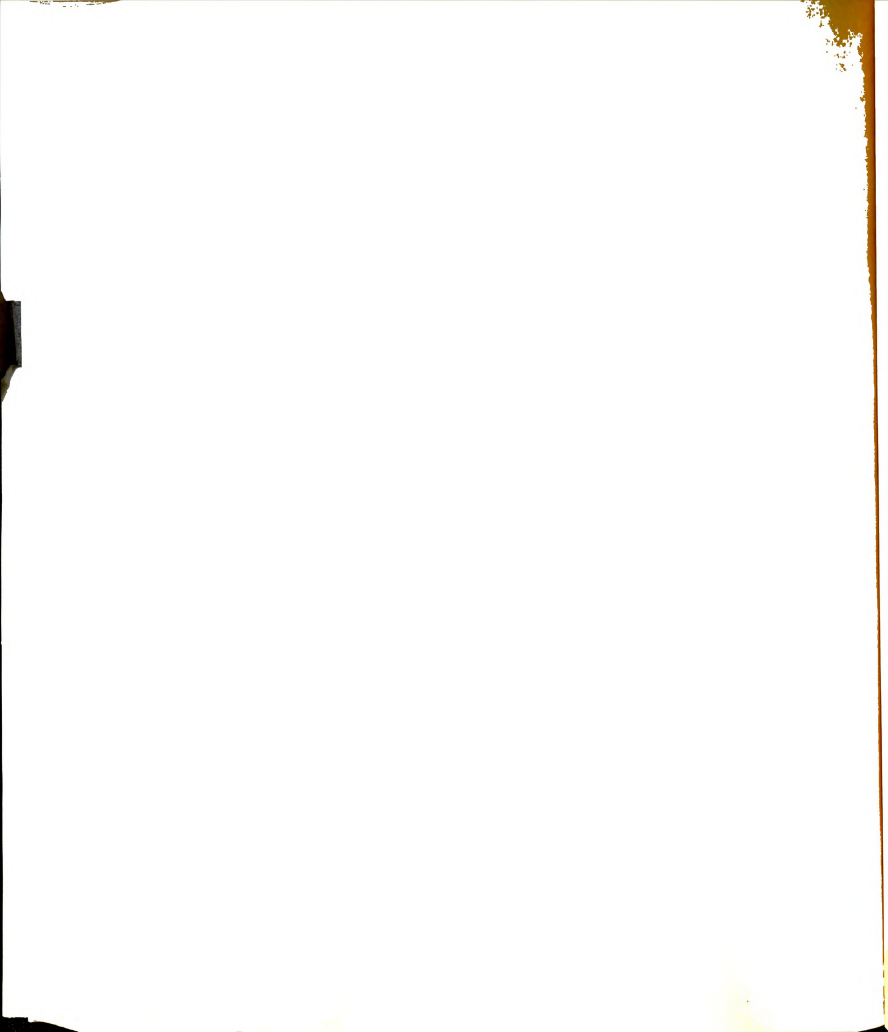
energy. Thomas also added the vague charge that these scientists had communicated with others outside the United States to the extent that "the peace and security of the United States is definitely in danger."⁵ Representative Adolph Sabath, rising to challenge Thomas, insisted that the New Jersey Congressman wanted "the army to control atomic energy because some of the civilians appointed to the commission might believe in some kind of world government."⁶

On the next day Thomas answered the critics who had pointed out that even the army's own experts had recommended civilian control. He declared that the President had ordered top military officials to approve the bill, and then, in characteristic fashion, he turned the House's attention to the fact that Communists and Communist-front organizations were giving their support to the bill.⁷ Next he attacked the individuals who he felt were responsible for the bill. Most notable was Dr. Edward U. Condon, the Director of the National Bureau of Standards, who was destined to become the symbol of the fuzzy-minded scientist who was incapable of taking the security measures necessary for the safeguarding of our atomic secrets. For the time being, Thomas was interested in explaining factors in Condon's background which he felt precluded his working on the bill:

⁵CR: 79-2, July 15, 1946, 9136.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., July 16, 1946, 9142.



It is interesting to know in connection with Dr. Condon that he is an appointee of Henry Wallace. Prior to VJ-day when the Russians invited a group of American scientists to visit Russia and attend a conference there, Dr. Condon was one of those invited.⁸

Condon's sins were thus two-fold: he had been appointed by the liberal Mr. Wallace, and he had been invited to visit Russia with a group of other American scientists. Admittedly this was rather flimsy evidence on which to label Condon a security risk, but in the forthcoming years Thomas would offer little further corroboration.

The Congressman was fighting a losing battle against the Atomic Energy bill, but he made one final attempt to brand the bill as foreign to America's best interests:

If you want to get the cue of who is pushing hard for the passage of this bill, read the Daily Worker, or read the suggestion of the Russian delegate, Andrei H. Gromyko, that 'he favors exchange of data at once.' If Mr. Gromyko, the Russian, had drawn a bill for American control of atomic energy and the atomic bomb, he could not have drawn a better bill for Russia than S. 1717.⁹

For Thomas, the bill had become Russia's bill, and seemingly anyone favoring it had become an unwitting dupe of the Communists. But his warnings went unheeded, and on July 20 the House voted its approval.¹⁰

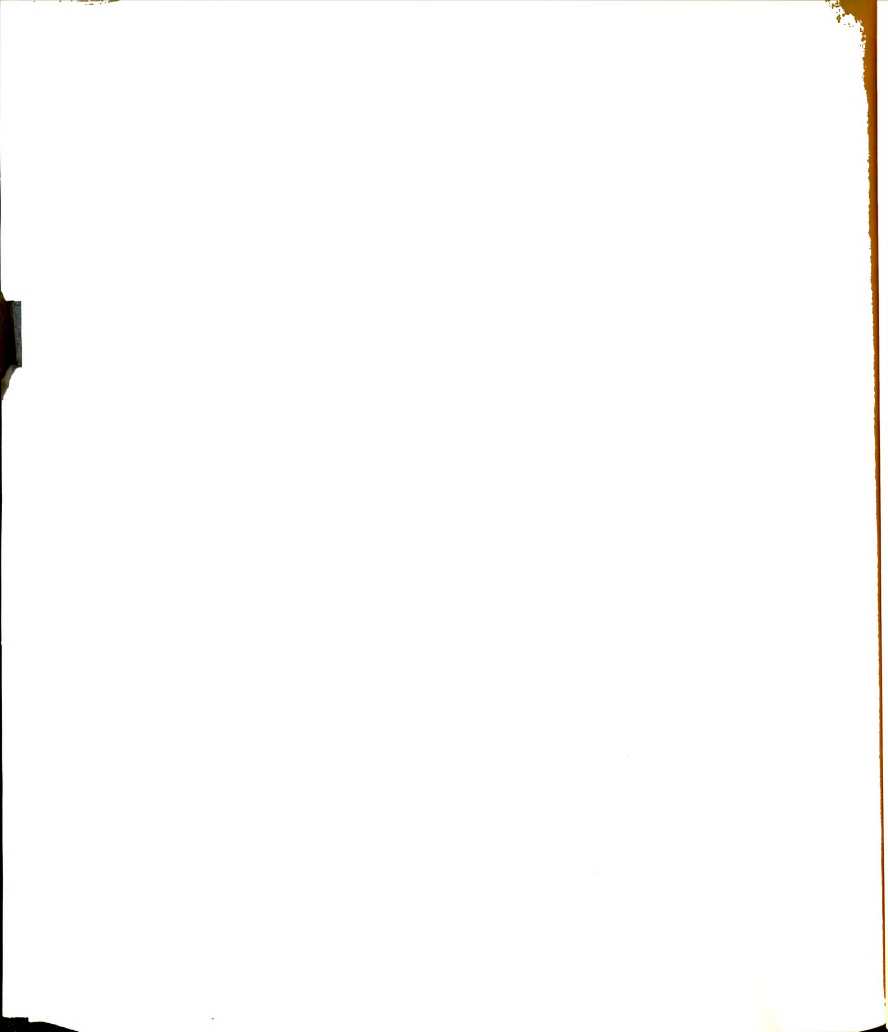
Oak Ridge and the Scientists, 1947

Thomas had lost his case for military retention of atomic power, but he was certainly not ready to give up.

⁸ Ibid., July 17, 1946, 9257.

⁹ Ibid., 9258.

¹⁰ Ibid., July 20, 1946, 9563.



Throughout 1947 he directed a steady stream of criticism toward the civilians employed in the Oak Ridge project, obviously hoping to discredit them to the extent that atomic energy control might be returned to the military. By 1947 J. Parnell Thomas was chairman of the Committee on Un-American Activities, but for the most part he conducted this campaign as a one-man crusade.

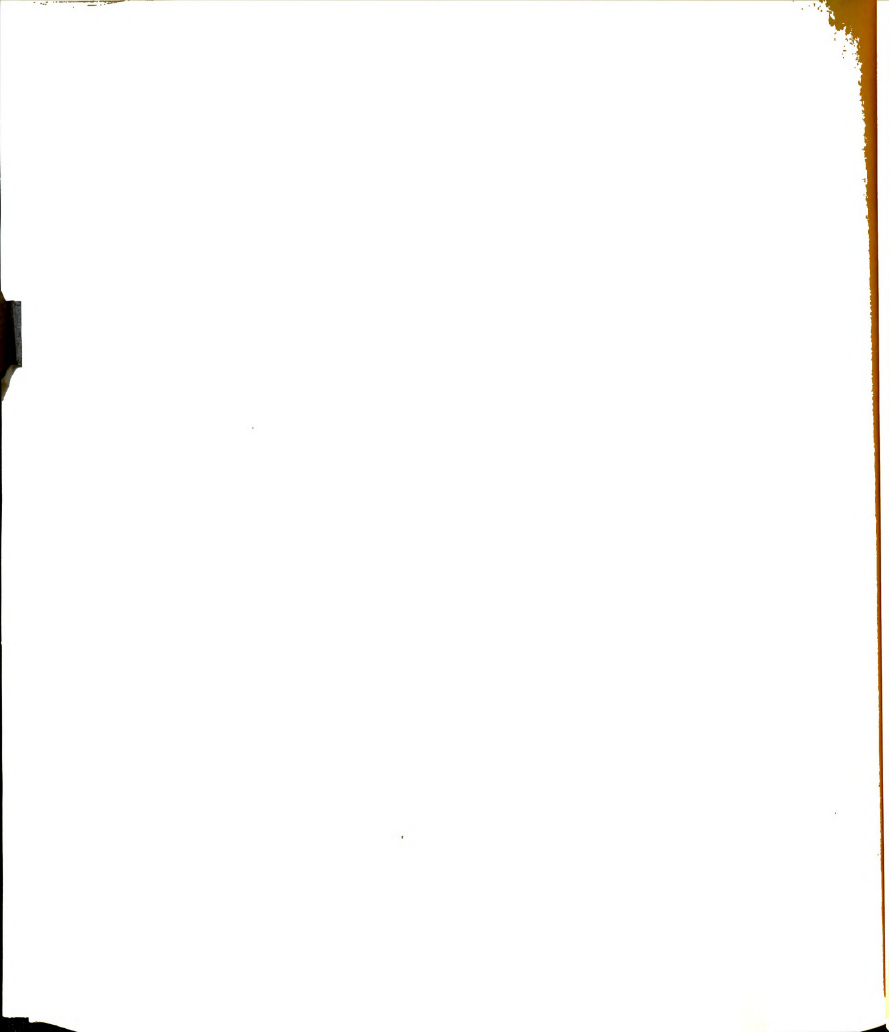
In February Thomas and Stripling made an investigative trip to Oak Ridge. Thomas later informed the author that the trip was "unannounced, unbeknownst to the other committee members, and carried out in the dead of night."¹¹ When news of their visit leaked out to the press the next day, Thomas was particularly displeased, and he cited this as further evidence of the subversive activity at Oak Ridge.¹²

Thomas did not grant an official press release on his findings, but some information did slip out through certain reporters. Willard Edwards, the Washington correspondent for the Chicago Tribune and a long-time admirer of the committee, wrote that "reports from reliable sources at Oak Ridge have described the evidence gathered by Thomas as 'sensational.'"¹³ Thomas was reported to have been informed of the presence of workers in the plant who were regarded by military intelligence as of questionable loyalty. But of more importance, according to the Edwards article,

¹¹ Personal Interview.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Tribune, Feb. 27, 1947.



was the effect the report would have on President Truman's appointment of David E. Lilienthal to head the Atomic Energy Commission. Senate confirmation had still not been given, and Edwards was speculating that the Thomas disclosures would threaten the approval of Lilienthal's appointment. Supposedly his report would show that Lilienthal knew of the presence of employees under suspicion at the Oak Ridge project and took no steps to remove them.¹⁴

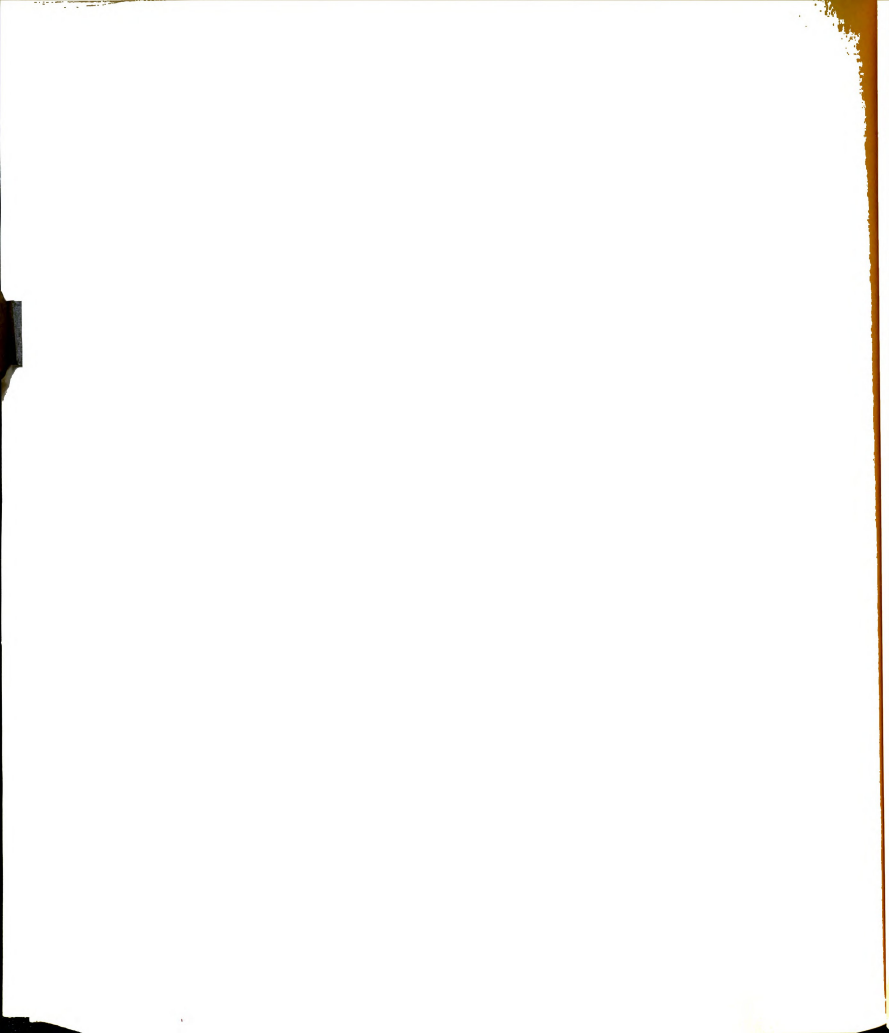
Earlier in the month Thomas had publicly disapproved of the Lilienthal choice, referring to him as "a Mrs. Roosevelt in pants."¹⁵ Lilienthal had long served the New Deal administration as chairman of the Tennessee Valley Authority, and he had also served on the State Department's Board of Consultants on International Control of Atomic Energy. The latter group had recommended United Nations control over atomic weapons; this and his long-standing ties with the New Deal made Lilienthal a most undesirable choice for Congressman Thomas.

No further mention of Oak Ridge was made until June when Thomas published an article entitled "Reds in Our Atom-Bomb Plants."¹⁶ Thomas claimed that on his recent visit he had been "startled to find how many Communist suspects were

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ The Record, Feb. 20, 1947.

¹⁶ Liberty magazine, as reported in CR: 80-1, Appendix, June 9, 1947, 2729-2730.



on duty there."¹⁷ No mention was made how this was determined, who they were, or what kind of proof he had. He stressed that morale had suffered "from the confusion marking the transfer of control from Army to civilian hands," and he condemned the "gullible American scientists (who) have a weakness for attending meetings, signing petitions, sponsoring committees, and joining organizations labeled 'liberal' or 'progressive' but which are actually often Communist fronts."¹⁸

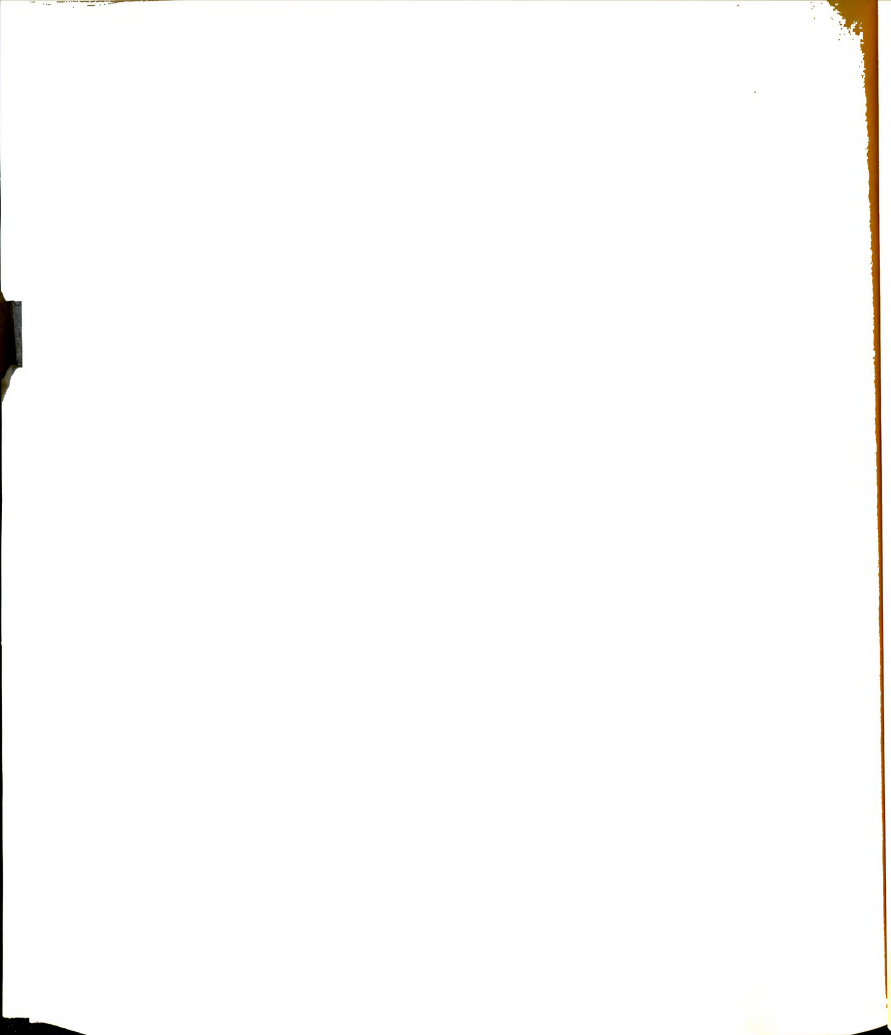
It was the old story of the liberal so muddled in his own thinking that he was incapable of determining which of his actions were along subversive lines. In addition, Thomas employed the technique of "guilt by association" as a guideline to subversive behavior. Albert Einstein was a case in point. While on the one hand admitting that he did not label Einstein a Communist, Thomas did point out that "it is notable that Communist fronts energetically cultivate him. They welcome him as a sponsor, and he has lent his name to a score of organizations classified as fronts by the Committee on Un-American Activities."¹⁹ Einstein was in no way connected with the Oak Ridge project, but he was a scientist who had vigorously opposed military use of the atom.

Thomas emphasized that most of the suspect scientists had opposed military control of atomic energy without ever clarifying why this might be interpreted as a subversive

¹⁷ Ibid., 2729.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 2730.



action. Though he had certainly not stressed this point when investigating Reds in the labor movement, he now concluded that communism was not a "disease" of the poor but an "affliction" of the academic and professional classes:

We have an immediate educational problem with the scientists who insist on having academic freedom with military secrets, who want one world but are indifferent as to whether it is to be a Communist world.²⁰

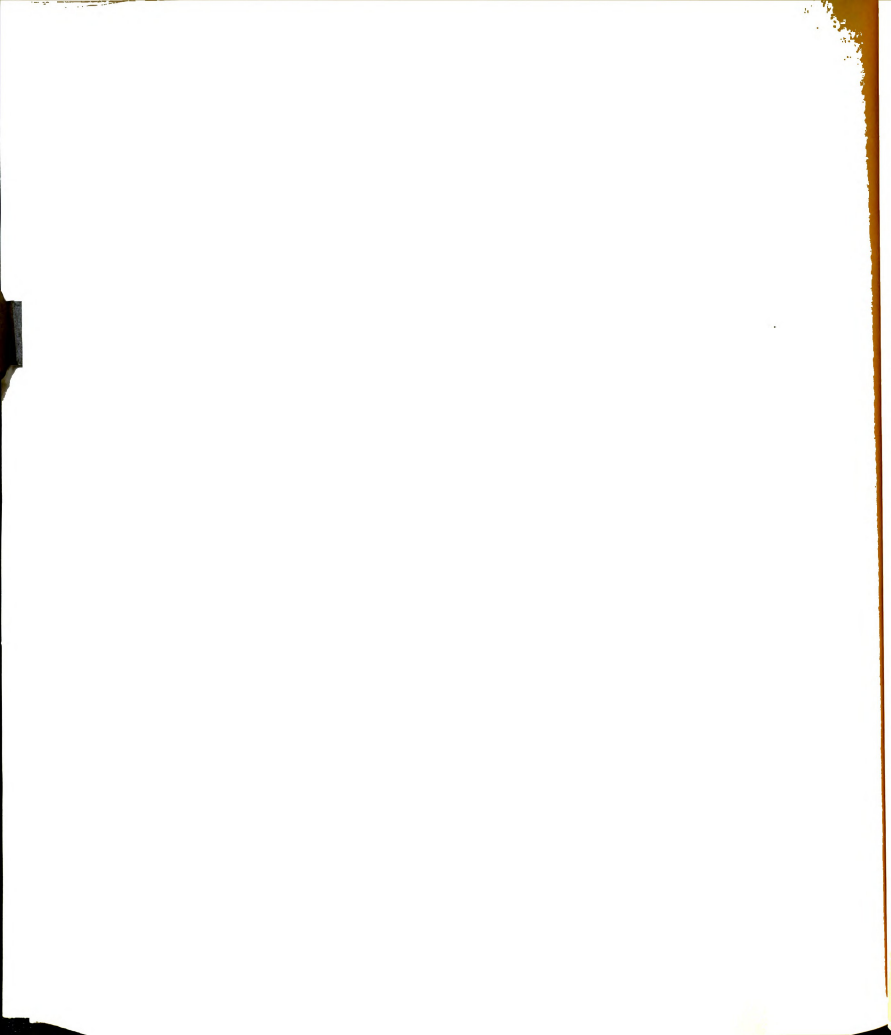
The name of Edward Condon also came up in the article, and Thomas repeated his charge that Condon was the "weakest link" in our atomic security system. But it was not until the following year that he really made Condon his cause célèbre.

Edward U. Condon

Thomas had first mentioned Dr. Edward Condon's name during his own fight to block civilian control of atomic energy. He had then made it clear that Condon was typical of the scientists who could not be trusted with something as vital to our national security as atomic energy. In the succeeding two years Thomas conducted a virtual "trial by newspaper and magazine," a ploy which left Condon practically helpless to vindicate himself.²¹

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ The magazine Scientific America did an interesting analysis of the treatment of the Condon case by nine newspapers in the New York area. These papers were examined between March 1 and October 31, 1948. The study, done by IBM cards, concluded that the charges always received more space than the statements in Condon's defense and that "fifty-seven percent of the derogatory materials appearing in the news columns consisted in mere repetition of the committee's baseless charges;" "Trial by Newspaper," Scientific America, Feb., 1949.



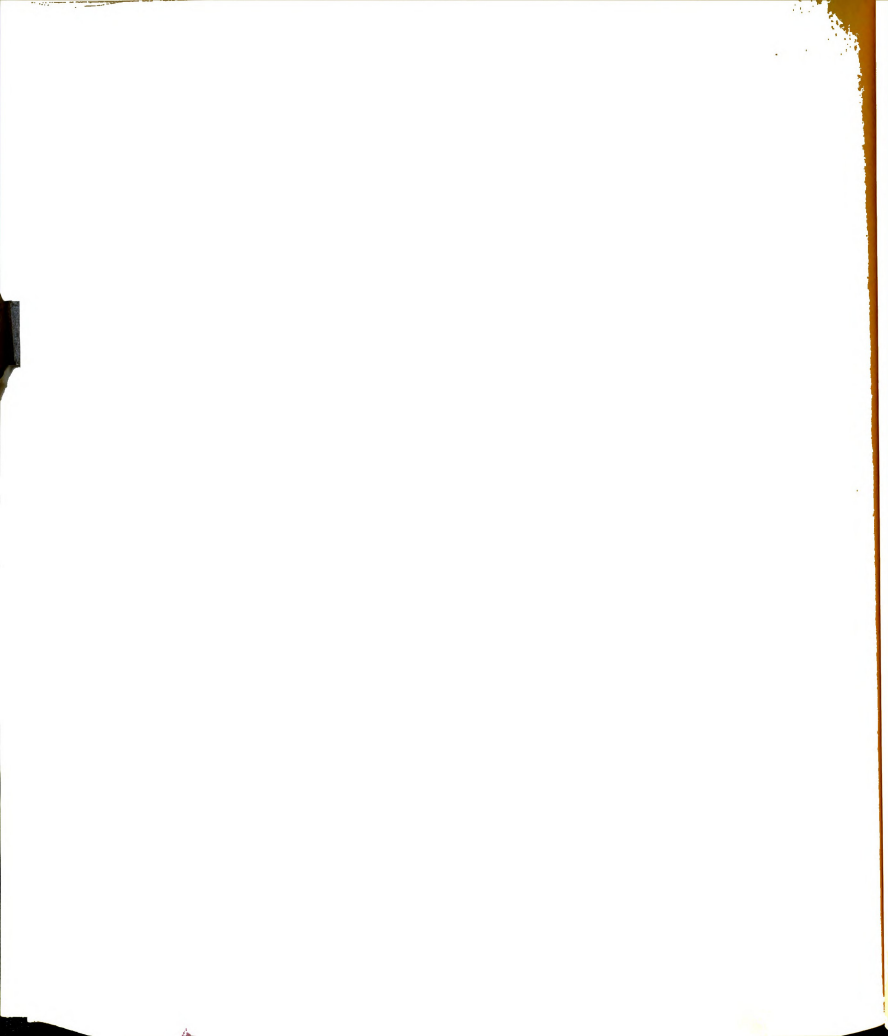
In March, 1947, two articles indicating that Condon would soon be investigated appeared in the Washington Times Herald, a paper, which according to Robert Carr, was often used by the committee to send up trial balloons.²² In June, Thomas' above mentioned article appeared in Liberty magazine, and it included the chairman's promise that Condon would soon be subpoenaed for a committee appearance. In the same month another article by Thomas appeared in the magazine America, and this time Condon was attacked because of his connection with the American-Soviet Science Society. Finally, in the following month a headline press release appeared in the Washington Times Herald repeating the past attacks on Condon.²³

In the meantime, Condon had asked and received an investigation by the Secretary of Commerce Averill Harriman and was subsequently cleared. Also in July, 1947, Condon wrote Chairman Thomas offering to appear before the committee to help in any way he could. It was the first of many such fruitless requests on the part of Condon. When this letter was ignored, Condon addressed a similar communication to every member of the Un-American Activities Committee. This was acknowledged by a few of the members, but Condon still did not receive his invitation to appear before the committee.²⁴

²² Carr, 132.

²³ Much of the above chronological information has come from a House speech by Representative Chet Holifield in defense of Condon; CR: 80-2, July 29, 1948, 9546.

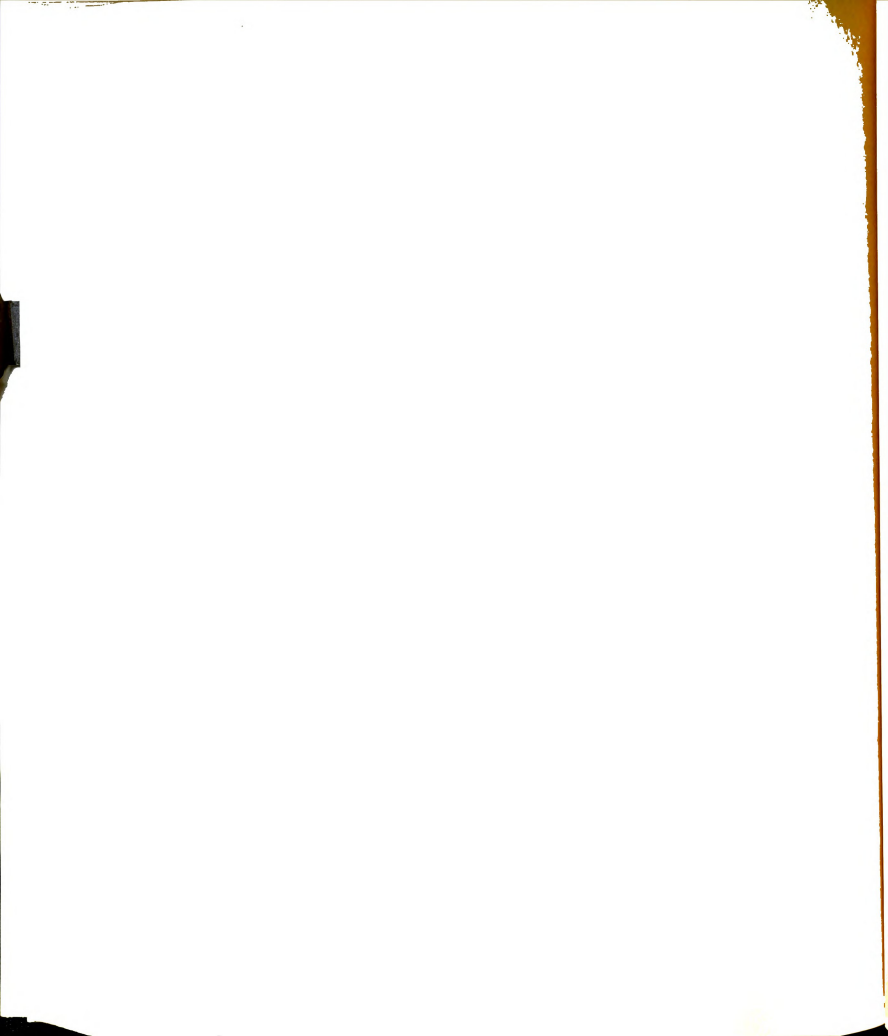
²⁴ Ibid.



In the following year Thomas accelerated his attacks on Condon. On March 1, 1948, a subcommittee, consisting of Chairman Thomas and committee members Richard Vail and John Wood, published a report addressed to the full Committee on Un-American Activities. The report was on national security, and it would result in the most controversial aspect of the entire Condon case. The subcommittee's assignment had been to undertake an investigation of "those groups and movements who are trying to dissipate our atomic bomb know-how for the benefit of a foreign power." The resulting report was identified as a preliminary one, but it was the only one the committee ever submitted, and it was devoted almost exclusively to the subject of Edward U. Condon.²⁵

The report began with the chairman's previous assertion that "from the evidence at hand, it appears that Dr. Condon is one of the weakest links in our atomic security." The report then went on to make several points: Mrs. Condon was "an American-born woman of Czechoslovakian descent;" Henry Wallace, "the Communist candidate for president," had appointed Condon as Director of the National Bureau of Standards; Condon himself advocated "welcoming Russian scientists to our laboratories; he also "knowingly or unknowingly entertained and associated with persons who are alleged Soviet espionage agents and persons now reported to be under investigation by a Federal grand jury;" and, finally, the

²⁵ Report to the Full Committee of the Special Subcommittee on National Security of the Committee on Un-American Activities, CH: 80-2, Appendix, March 2, 1948, 1306-1310.



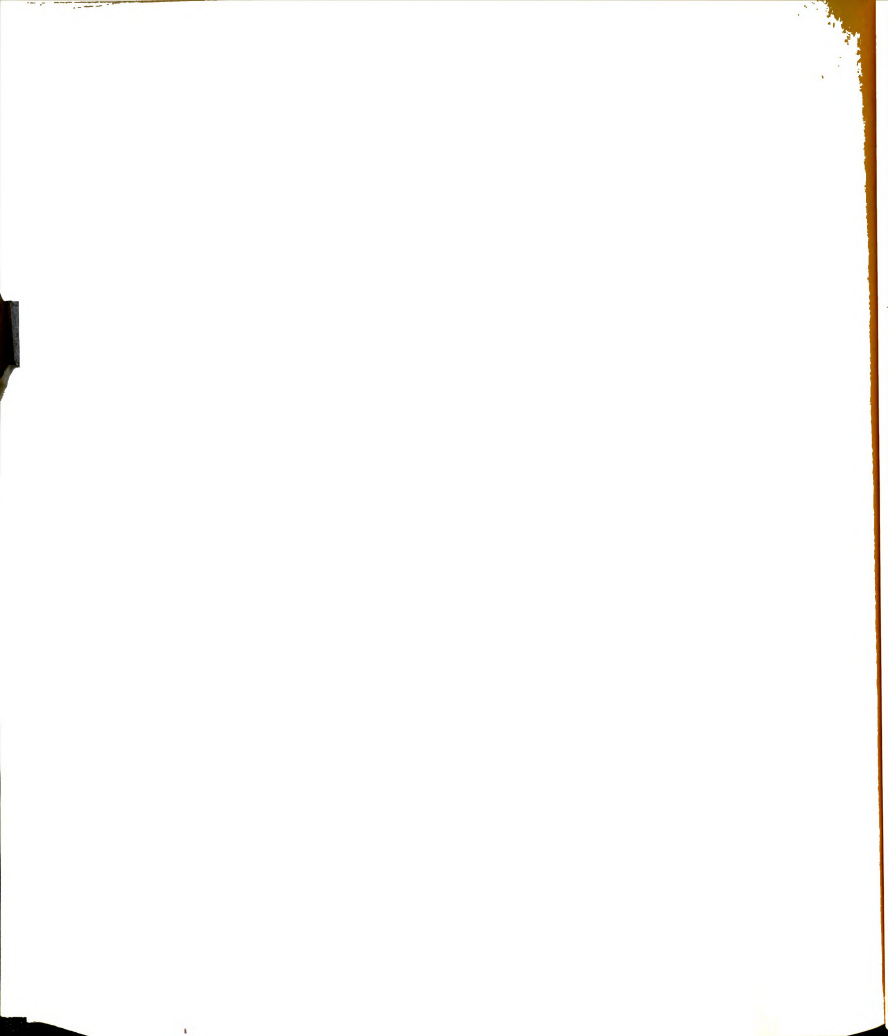
report included a letter from J. Edgar Hoover to Secretary of Commerce Averill Harriman which allegedly tied all this together. It was this letter which would become the most controversial piece of evidence in the Condon case. The report concluded that the "Condon case is not an isolated one, but that there are other Government officials in strategic positions who are playing Stalin's game."²⁶

The timing of the release of the subcommittee's report also seemed significant. On March 1 Thomas was confined to a hospital bed with his recurring ulcers, and the report was issued from his bedside. Committee investigator Louis Russell later informed Robert Carr that he had opposed the release of the report at that time, but that Thomas had insisted.²⁷ Stripling later wrote that he too had objected on the grounds that Condon should first have been granted a hearing, but likewise Thomas had overruled him.²⁸ The Committee on Un-American Activities was concurrently asking for a \$200,000 appropriation, the largest in committee history; and, as so often had happened

²⁶ Ibid. Carr does a particularly good job of analyzing the evidence cited in the subcommittee report on Condon; Carr, 134-149. See also Louis Welborn, "The Ordeal of Dr. Condon," Harper's Magazine (Jan., 1949); and Representative Chet Holifield's speech defending Condon, CR: 80-2, Mar. 9, 1948, 2435.

²⁷ Carr, 134.

²⁸ Stripling, Red Plot, 86; however, according to the Washington Post, Stripling at the time said the report was released "because of the urgency of the matter involved," but, unfortunately, he did not elaborate; Post, Mar. 2, 1948.



in the past, the chairman was evidently hoping that a sensational news release would facilitate the House's approval.

Time magazine made such an allegation shortly after Thomas had won his appropriation:

New Jersey's Representative J. Parnell Thomas knows that a good headline, come appropriation time, can do more than months of hard work. Last week, as his Committee on Un-American Activities applied for a whopping \$200,000 allotment from the house, Thomas dug deep. What he fetched up was an old file on Dr. Edward U. Condon.²⁹

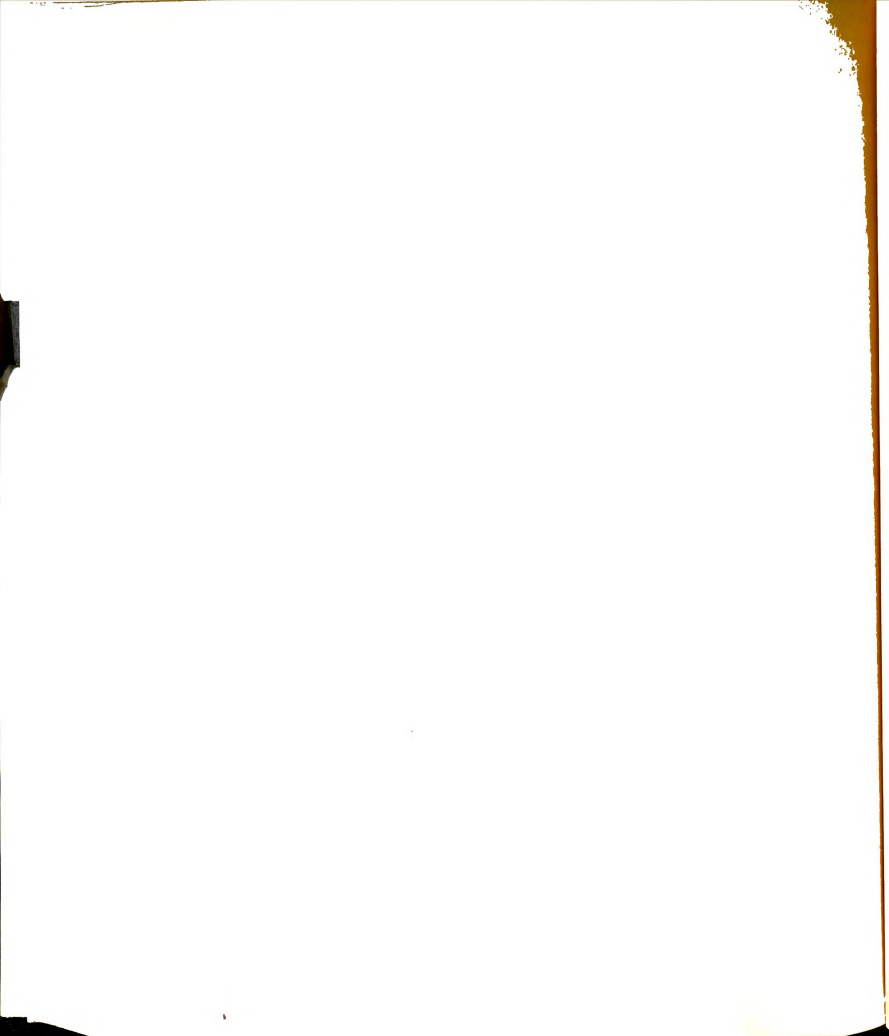
Condon himself felt the true meaning of the attack was related to "an undercover attempt to smear civilian control of atomic energy."³⁰

The Washington Post took an active and sympathetic interest in the Condon case, and it provided the best chronological account of the events which followed the publication of the report. On March 8 the Committee on Un-American Activities went into closed hearings on the Condon case. Supposedly a mystery witness was to be heard, and Stripling promised that "full and open hearings" would soon be held.³¹ On March 11 a two-page report on the result of the executive hearings was released. No new evidence of Condon's "guilt" was offered, but the Department of Commerce was accused of "laxity" in its handling of his case. Once again it was promised that open hearings would be held in "two or

²⁹Time, Mar. 15, 1948, 25.

³⁰Post, Mar. 2, 1948.

³¹Ibid., Mar. 9, 1948.



three weeks" with some twenty-five witnesses to be called.³²

Later in the month Thomas promised "hitherto undisclosed and indisputable evidence" to support his contention that Condon had been "indiscreet in his associations with Soviet agents and admitted Communists,"³³ and some two weeks later it was announced that the public hearings on Condon would begin April 21.³⁴ But April came and went, and still Condon was not called before the committee, though he had again requested the opportunity. Finally, in May, the committee once more went into executive hearings, but this time no report was forthcoming.³⁵

One of the most bizarre episodes in the entire Condon case concerned the letter which had been first mentioned in the subcommittee report of March 1. This communication had been sent from J. Edgar Hoover to Secretary of Commerce Averill Harriman, and it allegedly described Condon's associations with individuals suspected of being Communist agents. In April, Thomas introduced a resolution onto the House floor that the letter be placed in the record, and the House approved its reading:

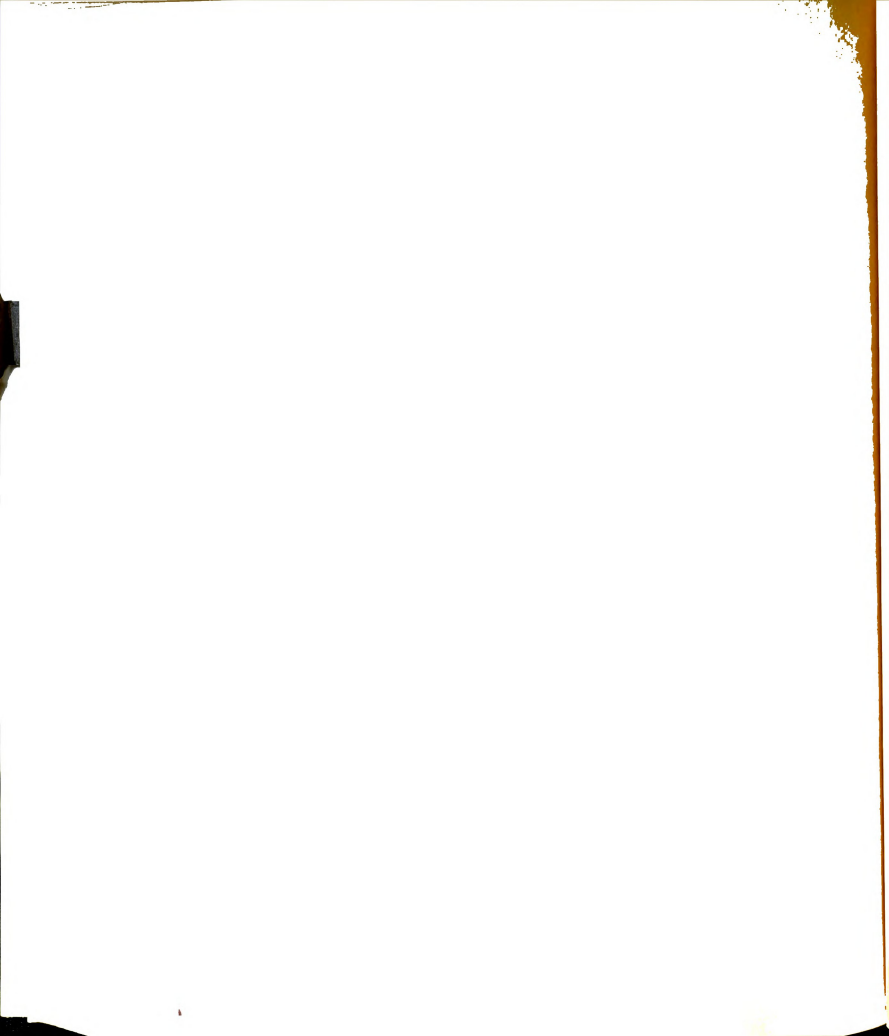
The files of the Bureau reflect that Dr. Edward U. Condon has been in contact as late as 1947 with an individual alleged, by a self-confessed Soviet espionage agent, to have engaged in espionage activities with the

³² Ibid., Mar. 11, 1948.

³³ The Record, Mar. 20, 1948.

³⁴ Times, Apr. 7, 1948.

³⁵ Ibid., May 25, 1948.



Russians in Washington, D.C., from 1941 to 1944.

Mr. and Mrs. Condon associated with several individuals connected with the Polish Embassy in Washington, D.C. Among those are Mrs. Joseph Winiewize, wife of the Polish Ambassador, Virginia Woerk, a clerk employee of the Polish Embassy, Helen M. Harris, secretary of the Polish Embassy and Ignace Zlotowski, former counselor of the Polish Embassy and presently a Polish delegate to the United Nations.

Helen Harris is identified as a former secretary to the American-Soviet Science Society during the time it was known as science committee of the National American-Soviet Friendship Society. She went to work for the Polish Embassy in the fall of 1946.

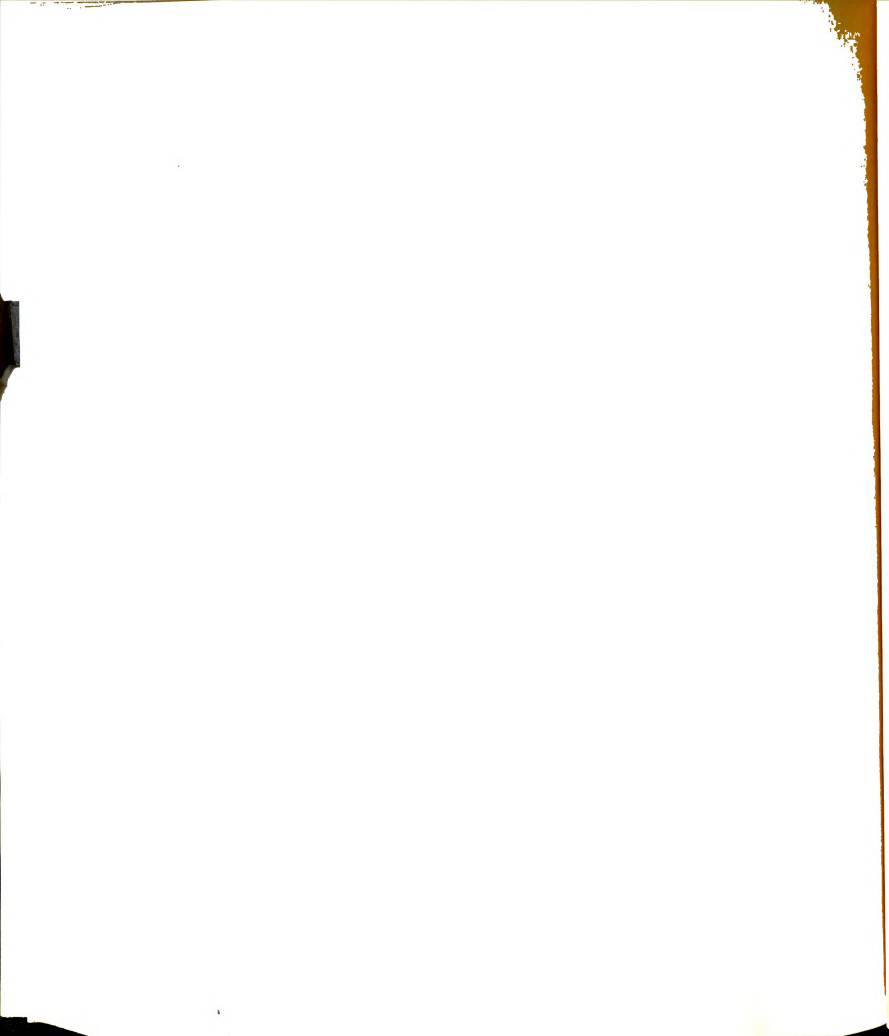
Zlotowski is identified as a nuclear scientist who studied under Joliet Curie, known member of the Communist Party. He was ex-secretary of the American-Soviet Society. It is known that in February, 1947, Zlotowski purchased 270 books on atomic energy which had been published by the Department of Commerce.

It is also known that Mr. and Mrs. Condon were in contact with several other persons closely associated with this alleged Soviet espionage agent. It is also reliably reported that in March, 1947, Zlotowski offered the use of the Polish diplomatic pouch to scientific groups as a means of transmitting scientific material outside the United States, dissemination of which had to be restricted because of security reasons by military authorities.

Zlotowski was in contact with Anatole Cromov, first secretary of the Soviet Embassy who has since returned to Russia. Mrs. Emily Condon applied for passports for European travel in 1926, and passports for travel to Russia in 1945. Passports were withdrawn. Condon was issued passport 276319 on October 11, 1946, to travel and study in Germany, France, Holland, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Great Britain, Denmark, and Switzerland. He applied for passport June 4, 1946, to Russia which was issued but was later canceled by the Army.³⁶

There was some question concerning the chairman's access to a confidential letter from Hoover to Harriman, but even more important was the assertion made by the Washington Post shortly after the subcommittee's preliminary report that the letter had been tampered with, and that one sentence favorable to Condon had been left out. In a March 3,

³⁶ CR: 80-2, Apr. 22, 1948, 4786.



front-page story, the Post reported that "two persons who saw the letter informed the paper that they were struck by the omission of a sentence in the subcommittee's quoting of the letter."³⁷ The next day the Post reported the missing statement as, "There is no evidence to show that contacts between this individual and Dr. Condon were related to this individual's espionage activities." The Post placed the statement after the first sentence of the subcommittee's version, and this certainly made it an important qualifying element in the letter.³⁸

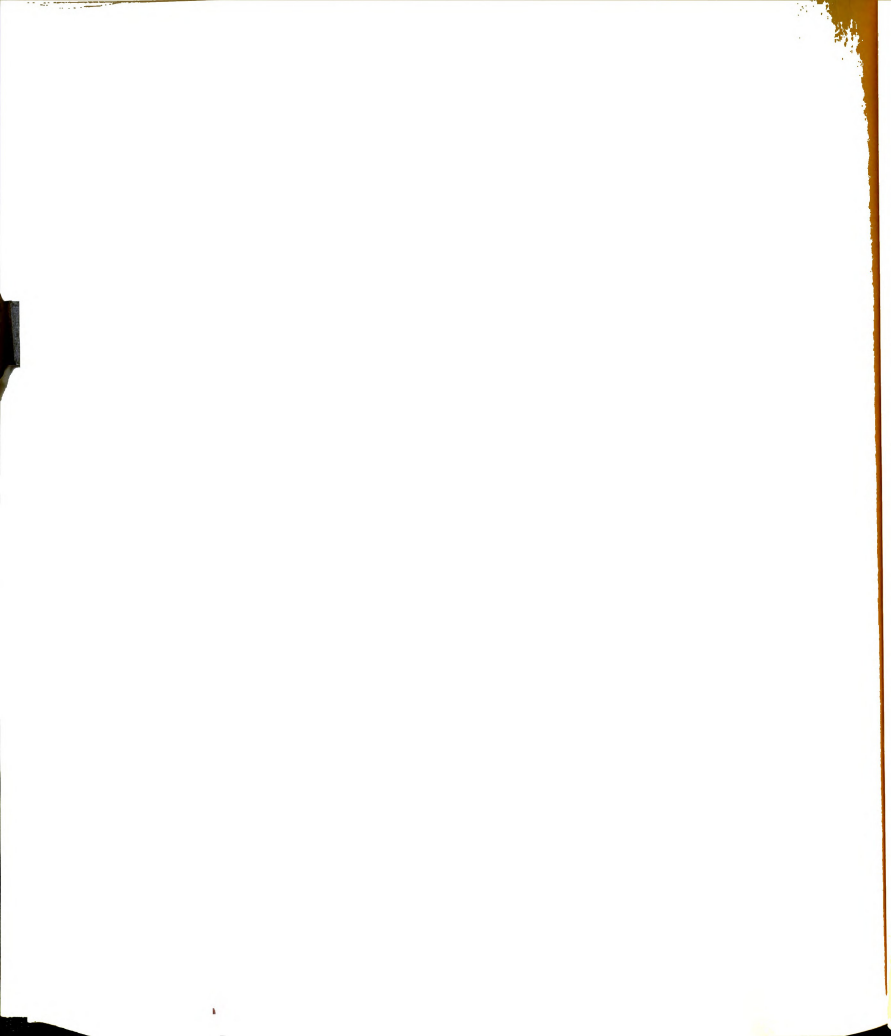
The same day Thomas conceded that the FBI had reported no evidence that Condon was involved in espionage activities in his contacts with alleged Russian agents.³⁹ The chairman's later story was that he had sent a committee investigator to ask the Department of Commerce for any information it had on Condon and that the investigator was allowed to make a brief examination of a file of papers and documents which included the Hoover-Harriman letter; however, when the investigator started to copy the letter, he was requested to refrain from doing so; hence, part of the original letter was missing.⁴⁰ It did seem a bit strange, however, that the committee's investigator only had time to copy down the material unfavorable to Condon and nothing

³⁷ Post, Mar. 3, 1948.

³⁸ Ibid., Mar. 4, 1948.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ CR: 80-2, May 14, 1948, 5562-5563.



which might have helped him.⁴¹

A letter from Condon's attorneys, read on the floor by Representative Chet Holifield the same day as the Thomas resolution to make public the letter, added more fuel to the controversy. After criticizing Thomas for denying their client the right to appear before the committee, Condon's lawyers claimed that "a spokesman for your committee has publicly conceded that some committee investigator was responsible for this tampering."⁴² The letter also accused Thomas and his investigations of undermining the morale of the scientists working on Federal projects, and it asserted that some of these scientists would soon go back into private work if the "snooping" did not stop.⁴³

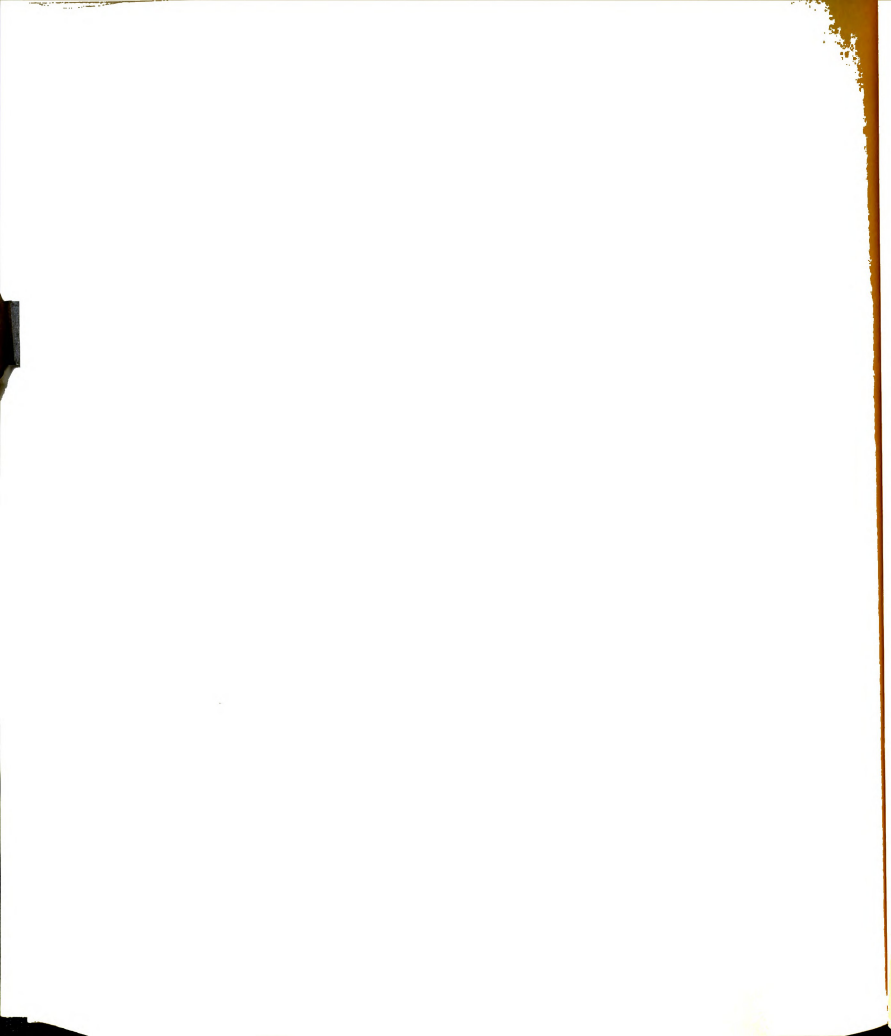
In the fall eight leading nuclear scientists supported this latter allegation of Condon's attorneys when they accused Thomas and his committee of endangering national security through their "objectionable smear tactics."⁴⁴ They insisted that such tactics were driving the most competent scientists out of government service at a dangerous rate. They further noted that out of 150 scientists who

⁴¹ In spite of these previous admissions, the house approved the reading of the subcommittee version of the letter by a 302 to 29 vote; the original of the letter was never released by the Department of Commerce; CR: 80-2, Apr. 22, 1948, 4786.

⁴² CR: 80-2, Apr. 22, 1948, 4795.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Times, Sept. 7, 1948.



had worked on wartime projects fewer than ten percent were still working on government atomic research.⁴⁵

A few days later President Truman offered his support to the scientific community. The President insisted that the work of such individuals was "indispensable for national security" and that it was "the climate of a totalitarian country in which scientists are expected to change their theories to match changes in the police state's propaganda line."⁴⁶ Truman's remarks were made at the opening session of the centennial meeting of the American Association of the Advancement of Science, and Dr. Condon himself sat in the front row of the platform during the President's speech. Later in the same opening session, David E. Lillenthal, whose appointment to the chair of the Atomic Energy Commission had been confirmed in spite of Thomas, also spoke about the increasing reluctance of men to serve in the government's programs:

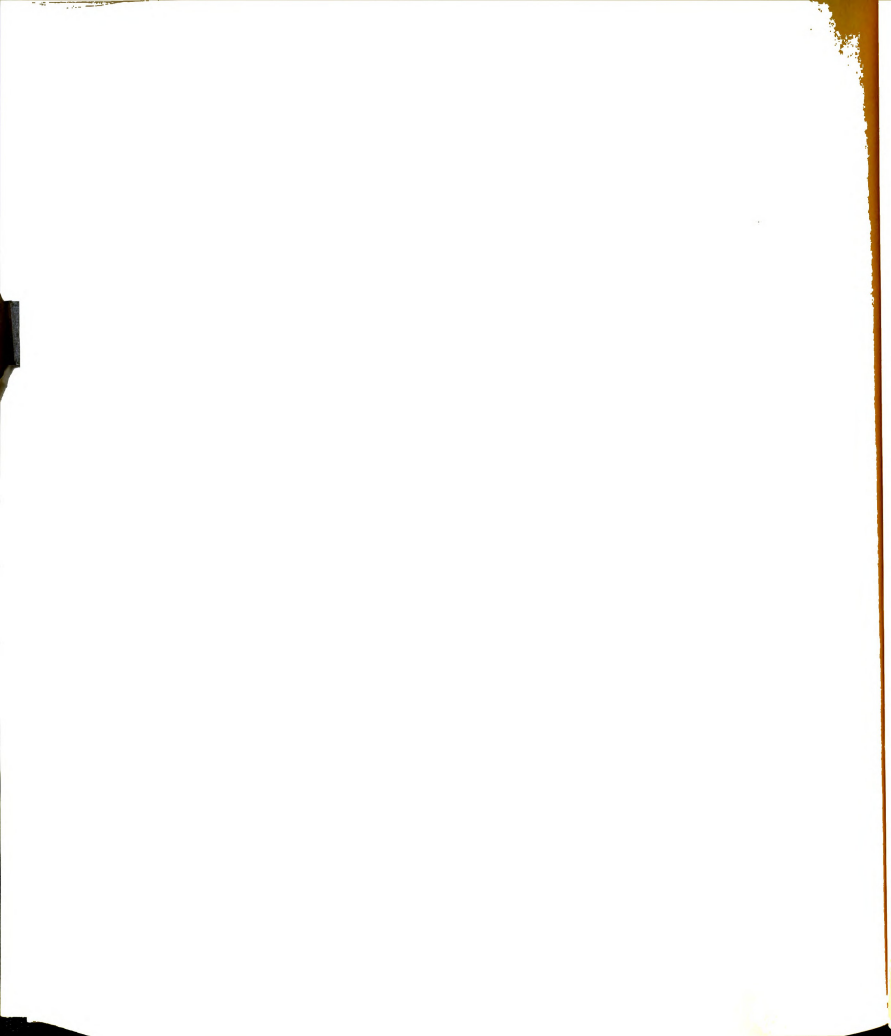
Public employment has become a hazardous occupation. The possibility of public pillory, so often unjustified and beyond immediate redress, does indeed cast a shadow of fear over public service.⁴⁷

The next day, however, committee members Thomas,

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., Sept. 14, 1948.

⁴⁷ Ibid., Sept. 17, 1948. In his memoirs Lillenthal made several references to the tremendous power of Thomas and his committee. Seemingly every time something went wrong on the Atomic Energy Commission, Lillenthal would get a rushed call from the Senate or some other government source warning him to prepare for a Thomas onslaught; The Journals of David E. Lillenthal, Vol. II: The Atomic Energy Years, 1945-1950 (New York: Harper & Row, 1964).



McDowell, and Vail signed a report opposing the allegations that their investigations were driving key scientists out of government work as had been testified by Lilienthal and the other scientists. The report finished with the often-made promise that the "Condon hearings" would bring out the full facts.⁴⁸

On the same day Thomas was reported to have said that secret sessions had showed Condon to be connected to Nathan Gregory Silvermaster, "who was recently described before this committee as heading an espionage ring of government employees."⁴⁹ This was soon followed by the chairman's charge that President Truman was interfering with an investigation of the Russian efforts to steal atom bomb secrets.⁵⁰ Finally, on September 24, the New York Times ran the headline "Atomic Spy Report Will Shock Public, Official Declares."⁵¹

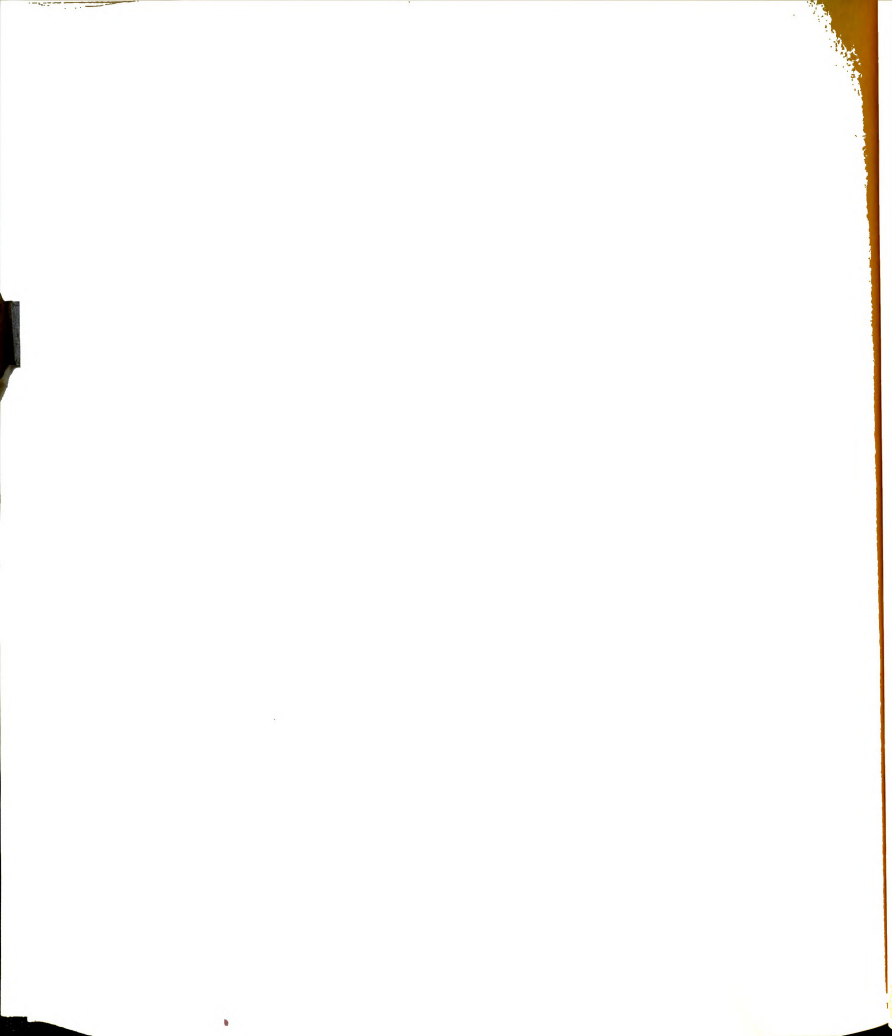
In language that sounded suspiciously familiar this unnamed official had told the Times correspondent that the report would make clear that Roosevelt, Truman, and Attorney General Clark "had all the facts on the ring" but evidently did nothing. The official's final words promised that "all pertinent facts will be given to the Congress and the American people. This is probably the gravest matter we

⁴⁸ Times, Sept. 18, 1948.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., Sept. 24, 1948.

⁵¹ Ibid., Sept. 26, 1948.



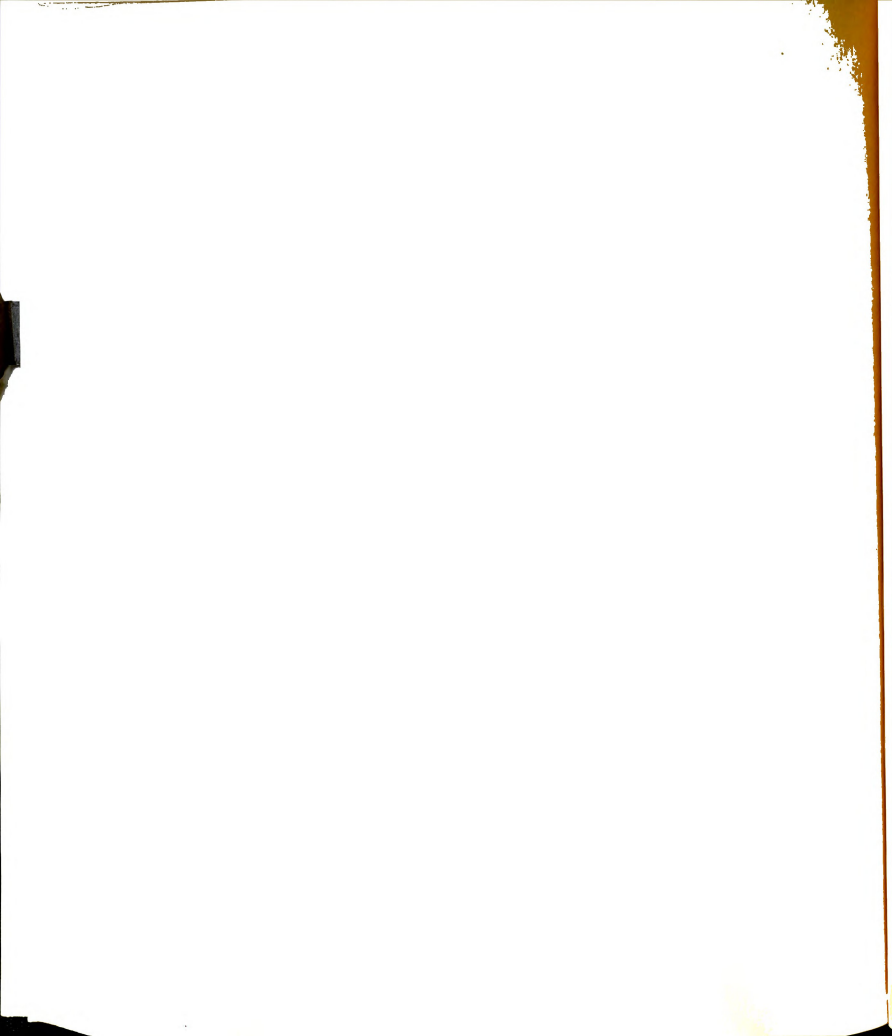
have ever gone into."⁵²

If the above words did indeed come from Thomas, it is difficult to determine just what he meant by the "facts on the ring." Elizabeth Bentley had already given her sensational testimony to a subcommittee only to be shunted aside when Whittaker Chambers took the stand on August 3; yet in September the pumpkin papers were still tucked away safely on the Chambers farm, and the committee's case against Alger Hiss did not look particularly convincing. Nor did it seem that the chairman had any new evidence implicating Condon and the scientists; at least, none was forthcoming. Once again it appeared that Thomas had answered his critics by taking the offense. And with the presidential elections coming up, there can be little doubt that Thomas was interested in pursuing every opportunity to embarrass the administration. In an interview with the author, Thomas verified a 1954 New York Times story which told of Republican National Chairman Carroll Reece urging Thomas to stay in Washington "to set up the spy hearings...to keep the heat on Harry Truman."⁵³

Attorney General Tom Clark was convinced of the chairman's political motives when he angrily answered his allegations that he and the President had "obstructed and thwarted" the committee's hunt for facts:

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., Feb. 8, 1954.

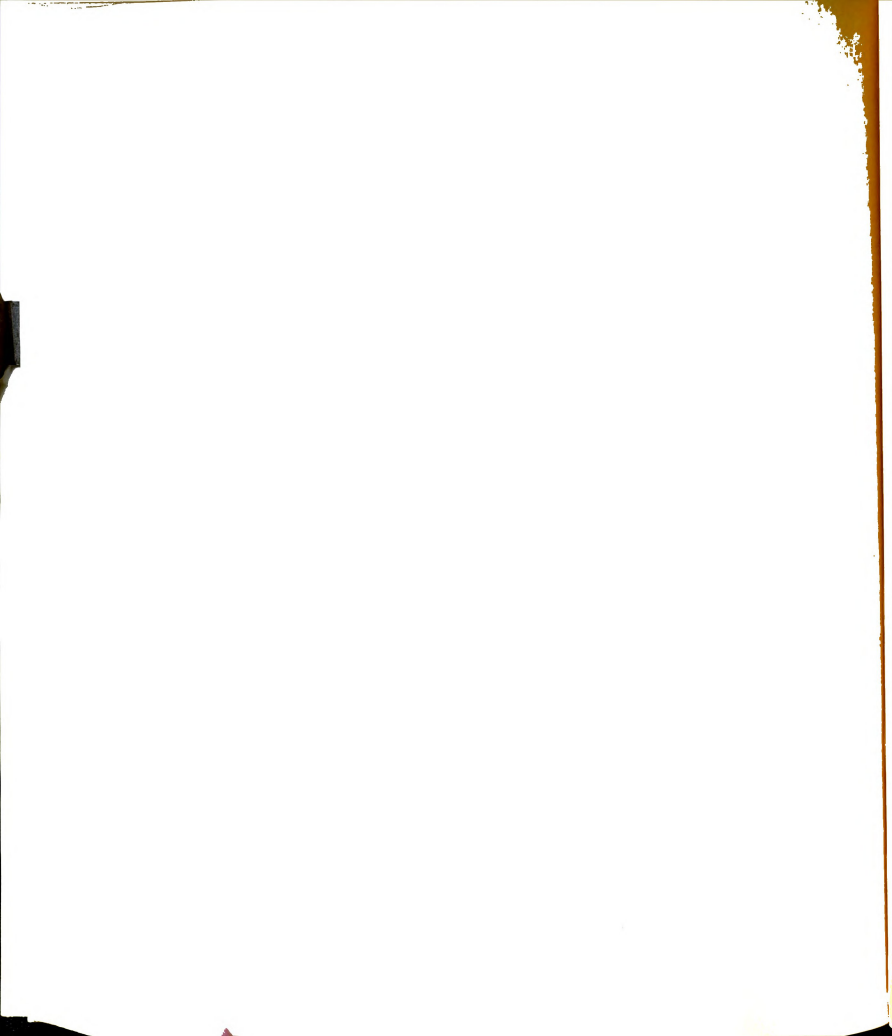


The Department prosecutes crime by the grand jury system...through courts and not by politically minded Congressional committees with one eye on publicity and the other on election results.⁵⁴

But what of Edward U. Condon? After the election his case was mercifully allowed to fade into the background. The committee had bigger game in Alger Hiss, and J. Parnell Thomas was busy with his own impending indictment for payroll padding. The next reference to Condon came in a committee report in June, 1950, which recommended that Condon be removed from all government work even though no new evidence was offered and in the face of the fact that Condon had been cleared in exhaustive investigations by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Atomic Energy Commission, and the Department of Commerce. Only the Committee on Un-American Activities had found him guilty, and it had done so without substantial proof and without giving the accused the opportunity publicly to defend himself.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ibid., Sept. 30, 1948.

⁵⁵ Condon was finally brought before a subcommittee in Chicago in September, 1952, but there was nothing further said about his own activities. The subcommittee seemed much more interested in what Condon might be willing to tell them about some young scientists in the atomic energy program who were then under the surveillance of the committee; Edward U. Condon Hearings, Sept. 5, 1952, 3839-3897.



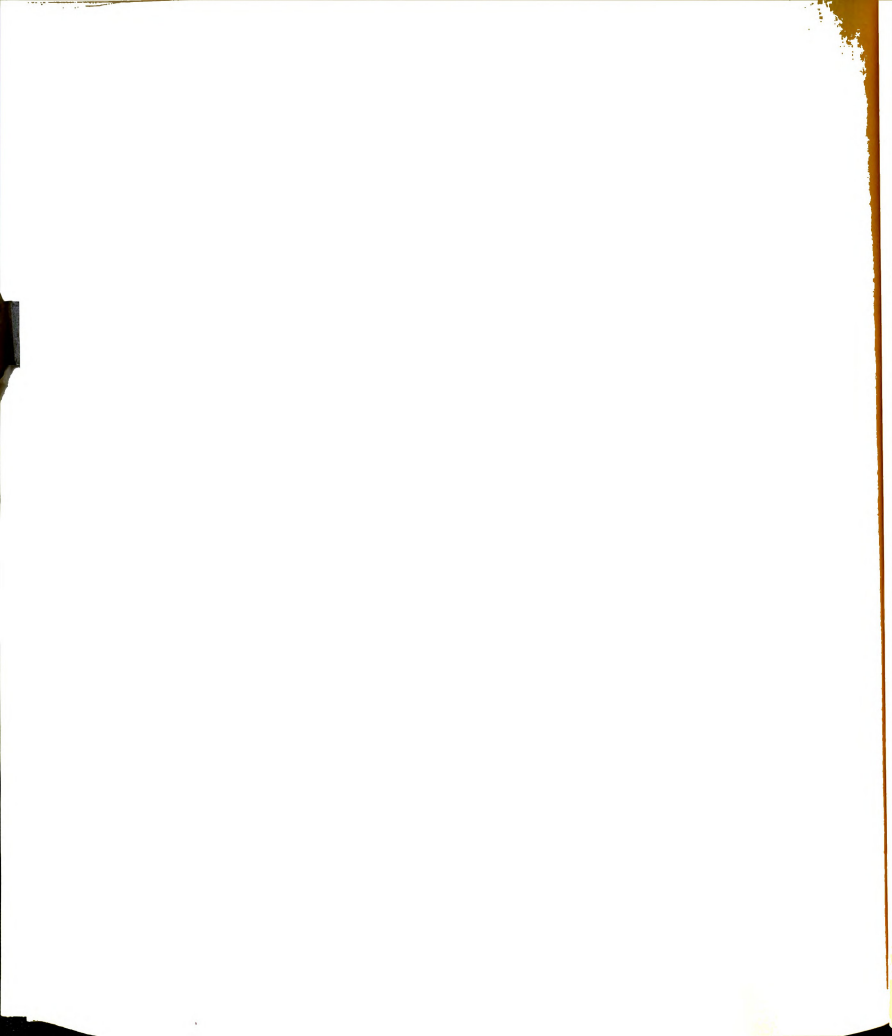
EPILOGUE

On January 3, 1950, the Congressional career of J. Parnell Thomas came to an official close. Due to his recent conviction for payroll fraud, Thomas had been forced to tender his resignation to Speaker Sam Rayburn. He had spent fourteen years in the House, the last twelve of which featured his service on the House Committee on Un-American Activities. His career, like that of the committee itself, was full of controversy and blazing headlines, but its end could only be classed as ironic. The man whose entire public life had focused on his own narrow interpretation of "Americanism," and who had always been so critical of the federal bureaucracy manned by "payroll patriots," as he called them, would be held up to public ridicule as a man who scarcely set an example for acceptable American behavior.

It was Drew Pearson, with one of his characteristic bombshells, who started the public exposure of Thomas' questionable payroll procedures. On August 4, 1948, Pearson accused Thomas of hiring three secretaries who were on his payroll but who did not work.¹ A few weeks later Pearson amended his charges to add the name of Thomas' daughter-in-law to the list of "paid but not working" office personnel.²

¹Drew Pearson, Washington Post, Aug. 4, 1948.

²Ibid., Aug. 7, 1948; see also the Post, Sept. 17, 1948.



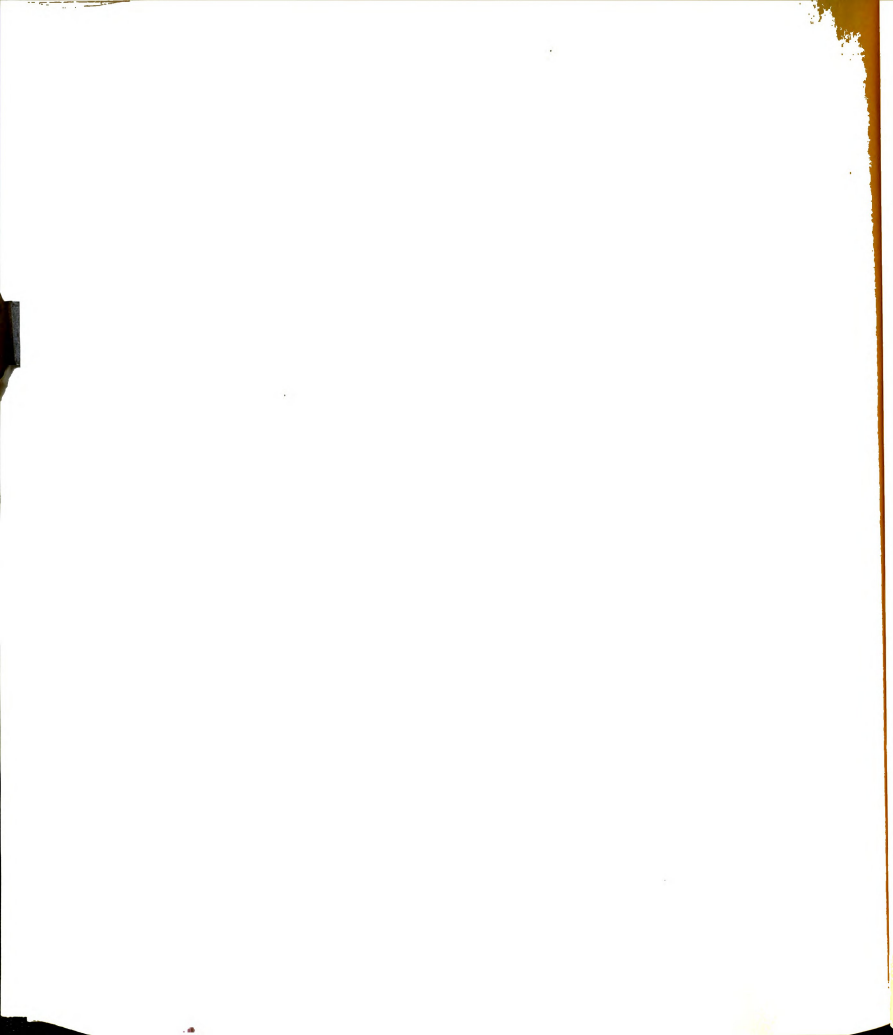
These were serious charges to be made against a man who at the time chaired the most powerful committee on Capitol Hill.

The sources of Drew Pearson's information have often been shrouded in an almost impenetrable mist--but not in the case of Thomas. In a story full of ironies, Pearson's informant provided one of the most remarkable coincidences, one which must have haunted the former Congressman throughout his nine months in the Federal Correctional Institution at Danbury, Connecticut. Helen Campbell had worked in the Thomas office in Washington for eleven years only to be let go in favor of a younger replacement who Pearson hinted was something more than just a secretary for the New Jersey Republican.³ In any case, Miss Campbell's fury was what one might expect from a woman so scorned, and she turned over to Pearson all the materials she had been able to take from the Thomas files.

Thomas should have known better. He himself was fond of relating how the committee had cleverly used certain paramours to track down some of its elusive witnesses.⁴ In such cases as Fritz Kuhn, the German-American Bund leader, and William Dudley Pelley, the commander of the right-wing Silver Shirts, jilted lovers had located their former beaux; and, of course, it was the former spy queen, Elizabeth Bentley, who provided the original testimony in 1948 that culminated

³ Ibid., Aug. 13, 1948; see also the Chicago Tribune, Nov. 29, 1949.

⁴ Personal Interview.



in the Alger Hiss hearings.

There were also ironies of a more political nature in the exposure of J. Parnell Thomas. The Representative himself had always been conscious of just how important the time element was when breaking a big story. Often as not the committee's headlines had corresponded to its renewal debate in Congress or to its seeking of a new appropriation, but now it was the government's timing that seemed significant.

On September 28, just a little more than one month before the presidential election, the Justice Department announced that it was ordering an investigation of Thomas' conduct in office.⁵ Truman himself, who was then engaged in a running battle with the committee and its chairman over the subject of Communist espionage in high government circles, had hinted that some such investigation might be forthcoming in a political speech in San Francisco a few days before.⁶ On October 6 the FBI was asked to investigate,⁷ and some two weeks later it was announced that Thomas was under inquiry by the Grand Jury in Washington.⁸

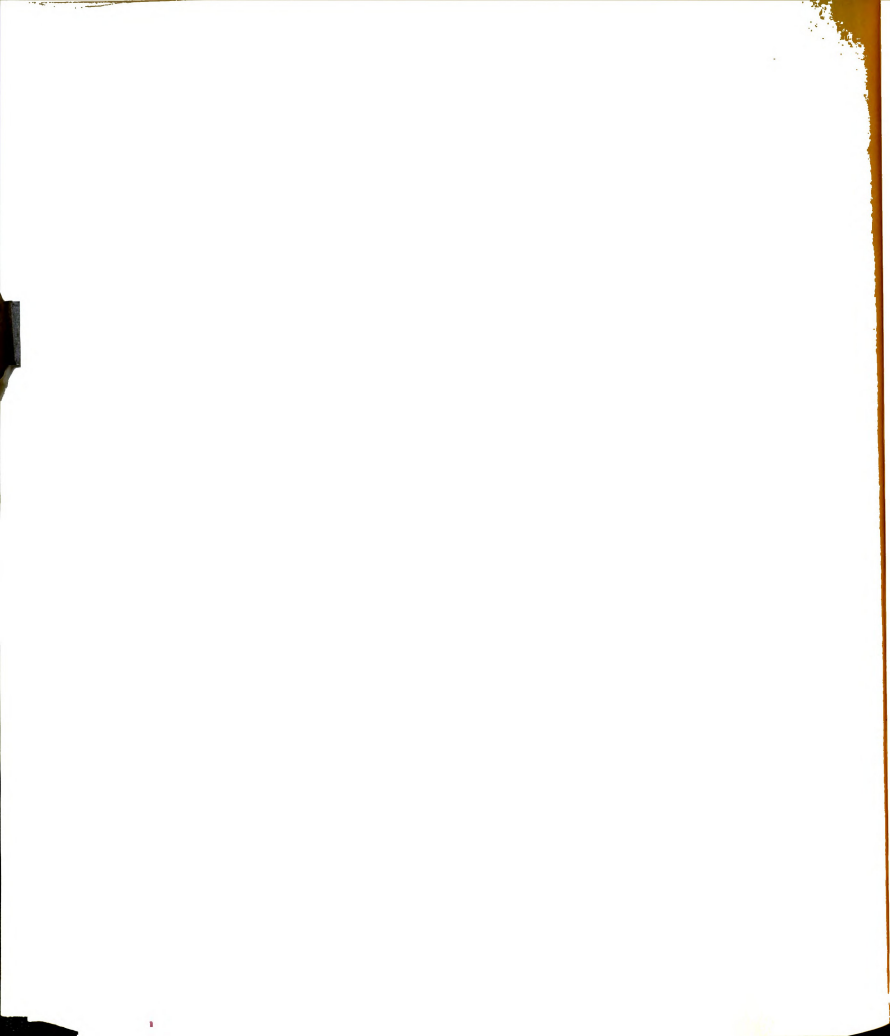
Thomas did not passively submit to such adverse headlines. His long investigative career had taught him that one of the best defenses against criticism was a Red-

⁵Times, Sept. 29, 1948; Tribune, Sept. 29, 1948.

⁶Times, Sept. 23, 1948.

⁷Ibid., Oct. 7, 1948.

⁸Ibid., Oct. 23, 1948.



tinged offense. Predictably he labeled the government's charges "a smear attack to cover the fact that Clark and his department had failed to proceed against Communist infiltration in high government posts."⁹ Then, with a flourish that must have brought a smile to many of his old adversaries, Thomas labeled the Attorney General's submitting of Drew Pearson's evidence to the Grand Jury ten days before the election "a cheap political trick."¹⁰ It was no trick, but undoubtedly its timing was meant to embarrass the man and the committee which had heaped so much public ridicule on the administration.

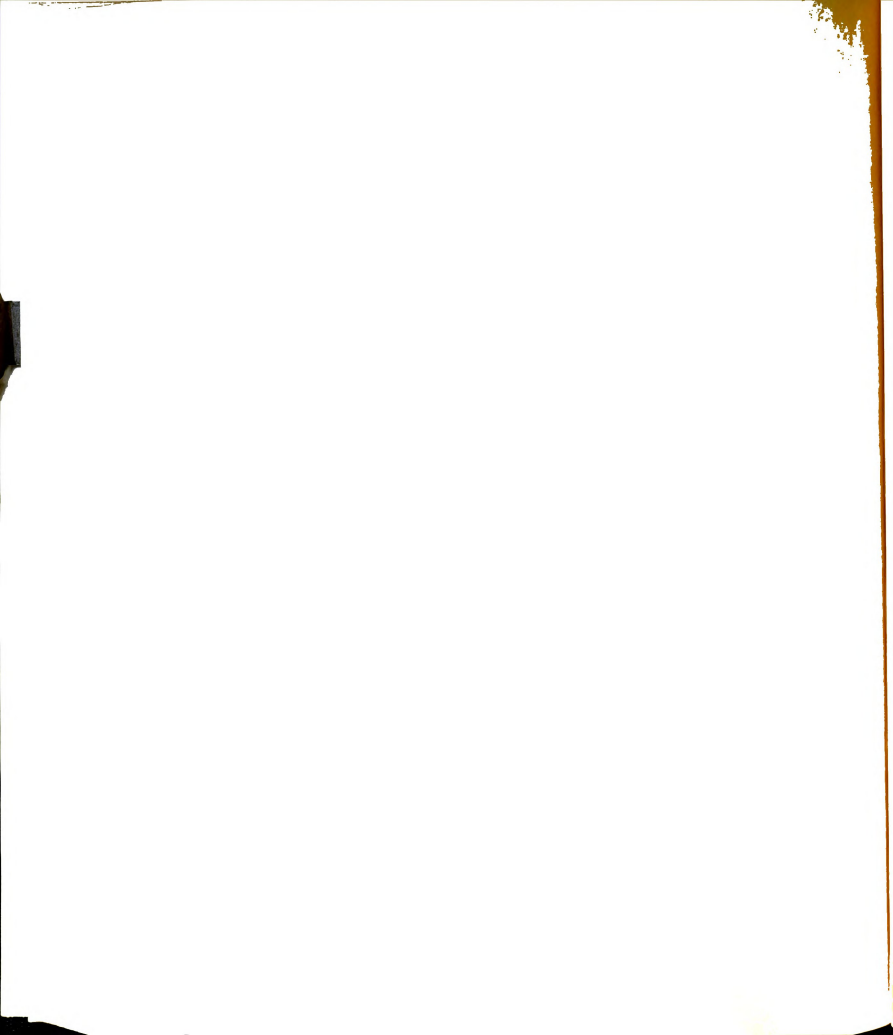
Two days later, in an open letter to Tom Clark, Thomas demanded that he be allowed to appear before the Grand Jury "not only for myself but for the members of my family who have been the subjects of your political harassment."¹¹ Such an insistence on the right to face one's accusers and to be confronted with the evidence was precisely the complaint that had so often been made by those stood accused before the Committee on Un-American Activities.

Thomas was granted his "rights," but when the opportunity came for him to exercise them a few days after the election, he refused; in fact, his pleading of the fifth

⁹The Record, Oct. 23, 1948. The Tribune quoted Thomas as saying he was being made "a political scapegoat for the Truman failure to drive Communists off the New Deal payroll;" Tribune, Oct. 24, 1948.

¹⁰The Record, Oct. 23, 1948.

¹¹Tribune, Oct. 24, 1948.

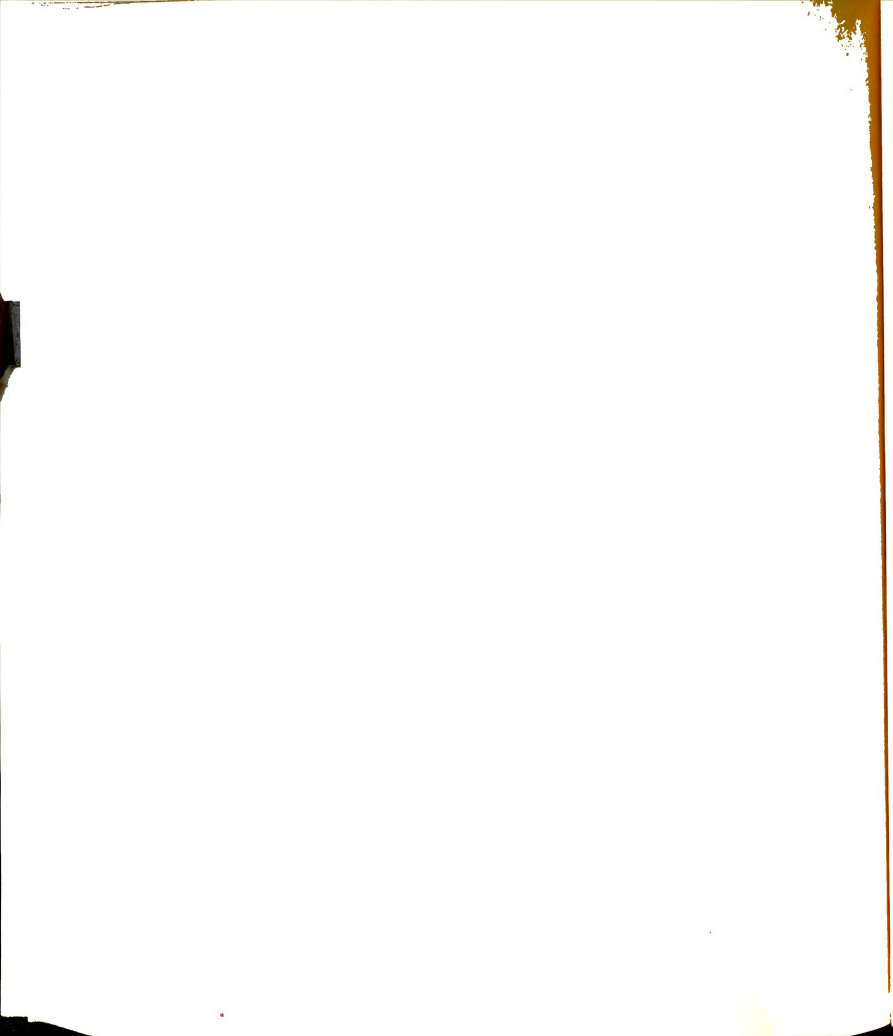


amendment recalled the tactics of several of the witnesses before his committee, and their reticence in answering had often been interpreted by the chairman as tantamount to guilt and deserving of contempt proceedings. An editorial in his home district observed that it was too bad that only when he himself was accused did Thomas learn about the Bill of Rights:

Mr. Thomas will never again be chairman of that committee. It is too bad. With his new and grateful understanding of the sanctity of the individual, of innocence till proved-guilty, he might have been a good one.¹²

The indictment of Thomas followed on November 8 on charges of defrauding the Government of the United States and of filing false claims against it. The indictment stated that Miss Cambell, Thomas' secretary, her niece, Miss Midriff, and a maid in Miss Campbell's home, a Miss Minor, were carried on the Thomas payroll and received monthly checks without actually working for the government. Evidently Miss Midriff and Miss Minor endorsed the checks over to Miss Campbell who deposited them in her personal checking account. Thereafter she withdrew this money by check and deposited it in the account of Representative Thomas in the First National Bank of Allendale, New Jersey, Thomas' home town. Thomas also was charged with presenting payment of salary vouchers for one Jacqueline B. Hill for services rendered as clerk-typist to the House Committee on Un-American Activities. The Grand Jury said these claims were fraudulent because

¹²The Record, Nov. 8, 1948.



Miss Hill had rendered no services to the committee.¹³

On November 16 Thomas was arraigned, pleaded innocent, and was released on \$1,000 bond to face trial on January 10.¹⁴ The chairman of the Committee on Un-American Activities faced a maximum penalty of \$40,000 in fines and thirty-two years in prison.

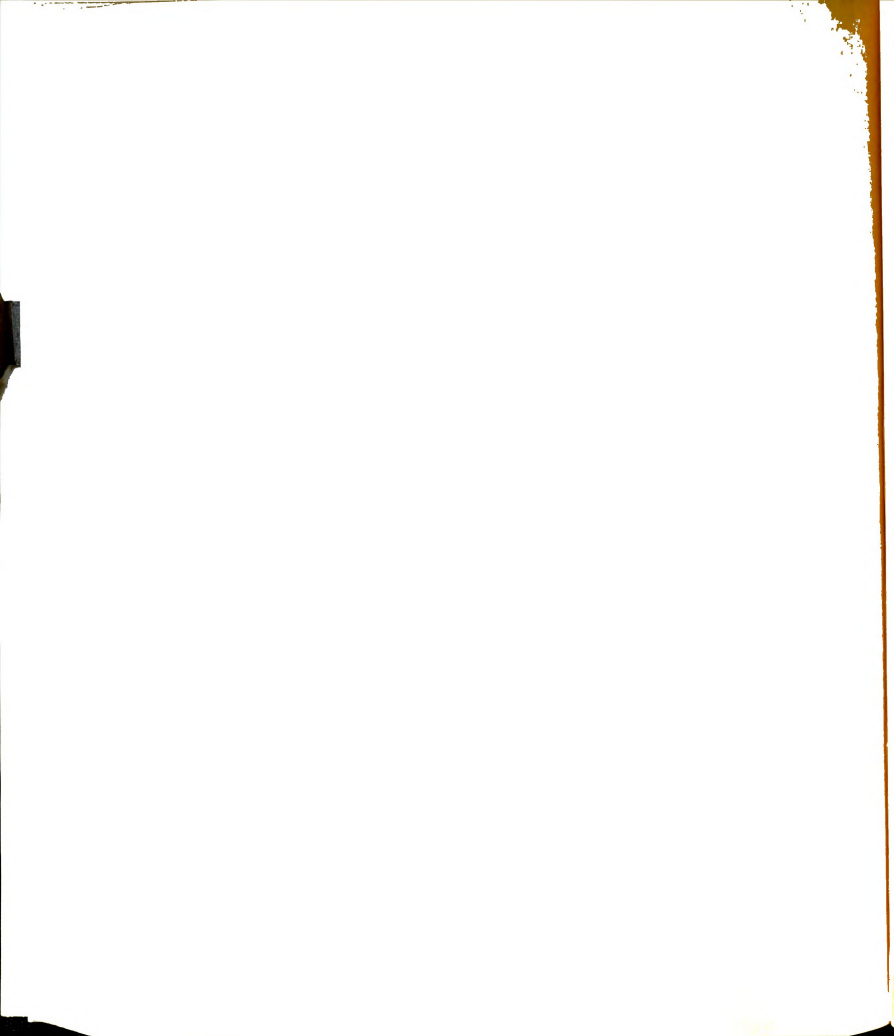
In January the trial was postponed; in fact, through a series of postponements, Thomas did not come into court until November 29. Thomas had long suffered with a nervous stomach and two 1949 operations for gastro-intestinal bleeding were cited for the delays. However, any possibility that Thomas might use his health for a perpetual postponement was ended by Judge Alexander Holtzoff who refused to honor any more such appeals, pointing out that if Thomas were healthy enough to consume three highballs at dinner and to smoke four cigars a day, he was strong enough to stand trial.¹⁵

On the second day of the long-awaited trial, Thomas surprised his supporters by withdrawing his not guilty plea and entering one of nolo contendere, or no contest. The uncompromising defender of American ideals was hoping for mercy--a quality he had seldom showed in his own treatment of witnesses before the Committee on Un-American Activities.

¹³ Times, Nov. 9, 1948.

¹⁴ Ibid., Nov. 16, 1948.

¹⁵ The Record, Oct. 29, 1949.



A few days later Thomas was sentenced to from six to eighteen months in prison, fined \$10,000, and severely lectured by Judge Holtzoff for ignoring his duty as a member of the Committee on Un-American Activities to give an example of "upright dealing and true Americanism."¹⁶ An editorial in the next day's New York Times upheld Judge Holtzoff's action:

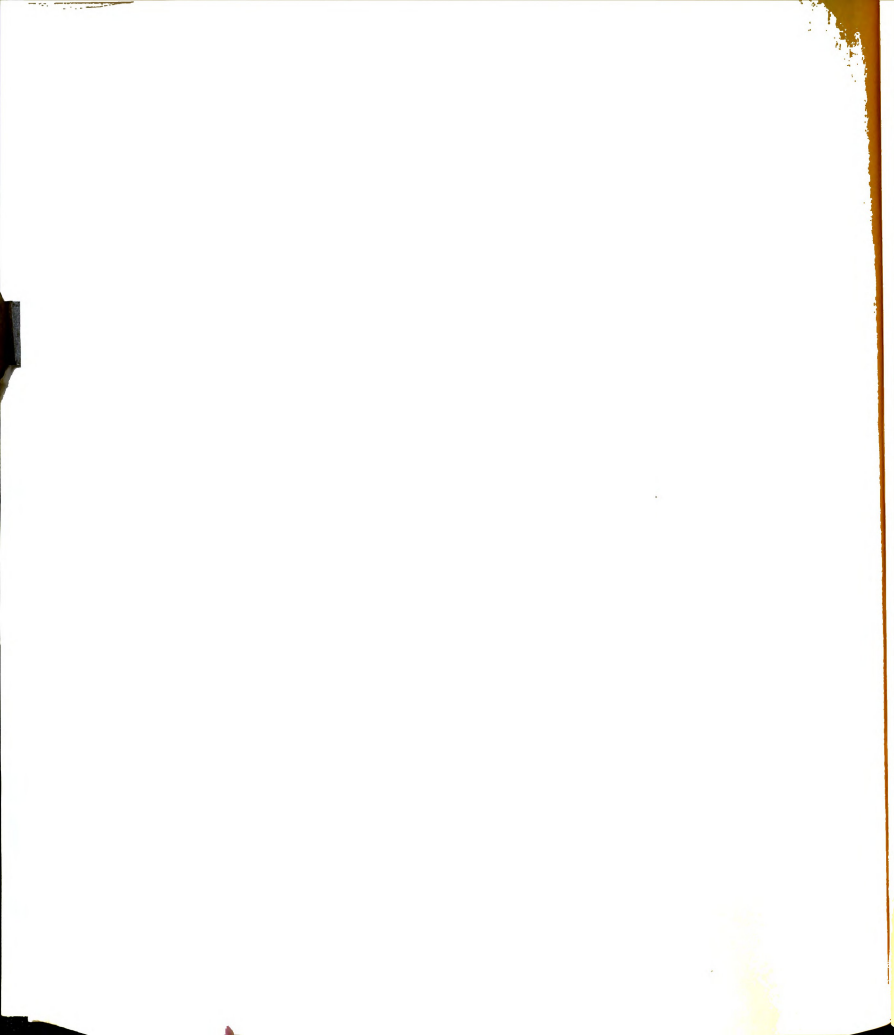
The penalty is well merited....As chairman of the House Committee on Un-American Activities he had been unsparing in his criticism of what he believed to be deviations from the honorable standards of American life. His own deviation from those same standards is shocking and unforgivable and deserves the penalty he will pay.¹⁷

Thomas was through as a public servant, but his years on the committee would remain as a reminder of the man for whom all too often Americanism was a kind of political gauge to measure one's opponents rather than a standard for personal excellence.

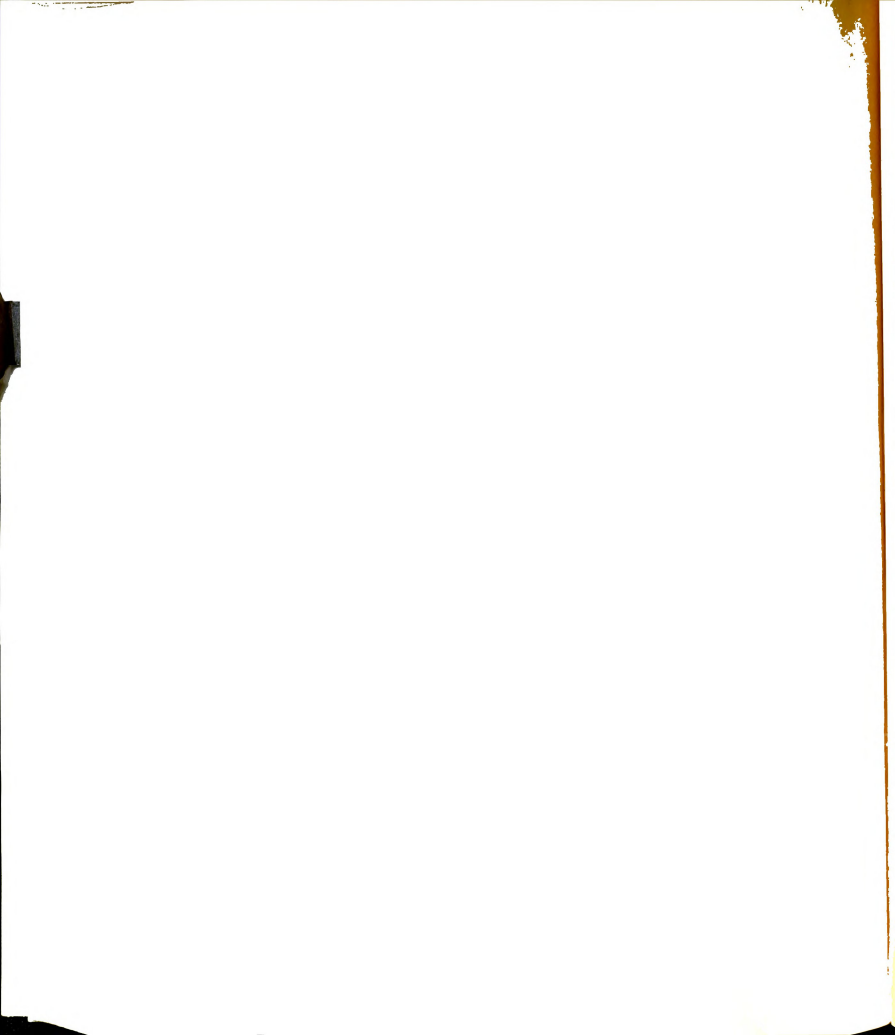
It is always dangerous to deal in hypothetical history; nevertheless, one does indeed wonder what the future might have held for J. Parnell Thomas if his questionable payroll practices had not been exposed in the fall of 1948. At the time, his Committee on Un-American Activities was in pursuit of its biggest game--Alger Hiss--but it would be Richard Nixon who would receive the public plaudits when it finally appeared that the committee did have a substantial case against a former high-ranking New Deal official. It is

¹⁶ Ibid., Dec. 10, 1949; Times, Dec. 10, 1949.

¹⁷ Times, Dec. 10, 1949.



perhaps an exaggeration to credit Nixon's meteoric rise in politics entirely to the Hiss affair, but there can be little doubt that it played a decisive role. But what if Chairman Thomas had still been able to dominate the committee? Was there not a chance that he too might have reached the Senate in 1950--the year when a freshman Senator from Wisconsin was ready to launch his own spectacular career in exposing un-American activities?

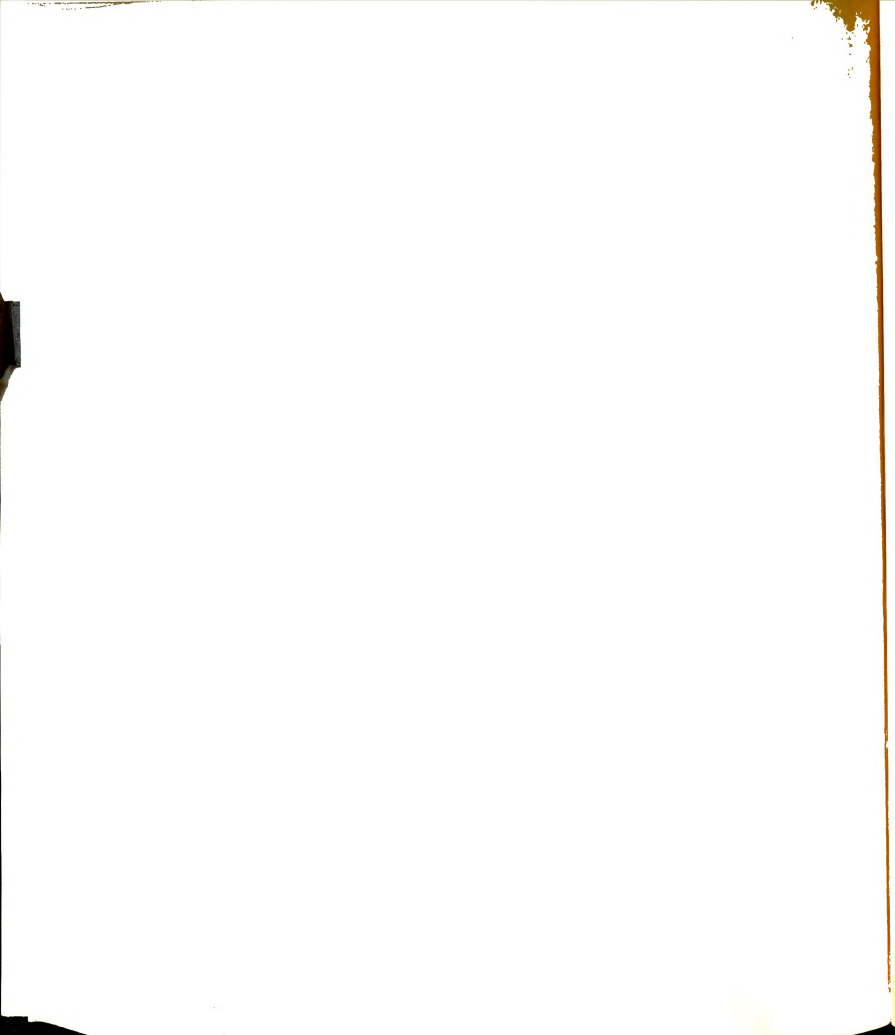


BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

Public Documents

Of fundamental value in any study of the House Committee on Un-American Activities and one of its members are the voluminous public hearings themselves. The committee now has recorded testimony covering well over 100,000 pages. During the existence of the special committee (1938-1948), these hearings were divided into seventeen volumes under the general heading U.S. Congress, House Special Committee on Un-American Activities. In addition, this committee was responsible for some eight volumes of executive hearings which were published some time after the actual hearings were conducted.

After the Committee on Un-American Activities was made permanent in 1945, the public hearings were no longer bound into the convenient large volumes; instead, each particular volume was printed under separate cover. There does exist an index to the public hearings which can be of value when one is seeking a particular individual who might have testified before the committee; however, in the general tracing of Thomas through his eleven years on the committee, it was necessary to follow the hearings in an almost page-by-page fashion. My specific use of the different hearings has been indicated in my textual citations.

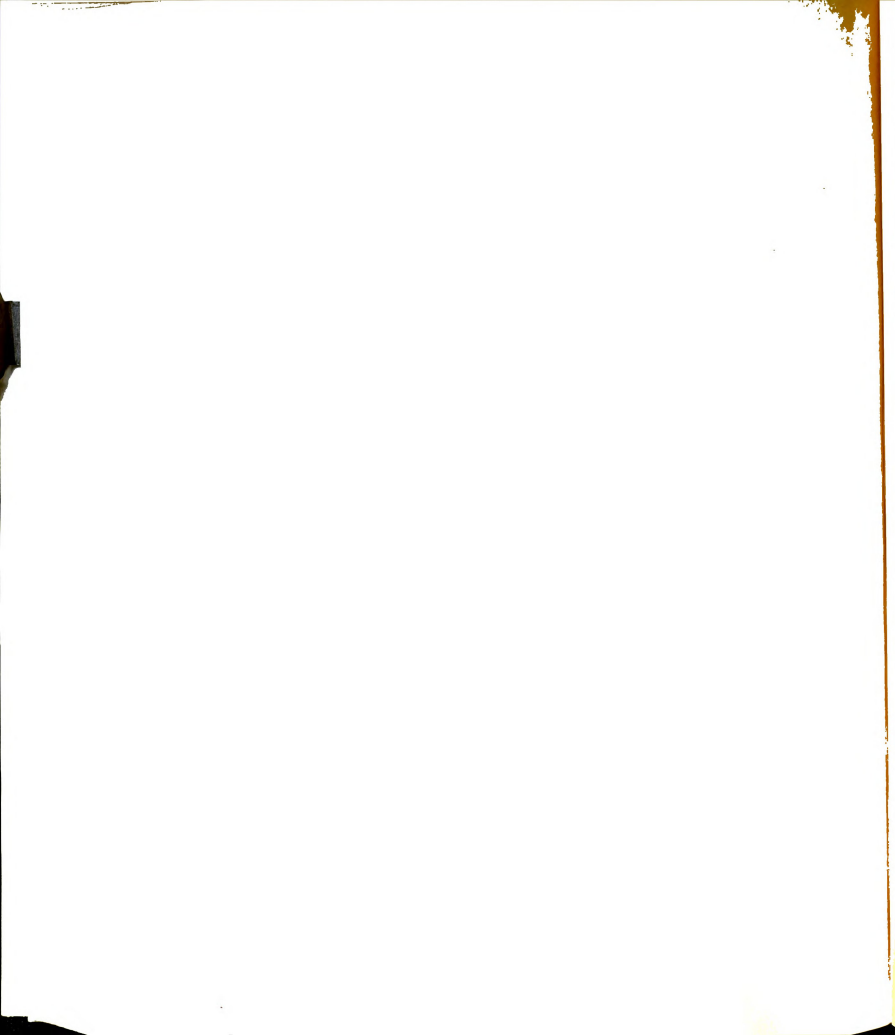


The committee also issued several reports on its activities. Most of these were in the form of an annual report to Congress, and they were often helpful in determining how the committee had followed up a particular investigation or what conclusions it had reached.

The Congressional Record was of considerable use, both in tracing the history of the Committee on Un-American Activities and in following the Congressional career of J. Parnell Thomas. The controversies which the Dies committee inspired often can be best seen through the annual debates over its renewal. Thomas and his fellow committeemen were always quite willing to extol the past accomplishments of the committee, and the opposition was just as ready to point out its failings. After the committee became permanent in 1945, it had only to worry about its annual appropriation, but this too was often the occasion of further debate on the relative merits of the committee.

There were, of course, many other specific references made to Thomas and the committee in the Congressional Record. Controversy continually followed the committee and its members and often this extended onto the floor of the House.

The Appendix of the Congressional Record also proved an invaluable source of information on J. Parnell Thomas. Many of the radio speeches and magazine articles which he here submitted would not otherwise have been available to the author.

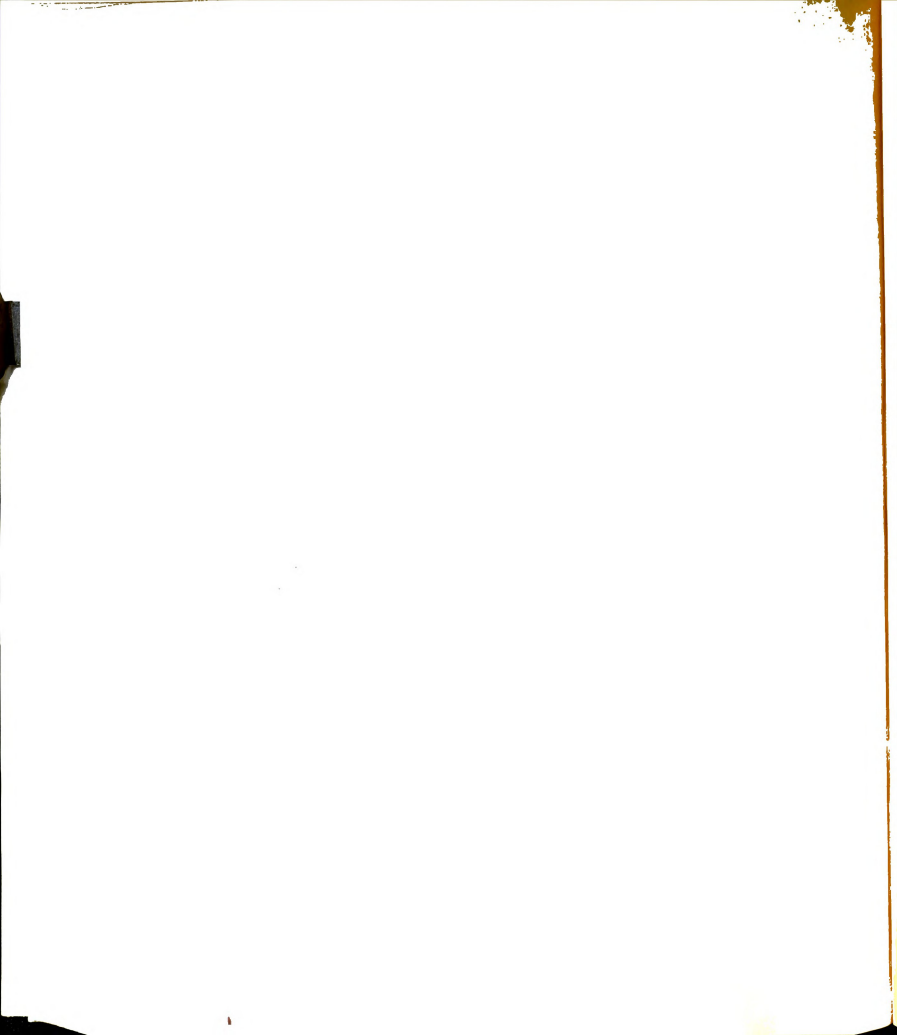


Books

This paper has been written almost exclusively from primary sources; nevertheless, two secondary works proved of great value. August Raymond Ogden's The Dies Committee (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1945), is the only solid treatment of the special committee's work. Although Ogden's study tends to ignore the committee's influence on American politics and society, it is a scholarly, chronological account of its work. In this latter capacity it served me as a valuable index to committee activities.

A more comprehensive analysis of the committee's later work is Robert Carr's The House Committee on Un-American Activities (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1952), but this excellent volume only covers the first five years of the permanent committee. In addition to presenting a chronological account of the committee's work, Carr examined its personnel, its treatment in the press, and its record in the courts. Like Ogden's work, this study provided a foundation upon which it was easier to place J. Parnell Thomas.

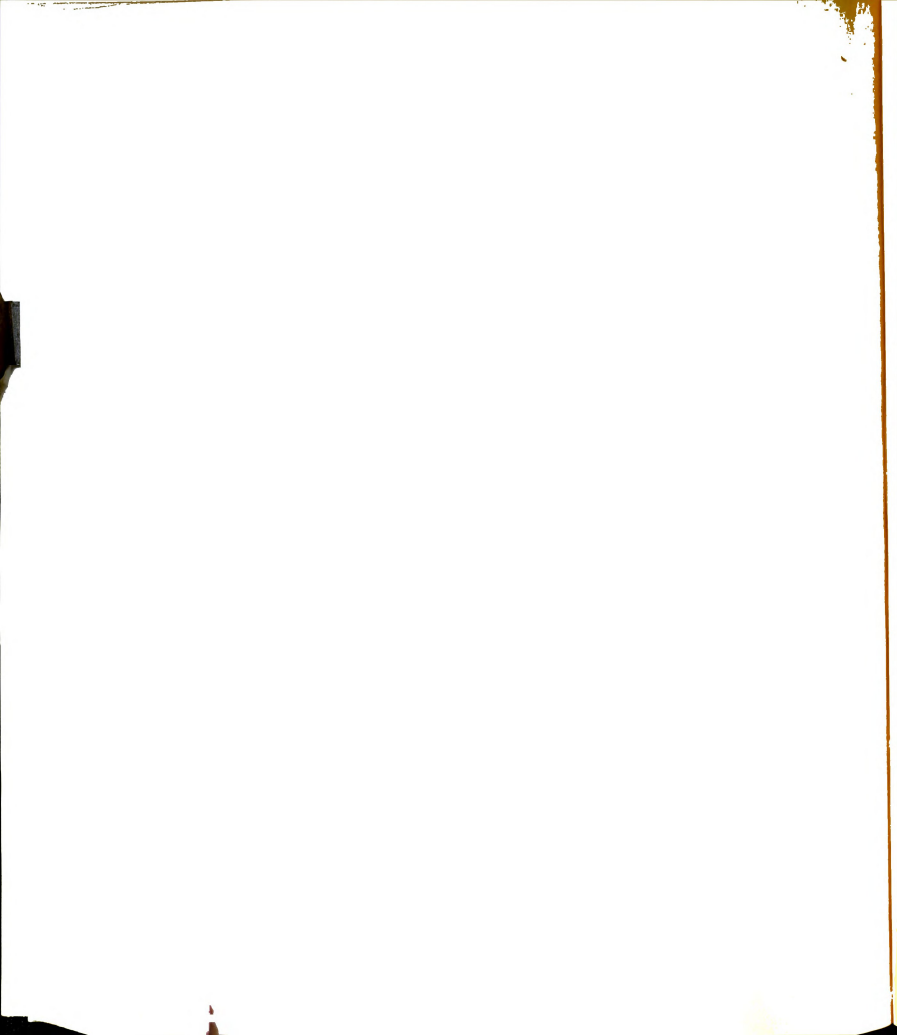
Two other secondary works were used in an attempt better to understand the motivation and techniques of the committee members and their investigations. The Martin Dies' Story (New York: Bookmiller, 1963) is the former chairman's autobiographical account of his years on the committee. Most of it is a further warning of the dangers of the internal Communist conspiracy, but of much greater



interest was his candid admission of the committee's great need for publicity and the methods used to obtain this national coverage.

Robert Stripling's The Red Plot Against America (Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania: Bell Publishing Co., 1949) is a self-dedicated description of the former chief counsel's years on the committee. He too wished to tell an ungrateful America of the long fight he and the committee had made against subversive activities. Fully half of his book deals with how to recognize a Communist and the organizations to which he might belong. Of more value was his narration of staff work--how investigations were planned and carried out and how the committee kept track of the 1,000,000 Americans which it considered subversive. Of use too was his candid admission that certain investigations were conducted by Thomas and himself without informing any of the other committee members.

There is one final monograph on the Dies committee. William Gellerman's Martin Dies (New York: The John Day Co., 1944) is a polemic against Dies and his committee for their alleged interference with the war effort through their constant attack on the administration and our ally Russia. Though making no attempt at an objective appraisal of the committee and its chairman, Gellerman's book provides an interesting analysis of some of the committee reports.



Newspapers

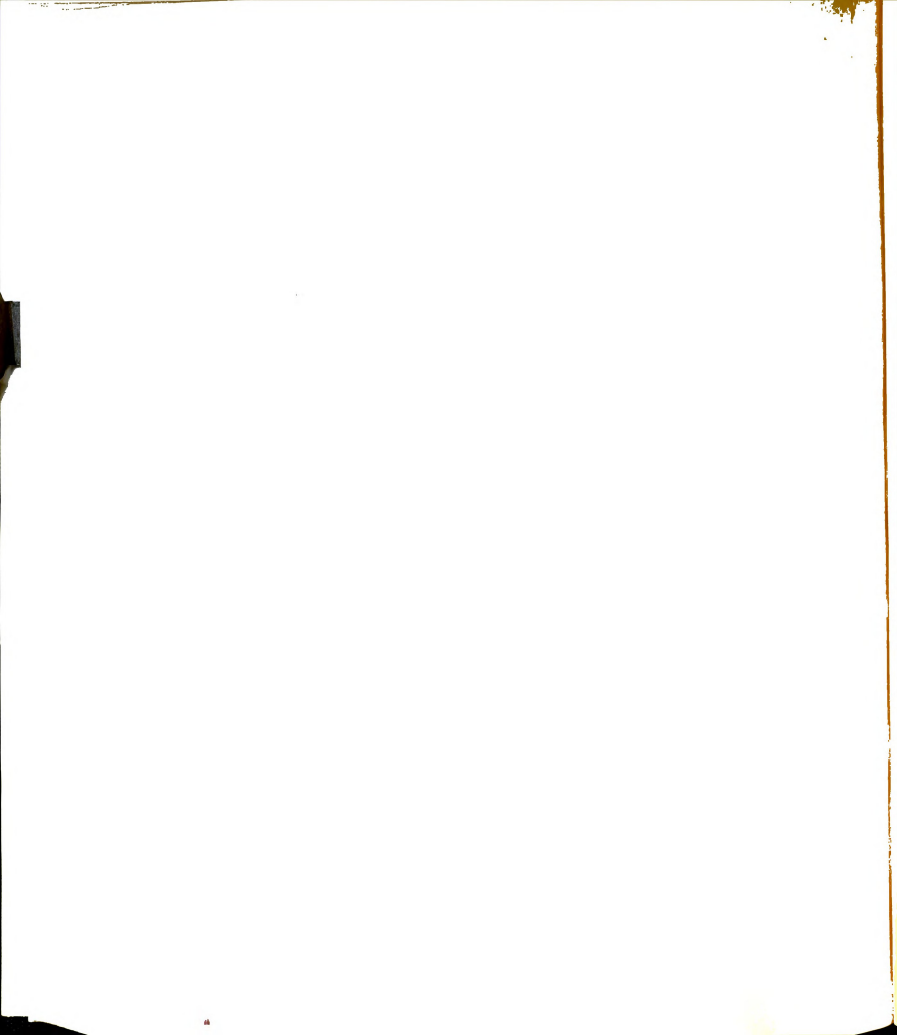
Considerable source material was found in newspapers which would not have been available elsewhere. Of greatest use was the New York Times, through which I originally outlined Thomas' public career. The invaluable New York Times Index also provided an indication of dates when other papers might have written about Thomas or the committee.

The Washington Post provided a good example of a paper which wished editorially to attack the committee while still giving its accusations and hearings front-page coverage. It was also occasionally the recipient of inside information on past and future committee activity.

The Chicago Tribune wholeheartedly supported Thomas and his committee, and it usually printed their charges without question.

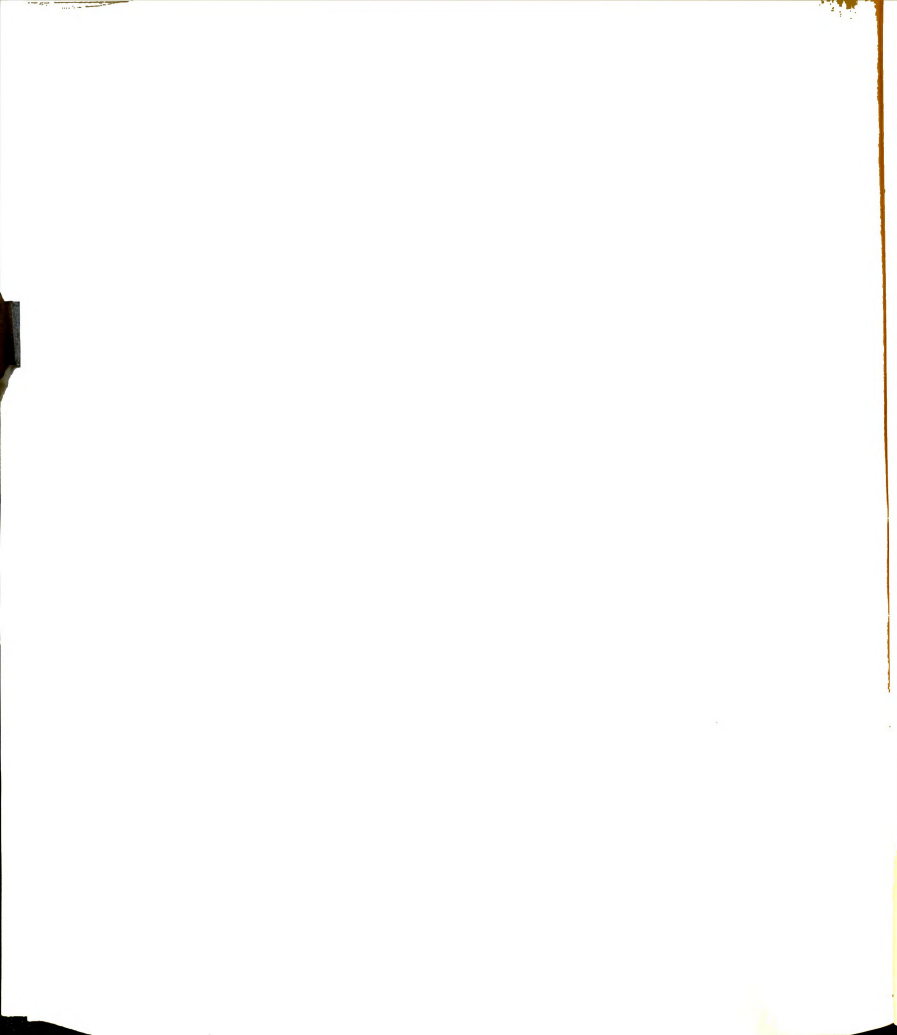
The Bergen County Evening Record (Hackensack, New Jersey) was the largest paper in Thomas' home district. It was of special value on his early political career and for general biographical background, and it naturally gave extensive coverage to his later Congressional career.

Finally, the Los Angeles Times was of special help with its daily reporting of Thomas and his subcommittee during their preliminary hearings on the motion-picture industry. This was of particular interest because Chairman Thomas had promised that there would be no publicity leaks during these preliminary hearings.

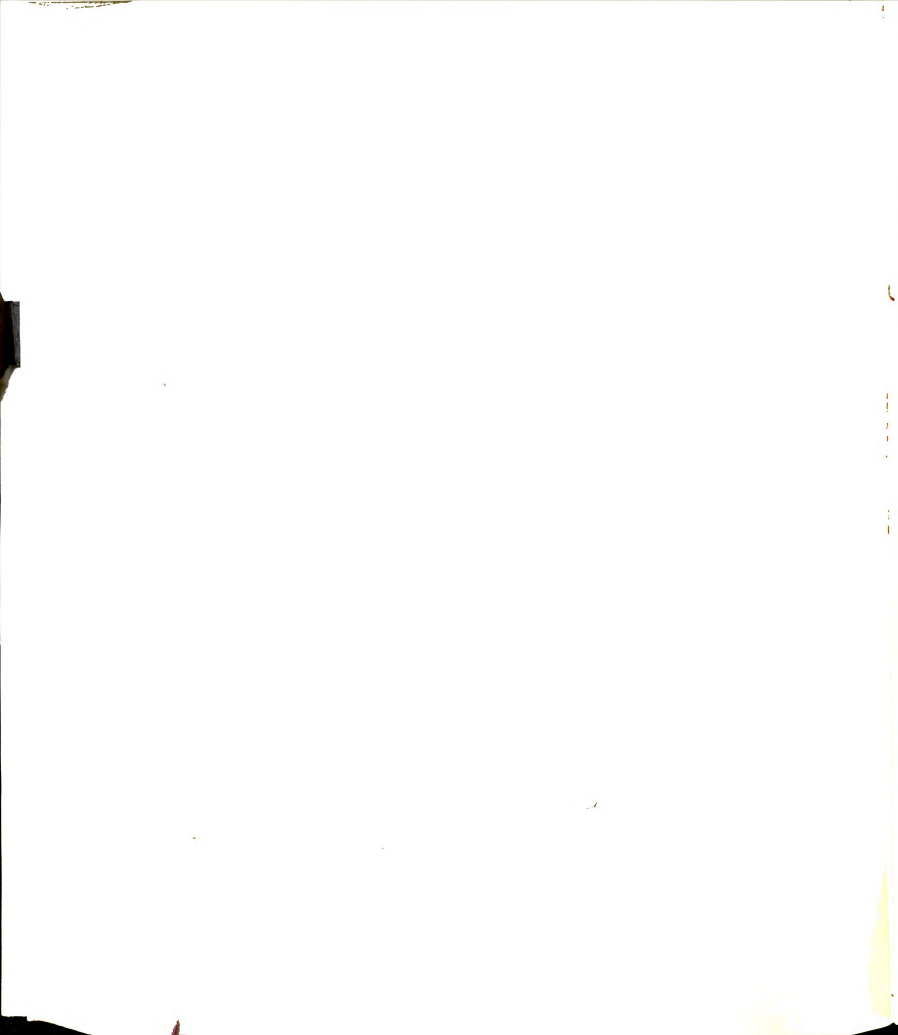


Personal Interview

Seldom is the historian fortunate enough to interview personally the object of his study, but in September, 1966, J. Parnell Thomas spent two hours with me reminiscing about his days on the committee. In many ways this was the most fascinating part of my research, and though much of the material he related was of an anecdotal nature, it, nevertheless, produced insights into the man which made it easier to reach many of my later conclusions.













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