

CORNELL RESEARCH IN CIVIL LIBERTIES

STUDY OF THE CONTROL OF SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES

2005  
Cornell University  
Civil Liberties

Advisory Committee

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October 12, 1948

OCT 26 1949

OCT 28 1949

Dr. Joseph H. Willits  
The Rockefeller Foundation  
49 West 49th Street  
New York, 20, N. Y.

Dear Dr. Willits:

I hope that you and the other officers of the Foundation have not been too unhappy over the publicity which our project for the study of the control of subversive activities has recently had.

I have not been able to convince myself that the attack made by Rabbi Schultz of the Jewish Anti-Communist League is of any great importance. I suspect, however, that it is typical of attacks which will be forthcoming as we begin to release various portions of the results of our investigations. Thus far nothing has been released, and Rabbi Schultz' ideas about the matter are based upon nothing but his own active imagination.

Apparently his interview was printed in the Los Angeles papers on the occasion of some sort of party which was being given for Senator Jack Tenney. Tenney, as you may know, was chairman of the California legislative committee on un-American activities for quite a number of years, but was recently removed from that position or ~~prevented~~ to resign because, as I understand it, his attacks upon allegedly subversive characters finally extended over into the Democratic leadership in the state. He has, been to a considerable extent, I think, discredited.

The New York Times called me up after the Schultz story was carried by the United Press, and I gave them the information which the Times printed along with the attack by Schultz. As I look back on it, I feel increasingly that it was a very shrewd move upon our part to explain the purpose and material of our study to the Attorney General, to the F.B.I. and to the White House. It seems to me that that fairly effectively protects us against the charge of browbeating public officials who are carrying on these loyalty investigations. As a matter of fact, none of us can explain the basis of Schultz' charge that we have been hounding the members of the Un-American Activities Committees.

On this one point I might give you this information. Last year Representative Nixon on the House Committee on Un-American Activities spoke at Dartmouth in connection with the Great Issues Course. During the two days he was on the Dartmouth campus Robert Carr saw a good deal of him, and they struck up quite a friendship. Nixon has been extraordinarily friendly to Carr, and on Carr's visits to Washington for the purpose of collecting material about the work of the House Committee he has been received with courtesy and has been given a good deal of helpful information. Certainly the relationships there are entirely amicable.

On the matter of Walter Gellhorn, who seems to be the principal object of the Schultz attack, I can only say that Gellhorn is the victim of the kind of loose and irresponsible smearing which has come to be the lot of many active-minded persons. Some time ago Gellhorn was proposed as a candidate for trustee of Amherst of which he is a graduate. At that time some acquaintance of his wrote a long attack upon Gellhorn elaborating his participation in many near-subversive or fellow traveler organizations. In order to meet this attack, and partly at my suggestion, Gellhorn prepared a very elaborate answer to all of the things which had been brought up against him. The answers seemed to me to be absolutely conclusive. I have a copy of this document, and if, for any reason, you feel that it would be desirable to have it in your office I can readily send you a copy of it.

On the most conspicuous point made against Gellhorn, mainly that he was listed as a fellow traveler by the House Committee on Un-American Activities, the answer is very simple. While Gellhorn was with the O.P.A. during the war the Washington office of that agency decided to put on a series of lectures round about the country to explain the work of the O.P.A. Gellhorn was sent to New York to speak before the Workers' College, an assignment which he took on rather reluctantly. The Workers' College is, I believe, on the Attorney General's list of subversive organizations. He gave the lecture which he had been ordered to give, and Mr. Dies, then chairman of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, promptly listed him as a member of the faculty of the Workers' College. Gellhorn's name appeared in the list of thirty-nine federal officers whom Dies tried to persuade Congress to dismiss by cutting off the appropriation for their salaries. As you may remember, the Kerr Committee was set up to screen this list of thirty-nine, and Gellhorn's name was cleared by that committee. The ones who were not cleared, you will recall, were Messrs. Lovett, Watson, and Dodd. However, I suppose it is the sad truth that Gellhorn will always live under the shadow of having been named by the Dies Committee.

I am not sure that you want all this information, but I think there could be no harm in giving you the salient facts as I see them. Our study is going forward in a satisfactory way, and we are all sticking to our original program of doing a thoroughly honest and objective job

of reporting. After the closest inquiry I am unable to discover that anyone connected with our undertaking has been guilty of any indiscretion or is a legitimate object of criticism.

I am sorry to burden you with this long letter, but I thought perhaps I might undertake to answer certain questions which may have been raised in your own mind, and, at the same time, give you facts which might be useful in answering questions which might be brought to you by other persons.

With best regards,

Very sincerely yours,

*Robert E. Cushman*

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