

CORNELL RESEARCH IN CIVIL LIBERTIES

STUDY OF THE CONTROL OF SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES

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October 12, 1950

Dr. Joseph H. Willits
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Dear Joe:

I think I ought to warn you that Fulton Lewis, Jr. is on the war-path and that our project and Walter Gellhorn's relation to it will probably be the subject of a broadcast some time within the next few weeks.

Mr. Dutton tipped us off on this since Lewis had made contact with him. I immediately got in touch with Mr. Lewis himself and had a long conversation with him about the whole problem. He is a very suave person and I was left with the impression that I had succeeded in correcting some of the erroneous ideas which he had and had reassured him on other points. He started out with the notion that Walter Gellhorn had inspired this entire program of study in order that he might dominate it with his objectionable ideas. That, I think, perhaps I was able to take care of.

This first conversation occurred last Friday. I gave careful thought to the matter and yesterday decided that it might be advisable to call Lewis again and suggest an interview in which Gellhorn and I might talk with him at some length and attempt to give him more fully our point of view. He was very cordial about such a suggestion and will, I think, on his own initiative go to New York in order to see Gellhorn. If he does that he will let me know and if I can possibly do it I will come down and join in.

At the same time, it is clear that he still feels that we are up to no good. In the first place, he dislikes Gellhorn's book intensely. I told him frankly that that didn't worry us. The book is in print and it is fair game for any reviewer or anyone else who wishes to express an opinion about it. He told me quite frankly on the telephone, "I do not think for a minute that Gellhorn is a Communist or a subversive person, but I do think that he is a person with a very definite and objectionable bias." The point he will make, apparently, is that Gellhorn is an officer of the American Civil Liberties Union -

OCT 25 1950

FMR	JHW	OK. in long-hand on letter from T.H.W. to Cushman dated 10/11/50.
C113	OKB	
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the American Civil Liberties Union has opposed the Loyalty Program, therefore Gellhorn should not have been selected to study the Program. I told him that he had not been selected to study the Program - that Miss Bontecou's study was the one which dealt with that and that Gellhorn's comments on it were incidental to the problem which his book deals with. I think, however, that I made a little progress on that point.

It turns out that I was too optimistic in my impressions of what we accomplished by talking to the COUNTERATTACK people last summer. I think I wrote you about that. Fulton Lewis called them up and they appear to have told him that they were far from satisfied with that interview. They mentioned one particular item, namely that Gellhorn read them two or three letters which he had written, protesting against the use of his name on the letterheads of organizations now regarded as "front" organizations. They apparently were greatly displeased that Gellhorn did not leave the letters with them or show them the letters. I told Lewis that it did not occur either to Gellhorn or myself that they wanted the letters or that they would assume that Gellhorn was reading something that did not exist in fact, but I suppose as the case is these FBI men have dealt with criminals and do not quite know how to react when persons like Gellhorn and myself are involved.

What comes out of my talks with Lewis is the rather disturbing conclusion that we are actually building up, largely through the efforts of men like Lewis, a doctrine that it is actually unpatriotic, if not subversive, to criticize or attack the Loyalty Program. You may have noticed that that was one of the grounds upon which the House Committee on Un-American Activities recently branded the National Lawyers Guild as a subversive organization. The Guild has consistently attacked the Loyalty Program. It sounds like saying that anyone who publicly asked for the repeal of the Alien and Sedition Acts back in 1798 must have been an unpatriotic and subversive American. It is quite clear, however, that Lewis feels that very strongly and that means, of course, that there will be very little in our program which would meet with his approval and also that the people involved in it are pretty well damned from the beginning because they have at least kept open the idea that the Loyalty Program should be criticized if events justified it.

I don't think there is anything to do about this, but if anything turns up you may depend upon my trying to take care of it as effectively as I can. Lewis has promised to call me after he sees Gellhorn, assuming that he does, and let me know definitely what his general plan is. I thought, however, that you would like to know that we shall probably be attacked from this quarter so that you will at least not be surprised when the bomb bursts.

With best regards,

Very sincerely yours

Bob

REC:JWS

Robert E. Cushman