

Date: Fri Sep 18 00:27:37 1998

## ADL Info Helped HUAC In 1947 "Witch-Hunts"

REPORTS THAT the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) furnished information on individuals and organizations to government agencies is not new. At press time, the MELB learned that in 1947, Congressional hearings revealed that the self-styled "civil rights" organization had been furnishing information to the U.S. Civil Service Commission on persons either alleged to be "communist," or linked, even indirectly, to some one who was. This information, was in turn, used by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and the FBI.



The investigation was conducted by a House Subcommittee on the Expenditures of the Executive Department on October 3, 6 and 7, 1947. Its purpose was "to make inquiry as to the authority of the Civil Service Commission to expend federal funds to compile an 'investigators' leads file containing facts, rumor, and gossip bearing upon the views, opinions, and acts of individuals who were neither federal employees nor applicants for positions coming under the jurisdiction of the Civil Service Commission. Also to learn for what purpose the 'file' was to be used."

What the Subcommittee learned, clearly to its disgust as a reading of the hearings make clear, was that the Anti-Defamation League was major source of information which Subcommittee Chair Clare Hoffman declared to be "all hearsay."

As an example, Hoffman held up a card, referring to the National Lawyers Guild, February 20-22, 1937,\* which stated that it came "from the subversive files in the office of Attorneys Mintzer & Levy, 39 Broadway, room 3305, and the files were made up in cooperation with the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League" (P. 17).

According to the Commission President Harry B. Mitchell, the files contained "the names of persons connected with some person who may be disloyal, subversive in some way. And we have the names of a great many who registered as Communists, who filed a petition, a nominating petition as a member of the Communist Party" (P. 10). It also apparently, included the names of some Senators and Congressmen (sic).

"You must remember," Mitchell later acknowledged, "that there is no evidence against the names on the list." "No," responded Hoffman, "but it furnishes a most admirable smear list." (P. 17)

Subcommittee member, Fred Busbey of Illinois, asked Commissioner Arthur Flemming how he could "reconcile your statement before this committee [regarding its activities] with the order put out by the Civil Service Commission on November 3, 1943, prohibiting your investigators from even asking questions about various Communist-front organizations - whether the man read the Daily Worker, or whether he was a member of the Washington Bookshop, or the American League for Peace and Democracy, or other organizations of that type?"

Flemming replied that "the Commission became convinced that the technique being used by some of the investigators, instead of helping us achieve our objectives, was deliberately playing into the hands of the persons against whom the investigations were being conducted. That type of information could be more effectively developed in other ways without playing into [their] hands."(P. 21)

Busbey, noting the "numerous cards" in the Commission's files that came from the ADL, asked Flemming to explain the relationship that existed between anyone on his staff and the ADL, and another organization, the Friends of Democracy, whose name was linked to it on the cards.

Mr. Busbey: Do you have any knowledge as to who in your organization contacts the Anti-Defamation League and checks their files, and how often they go to their offices and check their files for leads for your files? Mr. Flemming: I do not know, and I do not have such information.

Busbey, obviously frustrated when this line of questioning produced no results, urged the committee to "subpena before it the executive head of the Anti-Defamation League, and that they have Mintzer & Levy, I subpoenaed, to ascertain what they had to do with getting that kind of information into this file" (P. 36) The "advisability" of doing so was immediately questioned by Subcommittee assistant, Porter Hardy, the chair agreed and it went no further.

The Commissioner was adamant in his refusal to let the Subcommittee review the files, despite acknowledging that investigators from other committees, such as HUAC, and the FBI had been given access. In a letter to Hoffman, dated December 19, 1947,

Commission President Mitchell reported that of the 487,033 cards (on individuals) in its New York City office, "6,000 or 7,000 cards" compiled, to some degree, "in cooperation with the Anti-Defamation League." (P.63)

It should be noted that 1947 was the year in which ten Hollywood writers, producers and directors, who came to be known as the "Hollywood Ten," were called before HUAC and asked whether or not they were "now or had ever been" members of the Communist Party. All refused to answer, claiming that their First Amendment rights protected them from such an inquiry. They were judged to be in contempt of Congress and sentenced to a year in federal prison. The House Un-American Activities Committee, at the time, with whom the ADL made common bond, was largely made up of Southern racist "Dixiecrats" and ultra-right wing Northern Republicans.

\*This was during the infancy of the first HUAC, which came to be known by the name of its notorious right-wing chair, Martin Dies, as the Dies Committee.

---