

the

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TEACHER

DEMOCRACY IN EDUCATION

EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY

NOVEMBER 1938

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Fascism at the School Door

The Ruth Bill Weakened

The A. F. T. Salary Suits

New Rules for United Action

The Union Needs Funds

A. F. of L. Convention—1938

What We Have Done for the Ruth Bill



The Philadelphia Teacher

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Fascism at the School Door

An Account of Fascist Propaganda in and around Philadelphia Schools

MONDAY, September 26, 1938, was a Jewish holiday, a day when most of the teachers and pupils of that faith were not in school. On that morning, at Northeast High School, at West Philadelphia High School, and at other schools, attempts were made by certain individuals to distribute circulars, illustrated on this page. (See Figs. 1 and 2.)

A shocked teacher and pupil response quickly put an end to the distribution in most cases. Believing, however, that this was no mere isolated incident, but part of a planned campaign to promote racial and religious hatreds, the editors of this magazine have decided to expose this and similar attempts to teachers and the public generally.

The leaflets were anonymous; contained no signature of any person, no name of any known organization, no address, and no printing trade union label whereby the circular could be traced. In each case there was a hurried attempt to distribute, followed by a quick disappearance. At West Philadelphia High School, a number of leaflets were scattered about the street in the hope that they would be picked up.

These are samples of a number of sheets distributed lately, but not all of the circulars distributed to teachers, students, and parents have appeared anonymously. There have been several "organizations," most of them "paper" or "dummy" organizations, with no address given, no officer or other individual mentioned, and no listing in the telephone directory. Interesting and significant is the planned progression discernible in the names of the "sponsoring" organizations.

Early leaflets were anonymous. Later ones bore the names of the Anti-Communist Society, the League to Protect Schools from Communism, the American Coalition, the Christian Free Press, the Order of Independent Americans, the National American, the American Nationalist Press Association, and finally the American National Socialist Party.

This multiplicity of paper organizations led quite logically to the final revelation of the moving power behind them all, the domestic Nazi outfit, the American National Socialist Party, complete with swastika, Jew-baiting, and even a name parallel to that of the German National Socialist Party.

The mention of racial prejudice in the public schools brings inevitably to mind the name of Dr. Burchett. Dr. Burchett's

connection with the distribution of such a leaflet is indicated in her own handwriting, as shown in one of the photographic reproductions. (See Figs. 3 and 4.)

Such an action on the part of Dr. Burchett is scarcely new for her. Before the Board of Education ordered her transfer to West Philadelphia High School, she was head of the Language Department at South Philadelphia High School

COMMUNISM

IS JEWISH

Organizations predominately Jewish have been persecuting Dr. Burchett for three years. Now they have another victim, Miss Maguire. One is a Protestant, the other a Catholic. Who will be the next? Jews make trouble in every school, as they do in every country in which they are allowed to dwell. Jews are undermining the patriotism and religion of our children. Let us have Christian schools with Christian teachers for Christian children. Then the trouble in our schools will cease. Jews are making trouble so as to get the positions for themselves. If a lazy or inefficient Jew is rebuked, he calls it "race prejudice" and "abusive language." If they do not get all the promotions, they call it "religious persecution." Jews are getting most of the positions, most of the scholarships. Let's have schools for our own kind.

Show this to others. Make copies to mail your friends.

OVER

Fig. 1. Copy of leaflet distributed outside of West Philadelphia High School and several other high schools during the Jewish holiday on September 26, 1938. Leaflet declares "persecution" of Dr. Burchett has been at the hand of organizations predominantly "Jewish". See other photographic reproductions for names of organizations condemned by her. According to the leaflet, the remedy is "Christian schools with Christian teachers for Christian children."

for Girls. Beginning about 1924, she expressed views of a violently anti-Catholic, anti-Jewish, and anti-Negro nature. When Miss Ruth Wanger was appointed principal of that school in 1934, Dr. Burchett began to attack Miss Wanger and the Social Studies Department for "Red" teaching, also charging that "free love" and "atheism" were being taught at the school. These attacks received considerable newspaper publicity. Apparently encouraged, she began to spread her ideas among the pupils. The Board of Education undertook a thorough investigation of the charges made by Dr. Burchett and others; they reported, November 1936, that these charges of subversive teaching in the schools were completely unfounded.

In October 1936, a committee of alumnae sent a letter to the Board of Education asking for Dr. Burchett's dismissal because of "persistent fomenting of race hatred, and its influence on the girls in her classes." This letter was supported by hundreds of alumnae who addressed communications to the Board.

The alumnae committee had spent much time carefully gathering and recording statements made by Dr. Burchett over a period of years. Following are several such statements, selected from many available, all of which the committee declared it could definitely substantiate:

1. Education should be limited to a very select few—white, Protestant, wealthy American children of high I. Q.
2. The free system of public education should go.
3. "Catholics, Jews, and Negroes should be driven into the sea."

On October 26, 1936, the faculty of South Philadelphia High School sent to the Board a resolution asking for Dr. Burchett's transfer from the school. At the December, 1936, meeting of the Board, her transfer to West Philadelphia High School was ordered. The South Philadelphia High School Alumnae Committee wrote to the Board, commending the transfer, but reiterating the request for removal from the public school system. Many complaints and demands for dismissal have since been voiced by individuals and citizen's organizations.

The Board of Education and the Department of Super-

COMMUNISM

IS JEWISH

ROOSEVELT'S NEW DEAL IS CONTROLLED BY JEWS.

THE NEW DEAL (JEW DEAL) HAS RUINED OUR INDUSTRIES,
LOST US OUR MARKETS.

JEWS ARE GETTING THE FEW JOBS THERE ARE.
WHO HAS THE JOB THAT YOU OUGHT TO HAVE? A JEW
WHO WANTS WAR? ROOSEVELT'S NEW DEAL (JEW DEAL).
WHY? — \$ \$ \$ \$

Fig. 2. A variation of the previous leaflet distributed at the same time. Reveals obvious hatred directed against New Deal and an effort to smear our President.

intendence are in touch with the situation. For example, when the American League for Peace and Democracy protested to the Board of Education concerning the distribution in the spring of 1938 of the "Aid to Spain" leaflet illustrated elsewhere in this article, Mr. Morris B. Leeds, president of the Board, replied (in part):

" . . . I had already had a conference with the principal of the school in which she teaches, the Acting Superintendent of Education, and others responsible for our work . . . " " . . . We were informed in regard to this recent matter to which you refer before hearing from you, and we have more information in regard to it than was submitted with your letter . . . "

Dr. Burchett's activities were not confined within school walls. In the spring of 1938 invitations were issued to certain teachers of West Philadelphia High School and certain other teachers and citizens to attend a meeting near 19th and Spruce Streets. Two speakers were announced whose topics were "The Part of Judaism in Communism" and "The Silvershirts." The invitation discussed the "persecution" of Dr. Burchett by two local teachers organizations, and it concluded by urging teachers to form a chapter of the Anti-Communism Society.

Several teachers who desired to attend this meeting were refused admittance on the excuse that they were not "sponsored". (Dr. Burchett was called to the door to decide whether a particular applicant was or was not properly "sponsored.") Nevertheless it was learned through individuals who attended the meeting that the proceedings were violently anti-semitic. One of Dr. Burchett's pupils was observed attending this meeting, but Dr. Burchett has maintained on several occasions that she does not propagandize her pupils.

* * * *

At a "Save Our Schools" meeting of citizens, held at the Metropolitan Opera House under the sponsorship of the Philadelphia Teachers Association, anonymous leaflets were distributed outside the auditorium. These leaflets declared: "Americans will support schools that support America, but not propaganda mills of the Soviet. When Philadelphia teachers throw off the stigma of Communism . . . then, and not before, they may expect a sympathetic hearing." The implication sought is clear: American schools are propaganda mills; therefore they are not worth saving. Is this not clever demagoguery to cover up pressure for educational retrenchment? Do these pamphleteers want American schools to be closed down, as they have been, by the hundreds, in Nazi Germany? Perhaps they agree with the sentiment which was quoted earlier in this article: The free system of public education should go.

Local anti-semitism is a reflection of world unrest with all its economic implications. It is to the interest of Nazi groups to promote racial and religious hatreds. Their merciless persecution of Catholics, Jews and liberals abroad has its counterpart here in the activities of the Nazi-controlled German-American Bund, under whose auspices also Dr. Burchett has spoken publicly.

In an effort to combat the evil of racial intolerance, a committee of teachers appointed by the Executive Board of the

THE PHILADELPHIA TEACHER

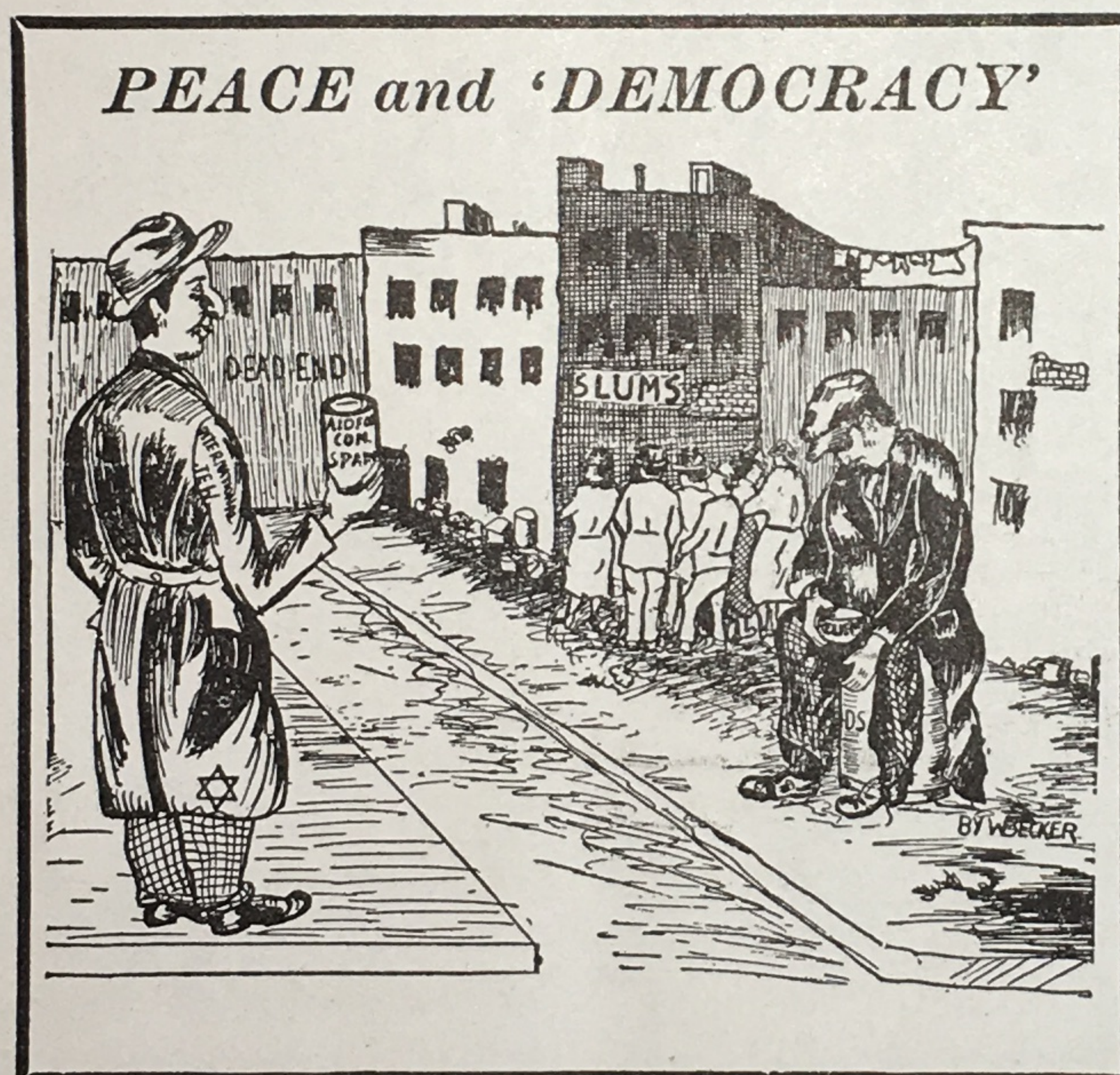
A. F. T. visited Dr. Nusbaum, Acting School Superintendent, on Saturday, October 29, 1938. The committee suggested to Dr. Nusbaum that he institute specific and vigorous instruction in the schools to educate directly for the preservation of our democracy. The committee thought that general instruction does not meet the need in today's situation. The A. F. T. also suggested that the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons now approaching provided a proper occasion for writing to principals re-emphasizing the American tradition of racial and religious co-operation. At this season, assembly programs could well be utilized to promote friendly understanding among the various groups. Shortly after the interview with the A. F. T. committee. Dr. Nusbaum sent out a

letter to each school on the subject of Armistice Day; suggestions in this letter for the teaching of racial and religious tolerance were quite in the spirit of the A. F. T. recommendations. We quote part of the letter:

"In the guarding of these fundamental ideas which lie at the basis of American life public school systems throughout the country are faced with a vital and ever-increasing responsibility. It is not sufficient to count and recount our blessings, important as that may be. There must be developed a dynamic attitude, even a militancy, in the matter of holding fast our spiritual inheritance, both for ourselves and for our children. From various sources and in a large va-

Please read + return to B. Burchett

THE "AID TO SPAIN" SCANDAL



Issued by the
Nationalist Press Association
147 East 116th Street - New York City

Fig. 3. Two pages of a leaflet distributed June 1938 by Dr. Burchett in the mail boxes of certain teachers at the West Philadelphia High School. As a result a large group of indignant teachers (who had deliberately refrained from complaining about previous leaflets) visited the principal and after protesting asked him to act in this situation. The principal spoke to Dr. Burchett and admonished her against placing anything of a racially defamatory character in the teachers' mail boxes.

The above leaflet is openly and recognizably of Nazi



The American National-Socialist Party an American organization dedicated to the restoration and preservation of Americans aims, ideals and traditions for the Americans of Aryan extraction, and opposed to the invasion of International Autocracy so that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, pledges itself on its platform to:

1. "America for the 'Americans'"
2. The Reawakening and Furthering of the American Traditions and Ideals.
3. For a firm belief in Christianity and a wholesome, moral family life based thereon.
4. For inner peace and unity among those of the Aryan race.
5. The complete isolation of the American Nation in European and Far Eastern affairs.
6. Against Communistic Internationalism.
7. The Common Welfare Above Private Greed.
8. Self-sufficiency for the American People and Nation in all agricultural, natural and industrial resources.
9. For the protection and encouragement of personal initiative and private ownership.
10. A harmonious relationship between Labor and Capital.
11. The limitation of excessive concentration of economic power and wealth.
12. America first, last and Always

HELP LIBERATE AMERICA JOIN THE A.N.S.P. NOW

inspiration. Note the name "American National Socialist Party," and the swastika. The swastika was a symbol used by early Indians, and the picture of the Indian with upraised hand in Nazi salute is probably supposed to constitute an implied argument that the Nazi philosophy is American. Note the references to "Americans of 'Aryan' extraction" and "unity of the 'Aryan race'." The drawing makes it appear that only Jews are soliciting aid for Republican Spain, and the title tries to make it appear that there is something scandalous in such action.

riety of ways this inheritance is being attacked, often insidiously but none the less with vigor and persistence. Our chief danger lies in the direction of a growing intolerance for groups whose only offense may be a difference of race, creed, or of social status. We owe it to ourselves, we owe it to our pupils, we owe it to our nation, that appeals to prejudice and hatred shall not meet with acceptance.

In making plans for Armistice Day this year every school should make provision for a special assembly program. It should be built about the theme of mutual respect, understanding, and appreciation. Our common aspirations are of such vast significance in relation to our smaller differences that we dare not allow ourselves to be blinded or misled by prejudice. The situation contains a challenge to every one of us, a challenge which the public schools of Philadelphia should meet squarely."

It is obvious that we are not dealing with the whimsical notions of an isolated individual, but with an organized attempt to bring fascism to our threshold. Anti-semitism is no isolated phenomenon, but a well known characteristic of this type of philosophy. Leaflets of the type reproduced here (only a few of the many that have been distributed) are a menace to democracy. To scoff today indicates an underestimation of the menace. Printing of leaflets is expensive. Money is back of their distribution.

small change that into those cylinders, or was collected in other ways and for equally unneutral purposes, came from W. P. A. workers and from people on home relief. It is a fair certainty, at any rate, that a fair amount of such money was money from the pockets of American taxpayers, money taken from the taxpayers (that is, the wage-earners) supposedly only for the purpose of relieving American suffering and reviving American business.

Fig. 4. Reproduction of a portion of another page of the "Aid to Spain" leaflet. Notice the last word of the fourth line, containing the letter "a" with German umlaut.

Anti-semitism must be revealed in its disgusting outlines. Nazism must be stifled. Vigilant teachers aware of the necessity of defending democracy cannot sit idly by while the liberties inherent in democracy are threatened and undermined. They recall that teachers in Germany once made light of Hitler's propaganda. They recall that Hitler began by attacking Communists and Jews; he ended by attacking trade unionists, liberals, middle-of-the-roaders, Catholics, and Protestants, and he exiled all scientists, scholars, and artists who refused to compromise with the truth. If "red-baiters" in our own country have their way, it may be that there will be no immunity for such organizations as the N. E. A., P. S. E. A., and P. T. A. (See Fig. 6.)

The American spirit of fair play causes many teachers to tolerate abuses to a certain degree, but no excuses will be effective when the true liberal instincts of American teachers are aroused. We cannot conscientiously face this threat to true democracy without taking vigorous action.

My dear
I am asking
a few teachers to come
to my house to discuss
"the state of the Union"
next Tuesday, October
25th at about 8 P. M.
Come if you can.
Yours cordially,
Bessie R. Burchett
3411 Race Street

Dear
Come tomorrow
(Tues Oct. 25) 8 P. M. if you can.
Saturday I received most terri-
fying information from an
Army officer passing
through town.
Ask other right-minded
Christians to come. Put
names of any you expect
to come in sealed envelope
in my mail box.
Destroy this note - not
in waste-basket!
B. R. Burchett.

Fig. 5. Photographic reproductions of two letters in Dr. Burchett's handwriting placed in the boxes of certain teachers at West Philadelphia High School. Several of the invited teachers turned their invitations over to the American Federation of Teachers. Each letter was personally addressed in a sealed envelope possibly as a means of circumventing the admonition of the principal given on a previous occasion. The names of the teachers addressed have been removed from the letters as a protection against possible attempts at reprisal.