

# Filmsters Blast Back at Communist Charge

News 8/15/40



MR. MARCH



MISS MUIR



MR. TONE

By United Press

HOLLYWOOD, Aug. 15 — Eighteen of Hollywood's biggest celebrities — actors, actresses and authors—today were accused of being Communists or contributors to the party treasury.

They were named in a 192-page transcript of John L. Leech's testimony before an extraordinary session of the Los Angeles County grand jury investigating the slaying, five years ago, of John Riley, a seaman. Leech formerly was executive secretary of the Communist Party in Los Angeles.

#### NOT CONNECTED WITH SLAYING

The jury indicted six persons and two John Does in connection with the murder, and deputy sheriffs were hunting them today. None of the Hollywood personages Mr. Leech named were connected with the slaying, it was emphasized.

He named: Jean Muir, Lionel Stander, Franchot Tone, Fredric March, James Cagney, Francis Lederer, Humphrey Bogart and Edward G. Robinson.

a regular contributor, he said. Mr. March belonged to the party, bought dues stamps and discussed Communist activities with Mr. Leech in studio groups.

Mr. and Mrs. Tuttle organized a mass meeting at their home in 1936 to hear Earl Browder, who was running for the presidency on the Communist ticket, he testified.

#### MR. MARCH RETORTS

Mr. March said that Mr. Leech was an "unmitigated liar." He said: "I do not know the man. I have never contributed a single penny to the Communist or any other un-American cause. If I have been duped by anyone, including Mr. Leech, at any time in the past, I want to be the first to know it."

Mr. Bogart said: "... I dare the men who are attempting this investigation to call me to the stand. I want to face them myself."

Mr. Cagney was reported motoring thru New England, but William Cagney, his business manager and brother, said he "is not a Communist, never was a Communist and never will be a Communist. He never has contributed funds to the party."

#### SHOCK TO MISS MUIR

"This is a shock and a surprise to me," Miss Muir said in Schenectady, N. Y., where she is appearing with the Mohawk Drama Festival. "I know nothing in the world about it. I have no sympathy with Communists, have never associated with them and certainly have never contributed any funds to the party."

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He named: Jean Muir, Lionel Stander, Franchot Tone, Fredric March, James Cagney, Francis Lederer, Humphrey Bogart and Edward Bromberg, all actors or actresses.

Playwright Clifford Odets, Producers Frank Davis, Mrs. Beryl La Cava, former wife of Director Gregory La Cava, Mrs. Tuttle, Buddy Schuberger, son of Producer B. F. Schuberger, authors Frank Scully and Samuel Ornitz and Mrs. Ornitz.

**NO CHARGES**

Mr. March, Miss Muir and Mr. Bogart denied the charges. Dist. Atty. Burton Fitts, who conducted the investigation, said he would prefer no charges against the movie figures.

Mr. Leech brought up the names last week when he was giving the jury "background" on the killing of Riley. Mr. Fitts charged Riley, a bitter anti-Communist, was beaten to death on the waterfront because he threatened to reveal plans of Communists to gain control of longshoremen's unions.

**LOYAL & TRUSTED MEMBER**

He said he had gone with Mr. Stander to various places and had "known" Mr. Stander as a loyal and trusted member of the party who has been one of the best of my knowledge, a member of the Communist Party in New York before he came to Hollywood.

Mr. Stander appeared voluntarily before the jury last week to deny he was a Communist.

Mr. Stander contributed as much as \$75 a week to the party and "he was definitely pledged to make a contribution that would not be less than \$75 per month," Mr. Leech testified. He said Miss Muir also was a party member and he "thought" \$75 a month was her donation.

**DAVIS SHELLS OUT**

Producer Davis was the largest contributor the party had in Hollywood, Mr. Leech said. He agreed to contribute \$500 a month in 1935 and did so until Mr. Leech left the party in 1936.

Mr. Cagney, Mr. Leech said, was both "member of the party and a contributor." In a 1934 San Joaquin Valley cotton pickers strike, Mr. Cagney contributed "large sums" to the party and to the strike committee which the Communist Party was directing, said he witness.

So unfavorable was the publicity he received, Mr. Leech told the jury, that Mr. Cagney ran into "professional difficulties" and the party "nearly lost a contributor."

Mr. Lederer and Mr. Bogart were members, he said, and Mr. Scully was considered "a very aggressive and progressive individual to have," Mr. Leech said as a member of a "study group" and

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Mr. Scully, who is seeking a seat in the state assembly, charged Mr. Fitts with his political ambitions. "I have never contributed money to any political organization of any form," available for comment.

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