

I.L.D. CIVIL RIGHTS SURVEY FOR FIRST SIX MONTHS OF 1940
Attacks on Religious minority groups (January 1 - June 30, 1940)

- JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES -- The most intensive attacks on this religious group began after June 3, 1940 on which date Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter handed down a decision in a "flag salute" case involving the children of members of Jehovah's Witnesses. The decision held the flag must be saluted -- and that School boards have the right to exclude children who refuse on religious grounds. Many of the attacks were excused on the grounds of pro-Nazi activities etc., on the part of the witnesses. Their literature and records are filled with denunciations of Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin.
- May 24 - DEL RIO, TEXAS -- Mob of 400 attacks 3 members of Jehovah's Witnesses -- two women and a man. Burns their literature. Cries of "hang them" follow victims over town line.
- June 2 - ODESSA, TEXAS -- 50 members of Jehovah's Witnesses rescued from mob by being placed in jail overnight. They "refused to salute the flag."
- June 3 - WAXAHACHIE, TEXAS -- 89 members of Jehovah's Witnesses jailed in Waxahachie, Texas. Held for 3 days charged with illegal assembly and disturbing the peace. Had been spreading peace pamphlets and recordings of their teachings.
- June 3 - AUBURN, CALIFORNIA -- Group of Jehovah's Witnesses distributing handbills run out of town by vigilantes. Information given by Police Chief J.M. Hamilton.
- June 6 - COTTONWOOD, ARIZONA -- 20 members of Jehovah's Witnesses run out of town after their literature was seized and burned by vigilantes.
- June 6 - MOWEAQUA, ILLINOIS -- 4 members of Jehovah's Witnesses threatened with violence by mob which accused them of making "derogatory remarks towards the flag."
- June 8 - SANFORD, MAINE -- Two organizers of Jehovah's Witnesses beaten by a crowd of about 1,000 because they "refused to salute an American flag."
- June 9 - BIDDEFORD, MAINE -- An apartment house stoned because a crowd which milled about the building for an hour shouting "Salute the flag" said one apartment was occupied by a man "suspected of being a member" of Jehovah's Witnesses.
- June 9 - KENNEBUNK, MAINE -- Dwight Robinson, 24, and Frederick McDonald, 22, shot and wounded while sitting in an auto near Jehovah's Witnesses headquarters. Mob of 2500 sacked and fired sect's headquarters.
- June 10 - WELLS, MAINE -- Jerry Semo 19, shot in the leg at the home of member of Jehovah's Witnesses by mob of Kennebunk residents who swarmed down in 24 cars.
- June 16 - LITCHFIELD, ILLINOIS -- 61 members of Jehovah's Witnesses, 39 women and 26 men rushed to city jail for protection after mob attacked them, overturned or destroyed 16 of their automobiles. Mob of 1,000 mills around jail shouting for lynching. Many injured while forced to their knees to kiss the flag. Mobsters state Witnesses had been warned to stay away.
- June 17 - ELSINORE, CALIFORNIA -- 30 Witnesses run out of town by vigilantes. Several severely beaten. Ordered not to return. Similar incident reported in COMPTON, CALIF.
- June 18 - RAWLINS, WYOMING -- Mrs. Everett Ruble and Mrs. Jim Todd, both middle aged dragged from the Todd home, beaten, their clothes torn until they kissed the flag. The women, both members of Jehovah's Witnesses and one man were placed in the city jail "for protection". Later that same day the mob seized four other members of the sect in different parts of the city forced them to parade with the flag, kiss it on their knees, repeat the oath of allegiance -- all under penalty of torture.
- June 22 - PARCO, WYOMING -- A member of Jehovah's Witnesses tarred and feathered after mob seized his literature and demanded he salute the flag before they would release him. Mobsters claim "he gave the Nazi salute." Similar instances of violence were reported in JACKSON, MISS. (where Witnesses were dumped across State line into Tallulah, La.); TILLAMOOK, ORE.; HICKSVILLE, OHIO; SHENANDOAH, PA.; MONESSEN, PA.; ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND.

Attacks on political minority groups (January 1 - June 30, 1940)

(A few examples of means used to deprive a minority political party of its right of franchise, also some samples of methods used to interfere with the activities of the Communist Party)

January 1940

WASHINGTON, D.C. January 17 -- In open letter to the press, Attorney General Frank Murphy orders selection of 23 man grand jury to prepare "espionage and foreign agent cases" against a number of individual Communists as well as against Workers Library Publishers and International Publishers. Charges, he says, will range from "mail fraud" to "conspiracy to obtain U.S. military secrets."

NEW YORK, January 22 -- Earl Browder, general secretary of the Communist Party, sentenced to 4 years imprisonment in a Federal Penitentiary and \$2,000 fine on a technical passport charge.

NEW YORK, January 24 -- Ex-Congressman John J. O'Connor of New York files objections with Board of Elections against petitions nominating Earl Browder as Communist Party Congressional Candidate for the 14th district N.Y. Reason: "He is an agent of Joseph Stalin."

NEW YORK, January 25 -- American Civil Liberties Union national committee passes resolution to exclude members and sympathizers of the Communist Party for serving as officers or directors of the A.C.L.U.

CALIFORNIA, January 30 -- California State Advisory Pardon Board announces it will grant no pardons to any persons convicted under the state criminal syndicalism law unless they "give up Communist doctrines."

February 1940

ILLINOIS, February 9 -- Hall owner cancels contract for Browder Defense meeting in Chicago. Says he was threatened by American Legion.

NEW YORK, February 20 -- William Robert Wiener, financial secretary of the Communist Party sentenced to 2 years imprisonment in a Federal Penitentiary plus recommended deportation on technical passport charge.

CALIFORNIA, February 21 -- Communist Party barred from participating in Berkeley California City Council chambers on basis of a state law that prohibits groups which advocate force and violence from using public buildings.

NEW YORK, February 26 -- Hearst N.Y. Journal-American "reveals" that the Department of Justice is "planning" to secure indictments against the Daily Worker on technical grounds which would result in "withdrawals of mailing privileges, imprisonment of the publishers and dissolution of the publication."

March 1940

NEW YORK, March 12 -- Described as a measure aimed directly against the Communist Party, Devany bill passes New York State legislature barring from appointive public office all "persons who advocate the overthrow by force and violence of the state and national government."

TEXAS, March 18 -- 7 active union members arrested in El Paso, held incommunicado as result of "Communist activities" investigation started by Special Attorney W.H. Fryer. The charge against them: being "Red agents."

WASHINGTON, March 22 -- Deputy Prosecutor John Caughlan of Kings County, Washington, dismissed on charges of "Communism" and refusal to condemn the peace treaty signed between the U.S.S.R. and Finland. (Caughlan pressed for prosecution of murderers of labor leader Laura Law in Aberdeen)

CALIFORNIA, March 30 -- Judge George Consgrove denies citizenship application of Archibald Allen. Application opposed by U.S. Naturalization Service which says Allen had associated with Communists, had a banner in his home reading "Vote Communist", had been heard to question the right of few persons to be very rich. Shortly before this Superior Judge James at San Jose denied citizenship to George Bogunovich because 7 years previously he had subscribed to "RADNIK" Croatian Communist newspaper.

April, 1940

PENNSYLVANIA, April 6 -- Detective Lieutenant Albert Granitz of Philadelphia, publicly commended by his superiors for "doing his plain duty" - participated in illegal raid on Communist Party headquarters with two agents of Dies Committee. Granitz' arrest was ordered by Federal Judge George A. Welsh.

PENNSYLVANIA, April 16 -- United States Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia uphold order to extradict Samuel Adams Darcy to California to face alleged election law violation charge dating back to 1934.

TEXAS, April 26 -- "Communitistic movement of the most vicious kind" brewing against which 100 California peace officers meeting together with FBI agents and sheriffs from Texas, Arizona and Nevada are warned by Sheriff Chris Fox of El Paso who says "Keep your eyes open - the Reds are brewing trouble on the border."

MICHIGAN, April 28 -- Four persons collecting signatures to place Communist Party on ballot arrested in Kalamazoo, fingerprinted, kept in solitary for 4 hours on charges of "suspicion of burglary". Police say: "We don't give a good G---D--- about state laws; we're running this city and we are going to keep the Reds out." Similar incidents reported in Flint, Grand Rapids, Port Huron, Albion and Pontiac.

May, 1940

WASHINGTON, D.C. May 5 -- Five Communist Party leaders indicted for contempt - they refused to submit names of their members to Dies Committee claiming it would constitute a blacklist. They are Dr. Albert E. Blumberg, state secretary Communist Party, Maryland; George Powers and James Dolsen, Pittsburgh, Pa., Philip Frankfield, State secretary, Massachusetts and Thomas F. P. O'Dea, president, Massachusetts Young Communist League.

ILLINOIS, May 18 -- Hoodlums raid, wreck and set fire to Communist Party headquarters on Chicago West Side. Four passers by beaten. At interrupted protest meeting against this attack policeman states: "I know we have a Bill of Rights but I am looking forward to the day when we can change the Bill of Rights and do with bullets what we can't do now." (Hall raided for second time on June 12.)

ILLINOIS, May 18 -- Persons collecting signatures on election petitions to place Communist Party on ballot and passing out handbills opposing U.S. entry into war; run out of Pekin after arrest, questioning by sheriff. Warned, "not to return or there would be trouble."

ILLINOIS, May 18 -- 5 persons arrested in Freeport for collecting signatures on Communist Party election petitions. Told not to return. Newspaper headline: "Freeport Police give 'Hotfoot' to quintet of Communists."

ARIZONA, May 13 -- Splitter of signatures on Communist Party election petitions arrested for vagrancy/and given choice of leaving town on next bus or going to jail.

ILLINOIS, May 25 -- Nine collectors of Communist Party ballot petition signatures return to Pekin with observers to test enforcement of "Law and Order". Threatened by organized mob which calls for lynching. Local press had announced "Reception Committee ready to take care of them." Seek refuge in court house where Sheriff insists on arrest as only form of protection he will offer. Two petitioners cars burned. Held until 4 A.M. next morning when taken under hostile police escort to Peoria and there kept in jail until finally put on bus for Chicago.

ILLINOIS, May 26 -- Man and woman arrested in Albany Park, Chicago for collecting signatures on Communist Party election petitions. Woman told by police captain: "The damn trouble with this government is that they allow such bastards to carry on such a thing. It won't be long now till we'll be able to put a stop to them. We'll get them out of the way damn soon. They didn't do anything against the law. There is nothing in the law that can stop people from passing petitions like this but it won't be long till we'll be able to put a stop to them."

NEW HAMPSHIRE, May -- 3 persons arrested while collecting signature on Communist Party election petitions. Fingerprinted. No charges.

June, 1940

WEST VIRGINIA, June 1 -- 141 persons arrested and indicted in Wheeling, Beckley, Charleston - 8 in Weirton, charged with violating election law never before used. Weirton bail totaled \$40,000. All eight are registered Democrats and under this law they supposedly were prohibited from signing Communist Party election petitions.

ILLINOIS, June 2 -- Group of five persons collecting signatures on Communist Party election petitions attacked, in Waukegan, Two women beaten, fingerprinted, ordered to leave town.

NEW YORK, June 9 -- Ex Congressman John J. O'Connor of New York announces formation of "The First Column" with branch headquarters in 62 counties of N.Y. State. Expressed purpose: blocking Communist Party efforts to place Earl Browder on ballot in N. Y. State; "It is an insult to the American people to encounter the name of a Communist candidate for President on the ballot. The Communist Party must be wiped out."

PENNSYLVANIA, June 9 -- Pittsburgh Press (Scripps Howard) begins publication of names and addresses of persons who signed Communist Party election petitions. The Lancaster New Era followed suit on June 25 as did other local papers. 28,000 Pennsylvania residents signed the petitions.

TENNESSEE, June 11 -- E. H. Crump, Memphis political boss "guarantees" that Earl Browder Communist Party candidate for president will not speak in Memphis at a meeting the date of which has not yet been announced. He asserted he could gather 100,000 people to join him anywhere within a few hours notice "to take care of any situation detrimental to American citizenship."

CALIFORNIA, June 12 -- William Schneidermann, California secretary Communist Party has his citizenship revoked by Judge Theodore J. Roche. Grounds: He failed to state publicly - 14 years ago when he was naturalized - that he was a member of the Young Communist League - Schneidermann was 2 years old when he came to this country.

OKLAHOMA, June 12 -- Forum meeting sponsored by Communist Party in Oklahoma City, broken up by hoodlums who then ransacked Communist Party bookstore from which they stole hundreds of books and magazines.

CALIFORNIA, June 13 -- Dan Taylor, fired from S.R.A. project in San Diego for "Communist Party affiliation". City council then denies him right to speak in his own defense.

WEST VIRGINIA, June 12 -- Oscar O. Wheeler, Communist Party candidate for Governor jailed in Raleigh on five counts of fraud. This followed by successful collection of 9,000 signatures on Communist Party election petitions. In Charlestown, W. Va., local American Legion Posts secures publication of facsimiles of nominating petitions showing the names of signers in 15 counties, signed "published by John Brawley Post No 20 American Legion, Charlestown, W. Va." Kanawha County Grand Jury indicts 84 signers under an obscure article in the official code of W. Va., which prohibits any person from voting in the primary for any other party than that of which he is registered as a members.

NEW YORK, June 15 -- C. A. Hathaway, editor Daily Worker, sentenced to 30 days in the workhouse plus \$500 fine. (Comprodaily Publishing Co., also fined \$500) on charges of criminal libel.

ARIZONA, June 17 -- Governor Robert T. Jones upholds county attorney James B. Robins' official statement to Morris Graham, Sec'y. of the Communist Party of Arizona to the effect that "subject only to the loss of God the use at this time of any methods or means necessary to rid our country of Communism is not only morally justified but demanded, and I shall act accordingly whenever the opportunity presents itself."

KANSAS, June 20 -- Sec'y. of State accepts petitions to place Communist Party on ballot signed by 3,000 residents from 32 counties. (Law requires 2,500 from 20 counties) but states that Communist Party will not appear on the Kansas ballot citing technicality for which none can find provision in the state law.

GEORGIA, June 20 -- Attorney General Ellis Arnall announces that the Communist Party will be stricken from the ballot in Georgia. Says he: "If I am called on for advise I shall as a matter of public policy do all within my power to keep the names of Communist candidates off the ballot . . . too long have we tolerated rats to gnaw at the constitution of the United States and when we start after the vermin they well for constitutional immunities."

ILLINOIS, June 22 -- Ten persons returned to Rockford, to test their constitutional right to collect signatures on the Communist Party election petitions having informed local authorities of their plan. Violently attacked by well organized mob and arrested one by one after being beaten by mobsters. Though attackers were pointed out to police (the chief was present) they refused to make arrests. Leaflets and petitions seized from petitioners publicly burned on court house lawn. Newspaper photographs (Chicago Tribune and Rockford Star) show uniformed officers participating.

PENNSYLVANIA, June 22 -- Three persons arrested in Ambridge, Pa., held in \$1,000 bail each on charges arising out of securing signatures for Communist Party election petitions in Beaver County.

CALIFORNIA, June 23 -- Henry A. Harris, Communist Party candidate for local office in San Francisco, arrested during election campaign meeting by policeman who states "I have orders to keep you people from speaking" Unusually large lineup of police had gathered on street corner hours before meeting was scheduled to take place.

NEW YORK, June 23 -- Eight persons arrested in Wappinger Falls, on charge of "disorderly conduct" held in \$50 bail each for ringing doorbells while collecting signatures on Communist Party election petitions.

MICHIGAN, June 23 -- "Advertiser" a Flint free Newspaper runs names of all residents who signed Communist Party election petitions. During that same week Women's Legion of the Blue Cross, via Mrs. Blanche Winters files motion to prevent Sec'y. of State from placing the Communist Party on the ballot. Sec'y. of State Kelly announces that he has indexed 9,000 signers of the Communist Party petition - has checked this with his employment record and advises private employers to do likewise. Mrs. Winters in defense of her action said: "Communists and radicals want Democracy, but we do not want it." Also "Big business is going to fight in another year and God help the Reds."

PENNSYLVANIA, June 24 -- Adolph Heller, Attorney and Bernard Rush arrested in raid on Workers School and held in \$25,000 bail each on charges that police found a bomb in the Philadelphia Workers School with which they are connected and which newspaper rumors tried to indicate were intended for Republican Party convention. Charged with sedition and conspiracy.

NEW YORK, June 24 -- Bronx Boro President James J. Lyons asks N.Y. City Council to bar Communists from relief benefits.

PENNSYLVANIA, June 25 -- Mayor Lord of Pottsville, sends agents to "round up signers" of Communist Party election petitions.

WASHINGTON, D.C. June 26 -- Emergency Relief Appropriation Act becomes law and orders all Communists and Bund members dismissed from W.P.A. also all persons who refuse to sign affidavits swearing they are neither.

CALIFORNIA, June 30 -- Police in large numbers break up San Francisco Communist Party election rally. Arrest 3. One Negro prisoner chained to telephone pole waiting for patrol wagon.

MAINE, June 30 -- 6 persons in Auburn and Brunswick collecting signature on Communist Party election petitions rounded up by police and held for questioning. Though police admitted their action was illegal, petitioners were threatened, warned to leave town "or else." One young woman previously taken into custody in Sanford. Held for one hour and released. Other Communist Party petition canvassers reported attacked and arrested in East St. Louis, Ill; Alton, Ill. (where 6 collected 120 signatures) Pacahontas, W. Va.

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