

EDITORIAL COMMENT ON THE OKLAHOMA CASES

"What Mrs. Wood did was think thoughts, read books and express ideas which the Ku Kluxers of Oklahoma did not like. For that she is to spend 10 years in prison, more years than many of our foulest criminals have served.... We want to ask a question. Since when has it become a crime in the United States--in the land of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Oliver Wendell Holmes, yes, and in the land of Franklin Roosevelt, who has expressed his determination to carry the four precious freedoms of America all over the world--since when has it become a crime to think, to read and to talk.... We had better pause in this moment of our history to decide whether or not we are going to throw away our liberties, scrap the Bill of Rights, throw our cherished judicial traditions into the discard and engage in a hysterical nation-wide witch hunt or whether we are going to preserve the principles upon which this country is founded."

St. Louis Post Dispatch, June 20, 1941

"The Post Dispatch had no truck with Communist ideology.... Our own readers need no reminder of the attitude^{of} the Herald Tribune on the subject. But no people in fighting a menace of the sort can afford to sacrifice in the process the fundamentals it is defending. We like to think this axiomatic precept is accepted pretty generally throughout the better seasoned portions of this nation. It is important, however, that it should be appreciated in Oklahoma too, lest in these emotional times a match applied there spread to the tinder of hysteria elsewhere."

New York Herald Tribune, July 14, 1941

"The unfortunate result of the Communist trials in Oklahoma City has injured rather than strengthened, the cause of democracy in Oklahoma.... the cruel beast of mob hatred is now abroad in the state to threaten any minority group which the mob fears or does not understand. Under this kind of hysteria the pious citizens of old Salem hanged poor old ladies.... The American system is worth fighting for because it is a way of life based on justice and decency. It cannot be protected by the injustice and intolerance that has been manifested in the inquisitions of Oklahoma City."

Tulsa Tribune, Tulsa, Oklahoma, June 6, 1941

"Booksellers will find several alarming aspects in the cases. If the verdicts are not reversed a precedent in Oklahoma and perhaps elsewhere will be established for the seizure not only of controversial literature but of other materials on the shelves, the arrest of bookshop customers present, and of booksellers offering it for sale."

Publishers Weekly, July 5, 1941

"Mrs. Ina Wood.... was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment and fined \$5,000 as a violator of the state's criminal syndicalism law. The woman was convicted under a provision of the law prohibiting possession of literature advocating political or industrial change by force. Under such a section a man could be sent to prison for owning a copy of the speeches and papers of Abraham Lincoln.... The zealots who put the criminal syndicalism law on the statute books injured their states reputation. One can abhor communism as we do, and yet feel that the Constitution was never meant to allow a legislature to decide what a person shall think."

Beacon Journal, Akron, Ohio, July 27, 1941

"And what shall the church say about the violations of civil liberties for those who are politically or religiously in a minority? A young woman is sentenced to 10 years in prison in Oklahoma because she possessed 'radical' books.... The Supreme Court will rectify this injustice, doubtless, if they have money enough to carry their cases up on appeal. The church which feels no hesitancy in denouncing persecutions in Germany and Russia might not so hesitate in denouncing persecution in its own land."

The Christian Evangelist, July 3, 1941