

Star
7/15/40-12

of rifles, ammunition and explosives was confiscated as evidence of a plot against the Government. Several of the prisoners were present or former members of the New York National Guard.

Mayor La Guardia, properly indignant over the discovery that some members of his police department had joined such an organization, directed Police Commissioner Valentine to send to every police officer under his command a questionnaire to determine who is or has been a member of the Christian Front or any "subversive, Communist, bund or Fascist club or organization." Since last Thursday, when the poll started, the returns have come in very slowly from the nineteen thousand policemen in the city. On the basis of incomplete figures, however, it was indicated that more than four hundred policemen have been members of the "front." Only twenty-seven admitted present membership. Many officers are said to have failed so far to respond to the questionnaire, while others have replied reluctantly with the notation that they are doing so "under protest."

Now comes the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association, composed of about fifteen thousand New York policemen, with a remarkable suggestion that the Mayor's inquiry may be an "invasion of civil rights." After members of the association had characterized the Mayor's action as "most unusual" and had demanded that the association defend any member who "got in trouble," a resolution requested an opinion from counsel of the association as to whether "constitutional rights" of policemen were being trampled on. New York's irrepressible Mayor is not likely to be greatly disturbed by the rebellious attitude of the association. It is true that Mayor La Guardia's inquiry is "most unusual," but so was the action of policemen in signing up with an organization apparently dedicated to principles inimical to the democratic way of life. There can be no doubt in the mind of any reasonable person as to the right of the Mayor to investigate the alliance of members of his police force with any organization he believes to be preaching un-American doctrines. Indeed, it was the duty of Mayor La Guardia to conduct a thorough investigation of his law enforcement officers in view of the gravity of the Federal charges brought against the seventeen so-called ringleaders of the Christian Front in New York. To have ignored the situation would have been a neglect of the constitutional rights of the citizens whom the police were sworn to protect.

La Guardia's Inquiry

One of the revelations stemming from the recent arrest by G-men in New York City of seventeen members of the Christian Front was the fact that an undetermined number of the city's police force has been on the membership rolls of the allegedly Fascist organization. The "front" was placed in the Fascist category by the Dies Committee on Un-American Activities in a recent report. Members seized by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the New York raids were charged with violating Federal sedition laws. A quantity