

The Police Questionnaire

It is not easy to understand the anger of the patrolmen over the Mayor's questionnaire requiring the police to report their present or past affiliations with the Christian Front, or with "subversive, Communist, bund or Fascist" organizations. According to the Mayor, the main purpose of the questionnaire was for the protection of the police force itself against reports that many of its members had joined the Christian Front—an organization that may have attracted many recruits with the best of motives, but which has recently appeared in a light which is bound to raise the question, at least, as to whether any police officer could properly belong to it.

No one could question the Mayor's dictum that "we have got to keep the police neutral in all controversial matters." No one, after the many recent investigations into the true bearing of these various militant political or sectarian associations can deny that membership in them is bound to impair the public confidence in the member's neutrality. And no one can deny that it is perfectly proper for an administration to ascertain, at least, in these days of "fellow travelers", "transmission belts" and the other imported arts of totalitarian and authoritarian infiltration, just what are the affiliations of the uniformed police force on which it relies for the maintenance of order and public safety.

A soldier's allegiance is a vital matter; and the police are the soldiers of the city. No one wishes to impair the proper civil rights of police officers, and no one would wish to see any of them penalized for joining an organization which seemed to them without public significance, at a time when it had not yet attained a notoriety that would make a police officer's membership in it of questionable wisdom. But few will accept the view that the authorities have no right to ask whether the police are members or not. To find that hundreds of the police had been Christian Fronters would not create so bad an impression as this police revolt against even being asked about their affiliations.