

POLICE IN 'FRONT' FEW, MAYOR SAYS

Valentine's Report Discloses
27 Retained Membership
of the 407 Admitted

SIX REFUSE TO ANSWER

Preliminary Survey Based on
Replies of 16,903 Men Out
of 18,314 in Department

Mayor La Guardia asserted last night that the Police Department membership in the Christian Front was negligible when he made public a report by Police Commissioner Lewis J. Valentine showing that twenty-seven policemen still retained membership of the 407 who had applied for and received it.

Commissioner Valentine gave the Mayor a preliminary report based on returns to his questionnaire filed by 16,903 men now on duty. Six men refused to answer the questionnaire. There are 18,314 men in the department, but 1,405 of these are on vacation or sick leave. As the final returns come in, the Mayor said he expected that the same ratio between members and non-members would be maintained.

He pointed out that the vast majority of policemen who joined the Front had done so in the belief that it sought to further religion and combat atheism. After making public the figures, the Mayor explained his policy on such activity by members of the Police Department. Declaring that he assumed full responsibility for the inquiry, the Mayor said:

"The Christian Front and kindred organizations were most active in the late Spring and Summer. Their gatherings could no longer be termed as meetings, but degenerated into demonstrations. Speakers invariably indulged in inciting racial hatreds condemning in abusive and very often obscene language high officials of the United States Government, State and city.

"Among the complainants registered with the Mayor were committees of distinguished citizens of all religious groups, men high in politics, business and social activities. Every possible consideration for the protection of the civil rights of all was given to the greatest extent by both the police and the Mayor, but the Mayor was often severely criticized for being too indulgent."

Sees "Master Mind"

Recalling the recent Federal arrests of seventeen Christian Front members who are charged with preparing to overthrow the government, the Mayor said that "some master mind or minds, not yet disclosed," were encouraging these young men to perform criminal acts. As an aftermath of the arrests the Mayor said the FBI had reported that many members of the Police Department held membership in the Front. It was on the basis of that statement that the inquiry was ordered, the Mayor explained.

"The activities of the Christian Front and other organizations reached the point this Summer that they were a nuisance not only to the citizens of this city, but created a police problem," Mayor La Guardia added. "During the height of the activities of these organizations, 238 arrests were made. Of these 112 were found guilty. The police, in all of these cases, acted intelligently and impartially.

"One hundred and nine arrests were made because of alleged unlawful acts in connection with anti-Semitic activities. One hundred and twenty-seven arrests were made because of resistance and opposition to anti-Semitic activities. It will thus be seen that the demonstrations and gatherings were causing actual disturbance and conflict among the people of this city and required the most careful, intelligent and impartial policing.

"The Police Department of this, or any other city, must be kept from any entangling allegiance with any kind of organization that might at any time create a disturbance. The minute any organization reaches a point where it becomes a matter of requiring policing or threatening disorder or inciting racial hatreds or encouraging violence, members of the Police Department then and there become ineligible to retain membership. There can be no question about that.

"The charter itself recognizes the responsibility of members of the Police Department. The charter prohibits membership in political clubs or organizations. It does not prohibit a member of the Police Department from exercising his franchise as a citizen in accordance with his political preferences. Members of the Police Department are free to join any recognized fraternal, religious, social or other organization, but always as long as such organizations and their members as such are orderly and law-abiding.

"The very nature of police duties makes it imperative that police officials remain neutral. Another instance of this requirement is that members of every department of the city are permitted to organize and affiliate themselves with recognized labor organizations. It has been the policy of this city that the Police Department should not and does not so affiliate itself."

Same With Anti-Labor Group

The Mayor said it would be just as improper for the police to join an anti-labor organization, and contended that any impartial persons would concede that no other consideration should be permitted to interfere with proper police duty. Since he had the responsibility of maintaining law and order, the Mayor said he would see to it that he had a Police Department that would function at all times. He expressed his full confidence in the department and commended its members for their excellent and loyal service.

"None of the members, according to the statement filed, have ever joined any subversive organization, or any organization advocating the overthrow of constituted government by force and violence," the Mayor said.

He added that Police Commissioner Valentine would make a further report on the cases of the six policemen who refused to answer the questionnaire. Mayor La Guardia said he could not say how many men had answered the questions under protest because he had not seen the questionnaire cards.

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