

# Coughlin Paper Faces Sedition Hearing Today

**Social Justice's Use  
Of Mails Is Issue  
To Be Determined**

By Dillard Stokes

Post Staff Writer *SDH*

The hearing of charges of sedition against Charles E. Coughlin's Social Justice weekly is scheduled to begin this afternoon, before three Assistant Postmasters General.

At issue will be the question whether the magazine shall be allowed to go on using second class mailing privileges set up for the free press of the United States.

#### **Follows Nazi Line**

"Clearly seditious," Attorney General Biddle called Social Justice on April 15, and Postmaster General Walker cracked down, closing the mail to every issue Coughlin printed until solicitors reviewed it, and setting today's hearing for final determination of the status of the publication.

Social Justice, said the Attorney General, "has made an unscrupulous attack upon the war effort of our Nation, both civilian and military" and "reproduces the lines of the enemy propaganda war being waged against this country from abroad."

#### **Hint of Defense**

Upon these rulings, the Postmaster General based his order directing the publishers of Social Justice to show cause why the mails should not be closed to their magazine.

Sitting as examiners in the hearing today are expected to be Ambrose O'Connell, First Assistant Postmaster General; Smith W. Purdom, Second Assistant, and Walter Myers, fourth Assistant.

Before them, in the small hearing room on the third floor of the Post-office Department, will appear members of the staff of the solicitor, Vincent M. Miles. Attorney Prewitt Semmes has indicated that he will appear in behalf of Social Justice.

After preliminary statements, the prosecutors plan to offer their evidence against Social Justice. This is expected to include recent issues of the magazine and transcripts of radio broadcasts from enemy nations.

The Attorney General found that the magazine closely paralleled the enemy radio in pride in Axis victories, slurs on America's allies, firing of racial hatred and attacks on the President of the United States.

There has been no indication what the answer of Social Justice will be. Except that Coughlin blamed the Government action on "the Jews and Communists and New Dealers" and a couple of days later the Berlin radio said the same thing.

#### **Under Berge's Scrutiny**

There were rumors that Coughlin would seize the hearing as an opportunity for a dramatic personal appearance, of the type of which he has stage-managed so many in the 10 years since he emerged from the depression to become a radio rabble rouser. He founded Social Justice six years ago, and pursued his vindictive themes so vehemently that the prelates of the church of which he is a priest, were moved to formally disavow his agitation.

With the proceedings against Social Justice came a clarification of the responsibility for its publication, which may be enlightened still further in the hearing scheduled to begin today.

Coughlin disassociated himself from nominal ownership of the magazine some time ago and on May 16, 1940, wrote to the Archbishop of Detroit that he would not be responsible for further issues. The bulk of the stock Coughlin transferred to his aged parents.

Recently the chancellor of the archdiocese, the Right Rev. Edward J. Hickey, declared that "no priest" of the archdiocese had asked or obtained permission to be associated in any way with Social Justice.

Coughlin, however, told a different story.

When the Attorney General's ruling was announced, Coughlin issued a "challenge" to be called to Washington.

He was ignored.

The proceedings were directed to the owners and publishers of record.

Coughlin then issued a statement assuming "full responsibility" for Social Justice.

As the postal proceedings got under way, Social Justice came also under the scrutiny of Assistant Attorney General Wendell Berge, the chief of the criminal division, who is directing the Nation-wide probe of treasonable and subversive activities which had been ordered by Attorney General Biddle.

Sitting in Washington was the special grand jury on Axis agents, which smashed two Nazi propaganda rings a few months ago. Before this grand jury three special prosecutors—William Power Maloney, Lieut. Edward J. Hickey, jr., U. S. N. (j. g.) and John T. M. Reddan—began summoning Social Justice employees.

Questioning of these began as the three prosecutors wound up the investigation of half a dozen other organs of the vermin press.

As they adjourned their hearings Friday, the three prosecutors reported that "substantial progress" had been made.