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PRESS SERVICE

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION

31 Union Square West
New York

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 BULLETIN #864

RELEASED FOR PUBLICATION
Saturday, April 15, 1939

GOOD FAITH OF DIES COMMITTEE QUESTIONED BY UNION

Employment by the Dies Committee of J. B. Matthews, ex-socialist, as a "technical expert" on radical organizations and failure to retain an expert on fascist-inclined and anti-semitic groups are assailed by the American Civil Liberties Union in a letter to Rep. Martin Dies, chairman of the House Committee on Un-American Activities.

The Union's letter, signed by Harry F. Ward, chairman, and Arthur Garfield Hays, counsel, points out that when the resolution for continuance of the committee was before Congress, Mr. Dies pledged the committee to a "scrupulously fair examination of the forces in American life which threaten our form of government and our liberties."

"We are now advised," writes the Union, "that although the Committee has employed counsel and investigators who apparently have no interest to serve except to uncover the evidence, you have employed as a technical expert a man who testified before your Committee with such prejudice that his interpretations of fact were sharply challenged in affidavits later filed with you. We refer to J. B. Matthews, whose testimony together with the accusations of prejudice and misrepresentation are fully set forth in your hearings."

Mr. Matthews, who testified on Communist "front organizations", was widely quoted for his references to Shirley Temple and other screen personalities.

Charging that the good faith of the committee is compromised by the employment of any technical expert "as biased as Mr. Matthews obviously is," the Union attacks the committee for retaining an expert "in regard to only one set of agencies and forces."

"So far as we can learn, no technical expert has been employed to deal with the whole field of activities so neglected by the Committee in its earlier investigations--namely, the native organizations of anti-democratic character such as the Ku Klux Klan, the Silver Shirts, the Black Legion and the host of anti-Semitic organizations. Nor has the Committee investigated with vigor the ramifications of the foreign Fascist influences in the United States. Plainly the services of a technical expert are even more needed in those fields than in the field already so thoroughly explored by the Committee--the radical and united front organizations."

The Union urges Mr. Dies to "adhere to the principles of fair inquiry which you have professed" in order to insure serious consideration by the American people of the committee's findings.


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