

The University of Chicago

The Law School

CHICAGO

January 17, 1940

Bob Wirtz, Esq.
International Labor Defense
192 North Clark Street
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Mr. Wirtz:

In response to your request for a copy of my remarks about Dean Smith's testimony before the Dies Committee, I am sending you instead this brief note. The substance of my remarks was first, a criticism of Mr. Smith's use of the words "un-American and subversive" and second, assurance, which I had confirmed by conversations with responsible administrative officials, that Mr. Smith's remarks did not represent the position of the University Administration. I pointed out that to apply the terms un-American to people who "owe allegiance to a foreign government, movement, or person," covers a very large number of people indeed, many of them quite harmless by any test. The looseness of definition seemed to me to reflect a looseness of thought, and to render pointless the application of the term "un-American" to any group by Mr. Smith. I was most concerned to pass on the assurances, in which I have confidence, that Mr. Smith's break did not represent any departure from the liberal policies to which the University Administration as a whole has been committed.

Perhaps I may add that your release of January 12, which I have just received, in its treatment of the episode, creates on my mind a slight impression of unreality, not altogether incomparable to the impression created by Mr. Smith's testimony in Washington! I am sure you will pardon this little dig.

With best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

Malcolm Sharp
Malcolm Sharp

MS:RSB

Memorandum re Chicago:

Immediately after Smith appeared before the Dies Committee, a meeting was held on the campus of the University of Chicago at which Professor Malcolm Sharpe of the Law School spoke. 800 students and faculty members attended. Sharpe spoke openly and semi-officially in behalf of the University, denouncing Smith for his activity.

The following information was obtained from Bob Foley, field representative, FEWOC, in Peoria, Illinois: The meeting was not chaired by B. C. Heacock, president of Caterpillar Tractor Company, but by the commander of the Legion post. Foley said the following things happened:

1. Tickets for the meeting (50¢ each) were distributed free to the workers in Peoria Cordage Company openly by E. C. Heidrich, Jr., president and owner of the company and former president of the Illinois Manufacturers Association (1923-1924). The Peoria Cordage Company makes binder twine and other farm equipment accessories.
2. Tickets for the meeting were distributed through the Caterpillar Tractor Company not openly by the foreman, but by members of the company union in the plant.
3. Some of the members of the executive committee of the local American Legion post were officers or on the management board of the Caterpillar Tractor Company.
4. The Dies meeting was timed to coincide with the NLRB elections at Armour Packing Company, in Peoria (held on November 21). The meeting was heralded widely in the local press.
5. The Dies meeting also "conveniently" took place at a time when Local 105, UFEWA, was in the midst of an intense organization and wage increase campaign.
6. The management of the Caterpillar Tractor Company took occasion to hand Dies in a conference with the union on the wage increase (December 2), of which a transcript copy of the proceedings was printed and publicly distributed by the management.