

STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT - OCTOBER 25, 1938:

"I am very much disturbed. I was disturbed not because of the absurdly false charges made by a coterie of disgruntled Republican officeholders against a profoundly religious, able and law-abiding Governor; but because a Congressional committee charged with the responsibility of investigating un-American activity should have permitted itself to be used in a flagrantly unfair and un-American attempt to influence an election.

"At this hearing the Dies Committee made no effort to get at the truth, either by calling for facts to support mere personal opinion or by allowing facts and personal opinion on the other side. On the threshold of a vitally important gubernatorial election, they permitted a disgruntled Republican judge, a discharged Republican city manager, and a couple of officious police officers to make lurid charges against Gov. Frank Murphy, without attempting to elicit from them facts as to their undeniable bias and their charges and without attempting to obtain from the governor or, for that matter, from any responsible motor manufacturer, their version of the event.

"Governor Murphy's painstaking and statesmanlike efforts to bring about a settlement of the sitdown strikes and to avert bloodshed and riot were not shrouded in secrecy. Every important move he made was communicated to the motor manufacturers and the union leaders affected, and was reported fully in the daily press. I received almost daily reports on the situation from the governor.

"Governor Murphy never said a word in condonation of the sitdown strike or any illegal practice. But the Governor was informed by responsible officials of the National Guard that any attempt on the part of the National Guard forcibly to eject the sitdown strikers at Flint would result in bloodshed and riot.

"Knowing these facts the Governor labored in the open, in the American way, to bring about a prompt settlement of the labor trouble without resort to force.

"Governor Murphy always insisted that the lawful order of the court must be obeyed. Not knowing that negotiations for settlement were proceeding and that precipitous efforts to enforce the court order would result in violence which would disrupt peaceful negotiations, he requested the sheriff to postpone the enforcement of the court order over the weekend. For that act a few petty politicians accused him of treason; for that act every patriotic American should praise him.

"By Wednesday of the week following Governor Murphy's request for a temporary postponement of the enforcement of the court order, the strike—which was probably the most dangerous strike which ever occurred in this country—was brought to an end without the loss of a single human life. That was a great achievement of a great American. Gov. Frank Murphy's great accomplishment elicited the cooperation of all the important motor manufacturers involved, of Mr. Sloan and Mr. Hudson of General Motors, of Mr. Chrysler, of Chrysler Motors, and of the Fisher Brothers of the Fisher Body Corporation, of Mr. Barrett, of Hudson Motors and of Mr. Graham of Hudson Motors.

"In handling the dangerous labor in Michigan in the dark days of 1937, Governor Murphy, as a true American, was concerned not only with the letter but the spirit of the law.

"Governor Murphy accordingly strove, and strove successfully, to effectuate a settlement not by force but by reason—a settlement which would satisfy not merely the letter of the law, but the community's sense of right and of justice.

"Most fair-minded Americans hope that the committee will abandon the practice of merely providing a forum to those who for political purposes, or otherwise, seek headlines which they could not otherwise obtain. Here opinion evidence has been barred in court since the American system of legislative and judicial procedure was started.

"Three weeks ago, the civilized world was threatened by the immediate outbreak of a world war. Cool heads pleaded for the continuance of negotiations. People may properly differ as to the result of such negotiations but the fact remains that bloodshed was averted.

"In the winter of 1897, Governor Murphy was confronted with the same kind of situation on a smaller scale. He knew that if negotiations were broken off bloodshed was inevitable. He worked successfully for the continuation of the negotiations. As a result of his fine leadership, there is no doubt that hundreds and even thousands of human lives were saved. That is the American way of doing things."

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