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WASHINGTON LEAGUE OF WOMEN SHOPPERS

AFFILIATED WITH THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN SHOPPERS, INC.

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RELEASE TO MEMBERS

The following recapitulation of the circumstances surrounding the recent Dies Committee statement attacking consumer organizations in the United States, and including the League of Women Shoppers, is sent for your information as a member of the League.

I. How the Statement Came to be Published

On December 3, 1939, at the unusual hour of six on Sunday evening, a "Subcommittee" of the Special Committee on Un-American Activities" held a meeting. No member of Congress but Chairman Dies himself was present, and it is reported that no Congressional member of the Committee, other than Mr. Dies, ever saw the testimony until it was published on December 11 as a part of the "hearings" of the Committee.

Present at the "Subcommittee" meeting, besides Chairman Dies, were: J. B. Matthews, known as Director of Research for the Committee; Robert E. Stripling, Committee secretary; and Robert Barker, Committee investigator.

II. What Was in the Report

The report subsequently published consisted of the testimony of Mr. Matthews and was an attack on various consumer organizations as "transmission belts" for the Communist Party. The organizations mentioned were: Consumers Union, League of Women Shoppers, Film League, Committee for Boycott Against Japanese Aggression, Milk Consumers Protective Committee, Consumer-Farmer Milk Cooperative, New York Consumers Council, various organizations Against the High Cost of Living, Consumers National Federation, Consumers Counsel of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, and Consumers Guide.

III. Who is J. B. Matthews

1. A self-styled "free lance writer", he was formerly associated with F. L. Schlink in Consumers Research, Inc., and acted as managing editor of Consumers Digest, a publication of the corporation. (It is to be noted that no mention was made of Consumers Research in Mr. Matthews' testimony.) (It should be noted, also, that the League of Women Shoppers in 1935 made an investigation of labor conditions at the request of striking employees of Consumers Research, found the shop to be strongly anti-labor, and minimum wages of only \$13.13 per week.)

2. In the Consumers Digest of February 1938, Mr. Matthews and Mr. Schlink wrote and published an article summing up their program as follows:

"To the end of restoring free enterprise to a workable basis, Congress should be called upon to:

Repeal the Guffy Coal Act
Repeal the Miller-Tydings Act
Repeal the Social Security Act
Repeal the Capital Gains Tax

Repeal the Robinson-Patman Act
Repeal the Wagner Act
Repeal the Undistributed Earnings Tax
Repeal the excessive, personal surtax

Repeal the Soil Conservation Act
 Shelve the proposed Wages and Hours
 legislation
 Take the Federal Government out of
 business
 Abolish the WPA and the PWA
 Defeat the proposed Government Re-
 organization plan
 Demobilize the army of bureaucrats
 Balance the budget as speedily as
 urgent economy permits

Recall the new farm legislation which
 awaits Congressional conference
 Put an end to debt-salvaging operations
 Preserve the independence of the judi-
 ciary
 Guard against "armaments prosperity"
 Cancel the President's powers over
 currency
 Make the incorporation of unions com-
 pulsory
 Enforce the anti-trust statutes."

IV. Immediate Reaction to Dies Report

Congressman Jerry Voorhis, California member of the "Special Committee on Un-American Activities", immediately issued a protest to the press. His statement in part follows:

"...the circumstances surrounding the release of this so-called report on consumers organizations leave me only one course of action. That is to disavow and disclaim any responsibility whatsoever for the report and to state publicly that it was released to the press by a suddenly appointed one man sub-committee before other members even knew such a report was in preparation, that not a single hearing has been held on any of the matters contained in the report, that none of the persons mentioned has ever been called to the stand, that Committee members have done no work at all in this field, and that the entire report is purely and simply the opinion of Mr. J. B. Matthews, who in spite of his past connections with a consumers organization other than those attacked in the report sits as sole investigator, judge and juror on the whole consumers protective and cooperative movement in America.

"If anything is un-democratic in the world certainly this procedure is..."

Donald Montgomery, Consumers Counsel, AAA, also protested against the publication of this testimony.

Outstanding among citizens groups which have made their indignation known in public statements is the American Association of University Women. Other public statements have been made by the National Consumers Federation, Consumers Union, and the League of Women Shoppers.

V. Sophia Boyer, President of the National League of Women Shoppers, Makes Statement in the Press

In reply to the Dies report, Mrs. Boyer issued the following statement:

"Mr. Dies has never seen fit to allow the League representatives to testify directly before his committee about our organization, as we have several times requested. Instead he now permits to be made public the ridiculously untrue and unsubstantiated attack of Mr. J. B. Matthews. The only knowledge that Mr. Matthews has of the League of Women Shoppers dates back from 1935, when the New York League supported his striking employees at Consumers Research. Evidently we were effective enough in so doing to draw this retaliation now from Mr. Matthews.

"We could wish that the Dies Committee would check on its information by asking any officer or any individual member of the League before publishing statements about the organization. We consider this statement as untrue and inaccurate as the testimony given by Matthews about the League of Women Shoppers previously. At an earlier session he stated that he, J. B. Matthews, was a member and active in the formation of the League of Women Shoppers and had access to our files.

"We showed in the press that this was absurdly untrue, as we had never until our convention in May, 1938, accepted male members into the organization, and he never was in our office at any time. We repudiated both his statements. The League of Women Shoppers is a non-political, non-profit consumers' organization, having as its purpose to use its consumer buying power to promote better conditions for workers. It was founded in New York in 1935 and became a national organization two years ago. There are now 14 local leagues throughout the country."

VI. Dies Committee to Expire January 3 -- IF---

"Business Week", authoritative organ of the business world, states in its issue of December 16:

"The Dies Committee is running out of money. It is due to end with the new session of Congress, unless new money is appropriated. Chairman Dies may very well be counting on business interest in the consumer movement to act as a lever to get the money. And the business interest is there."

Indications are that the question of further appropriation for the Dies Committee will undoubtedly appear early on the calendar of the next Congress. The Washington League of Women Shoppers has voted unanimously against the continuance of the Committee activities. It now appears important that you **WRITE TO YOUR CONGRESSMAN, MEMBERS OF THE DIES COMMITTEE, and THE PRESS**, stating your views as a taxpayer and as a citizen.

(Members of the Committee are: Martin Dies, Chairman, Texas; Joe Starnes, Alabama; John J. Dempsey, New Mexico; Noah M. Mason, Illinois; J. Parnell Thomas, New Jersey; Joseph E. Casey, Massachusetts; and H. Jerry Voorhis, California)