

The Strange Case of Edward James Smythe

One of the most peculiar incidents revealed by the manuscript of record of hearings of the so-called Dies Committee begins on p. 426 427. It deals with a missing person, one Edward James Smythe. It also deals with files and correspondence of Mr. Smythe, seized by the committee from one Donald E Shea, of Washington, D.C., "head of the National Gentile League League", and "a former secretary of one of Mr. Smythe's organizations--the Protestant War Veterans of the United States."

Among the organizations connected by the Committee with Mr. Smythe are: The National Committee Against Communism; the Protestant War Veterans of the United States, of which he was national commander; the Protestant Chaplains' Association, Inc.; the Protestant War Mothers of the United States; the Ladies' Auxiliary of Protestant War Veterans; the Sons and Daughters of Protestant War Veterans; the Protestant Civic Welfare Federation, and the Legal Legion of America.

There are about six pages altogether in the record devoted to Mr. Smythe. He had been served with a subpoena, but didn't appear. Then it came out that his files had been secured from Mr. Shea.

There was considerable testimony, and sure talk, about the contents of these files. Mr. Whitley said that the Smythe ^{in his} correspondence was at times violently anti-Catholic, at other times violently anti-Jewish. Apparently Mr. Smythe was both. But for some reason Mr. Dies appears from the record to have been anxious that the facts in regard to Mr. Smythe and his anti-Catholicism and anti-Semitism should not be spread in detail on the record. According to Mr. Whitley's description, Smythe was in close correspondence, back and forth, with Gerald B. Winrod, with Nazi spies, with an active White Russian fascist

group, and with William Dudley Kelley's Silver Shirts; with George Deatherage, James Tamm, and a host of others.

Mr. Dies discussed the whole matter as dealing merely with a racketeer, at first. Then he says: "There are a great many letters here, including letters from prominent people. We ought to determine which ones we shall make public. The correspondence in that file ought to determine those who are innocent and those who are guilty, or who have participated in the movement."

Finally, Mr. Dies said: "Anyway, it is a question, I think, that the committee had better determine in executive session. We can make this correspondence public at a later date."

Since when has the Dies Committee failed to make correspondence public, or to make names public, for fear of injuring innocent persons? So far as his record shows, only in cases where fascists and fascist supporters might be involved.

All this happened in on August 29, 1939. The "later date" to which the chairman referred never arrived.

Curiously, this correspondence, the record shows, implicated in one way or another William Dudley Kelley and Gerald B. Winrod. Curiously also, the names of two of Sythe's organizations, the Protestant Chaplains' Association, and the Protestant War Veterans of the United States, appear on placards in a photograph of a picket-line reproduced on the back cover of Father Coughlin's Social Justice on September 16, 1939. The picket-line was organized by the Christian Front.

Even more
Curiously, also, the Dies Committee does not appear from the record to have made any further attempt to secure Sythe's appearance in spite of his defiance of the committee's subpoena. Such in that particular

case the contempt of Congress involved was passed over with unbecoming
lightness. Who were these ^{anti-Catholic} "prominent people" who corresponded with
Smythe, and who had to be so carefully protected from publicity? And
why? In other cases, not involving fascists, the procedure has been
altogether different.