

Dies Committee Is Told of 'Leak' Of U. S. Data to Harry Bridges

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Witness Says Charges Sent to Labor Department
Became Known at Once on Coast; La Follette's
Aids Accused of Hampering Inquiry

From the Herald Tribune Bureau

WASHINGTON, Aug. 18.—Sinister "leaks" and charges of tampering with witnesses furnished the main theme today of the House committee investigation of un-American activities. Not only was the inference made

—that the Department of Labor allowed important secret information to "leak" to Harry Bridges, west-coast maritime leader for the Committee for Industrial Organization, but the direct charge was made by two members of the committee that witnesses for the committee were being covertly warned to stay out of town by investigators for the Senate Civil Liberties Committee, headed by Senator Robert M. La Follette jr., Progressive, of Wisconsin.

There have been other surface indications of the hostility between the two committees, but today was the first time that Representative Martin Dies, Democrat, of Texas, chairman of the House group, had indicated his displeasure.

At the end of today's hearing he emphatically declared that it was not necessary for "some people" to put themselves out to find out who was connected with his committee and added that those in disagreement with the purposes of the committee would receive ample opportunity to be heard. He thereupon named all those officially connected with the investigation. The "some people" are supposed to be investigators for the La Follette committee.

Aside from the feud between the two Congressional committees, one of which is hostile to the C. I. O. as being heavily infested with Communists and the other of which has shown its C. I. O. sympathies, the main development of the day was the reading of two affidavits by Irvin A. Markheim, former Communist party member, the first concerning the membership of Harry Bridges in the Communist party under the name of "Harry Dorgan" and the other concerning efforts to get the maker of the affidavit out of the country.

Markheim swore that last month he was offered \$500 and fare to go to Ensenada, Mexico, and not come back until told to do so. The offer was made, the affidavit said, by A. L. Wirin, an attorney and officer of the American Civil Liberties Union, which has been branded by other witnesses as Communistic. Just before the offer was made Harry Bridges walked out of an inner office and shook hands with Markheim, the affidavit stated.

On the stand, Miss Margaret A. Kerr, executive secretary of the Los Angeles Better America Federation, said that she had obtained the affidavits. She had forwarded the first affidavit to the Senate Committee on Commerce and Labor, which at that time was investigating Bridges as an alien Communist who had tied up Pacific Coast shipping off and on

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NEW YORK

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Aids of La Follette Are
Accused of Tampering
With Witnesses Called
by House Investigation

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for three years. She sent another to the Labor Department, which was considering the advisability of bringing deportation proceedings against Bridges.

Miss Kerr charged that the information contained in the document had "leaked" almost immediately and that the only sources of the leak could have been either the Senate committee or the Labor Department, since she had not even apprised her board of directors of the contents. She added that the late Senator Royal S. Copeland, of New York, chairman of the committee, had wired her that he had turned his copy over to the Labor Department. The very day that this was done, she added, West Coast papers reported that Bridges had "left hurriedly" for Washington. A few days later Markheim began receiving threatening telephone calls because he had signed the affidavit.

Miss Kerr, under questioning, said that she had heard rumors on the west coast that Bridges was being "protected" by high officials of the Department of Labor.

This ties up with information furnished to the committee by Edward F. Sullivan, chief investigator, who declared that "high officials" of the Department of Labor had given aid and advice to Bridges and that an official of the immigration service, under the Labor Department, had read a letter of instruction to Bridges from a Labor Department official telling him how to comport himself in the future to avoid trouble.

In turn, today, Mr. Sullivan appeared to be on a hot griddle. One of the most pointed actions of the La Follette committee investigators had been to throw a cloud upon the name of the Dies committee's chief sleuth. They have connected him up with an Edward Sullivan who, they say, was on the pay roll of a strike-breaking organization working for the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company during the strikes of 1937.



Associated Press photo
Margaret Kerr

Chairman, Dies today denied that Mr. Sullivan had been "fired" and named him as one of the current investigators. He did say, however, that "for reasons of economy" it would be necessary at an early date to cut down the staff.

Partly because of his disapproval of the way the investigation was being conducted, a member of the committee, Representative Arthur D. Healey, Democrat, of Massachusetts, has withdrawn from active participation. He gave as his reason the necessity of giving all his attention to the primary fight in his home state. Those acquainted with the situation say that he was indignant at the manner of release of the Sullivan report, without having Sullivan sworn and put on the stand. Representative Healey belongs in the liberal group in his party.

The latest verbal outbreak in the feud going on between the Dies and La Follette committees turned today on the inability of two Dies committee members to get hold of witnesses.

Representative J. Parnell Thomas, Republican, of New Jersey, complained as the committee resumed for its afternoon session that there seemed to be "a large number of Federal employees on vacation" when committee agents sought to question them.

"I find that in New York City when we try to get information from certain individuals," he said, "they quickly go on vacations. Here in Washington we tried to contact two persons, and they were said to have gone on vacation."

"We wanted to question Katherine Kellock, who has been placed in charge of 4,600 workers in the Federal writers' project. This project has an appropriation of \$1,500,000. I've been informed her husband is the publicity man for the Soviet Embassy in Washington. We tried to contact them and were told they were on vacation in Vermont."

Representative Harold G. Moyer, Democrat, of Ohio, interposed: "Is some one tipping off these people that we want to see them? I've noticed a couple of investigators from the La Follette committee here several times. Are they trying to hamstring our committee? To me, two and two make four."

"The chair," remarked Representative Dies soothingly, "has no knowledge of anything like that. The chair does not assume that any other committee would have any interest in our proceedings except to co-operate."

Later, Representative Thomas told reporters that he considered the Federal theater project in New York to be a "hotbed of Communism" and that it was difficult to get a job in it "unless you belong to the Workers' Alliance,"

which other witnesses have characterized as being Communist-controlled.

Two American volunteers who fought in Spain on the loyalist side were produced by the committee. Both agreed that American participation is under the Communist aegis and declared that from 3,000 to 4,000 youths were "virtual prisoners" in Spain who would like to come home but were not allowed to leave the country.

Alvin Halpern, of Boston, who claimed that he did not know when he enlisted, that he would be fighting under Communist control, said he had been wounded four times in his seven and a half months of service. Americans, who were rushed around the various fronts where the native troops are weakening, were treated as "cannon fodder," he said, and when one unit showed its displeasure at not getting promised rest after more than 100 days of continuous fighting, the roads were guarded with machine guns and they were told they would be "wiped out" if they made trouble.

"I know definitely that these lads would like to come back home," the witness said. "If we had thought that Mr. Franco would have repatriated us, we'd have gone over to his side."

To a question, he answered, "If the United States could get our boys out they would be doing them a great service." He himself had escaped by boat to Africa, thence to the United States.

He said the place was thick with political spies and that if one talked too much he was tied up to a wall at dawn and shot or sent into the front lines without arms as a "first-aid man." Neither side respected the Red Cross, he said, and it inevitably meant death.

The boys, who had ignorantly gone over, thinking they were fighting for democracy, said Halpern, were good citizens and "would be better citizens if they could get back, having seen what Communism is and means—like mad dogs gone wild."

His passport had been taken up and when he had applied at the Spanish government embassy here for its return he was met with a shrug and the expression "Nada," meaning nothing could be done for him. His life had since been threatened, he said, for having given his story to the press.

The other witness who had gone to Spain was Abraham Sobel, Boston law student, whose transport from France to Spain was torpedoed with the loss of 158 lives, including two Americans. He had not followed the "party line" in Spain, he said, and had been made a machine gunner, then put in jail. He managed to escape and made his way over the Pyrenees barefooted to France. He said that he had been robbed by his comrades and that he had realized he had gone to fight for a band of "dirty, rotten crooks."

The committee received a dossier on Harry Bridges from the hands of Thomas B. Shoemaker, Deputy Commissioner of the Naturalization and Immigration Service. Asked if it contained all the letters and documents connected with the case, he declared that it did, so far as he knew. It developed later that the original Markhelm affidavit now reposes in the files of the Senate Commerce Committee.