

The Dies Committee Looks Back

The final report of the Dies Committee was a much better document than the previous antics of some members of the committee had led us to expect. Washington gossip says that in the absence of Chairman Dies, ill in Texas, it was largely rewritten at the last minute by one or two sensible members, especially Representative Jerry Voorhis of California, and the report sounds as though this were true. It says that not more than a million Americans have been influenced by any sort of radical doctrine. Check; the estimate is if anything too large. It says that both Nazi and Communist faiths are rapidly losing strength in this country since Russia and Germany joined hands. Check. It says economic distress is what causes people to embrace radicalism. Check. It says existing laws and law officers are adequate to deal with any such danger as may exist, and expresses the hope that we shall see no recrudescence of vigilantism. Check. It exonerates from the charge of Communist influence the American Youth Congress and three-quarters of the unions in the CIO. Check.

Give It to La Follette

Some other things in the report are much more dubious. It gives a list of ten CIO unions and twelve other organizations which it says have leadership "more than tinged with communism." We do not know just what degree of truth there may be in this charge in each individual case. We do know, however, that the Dies Committee never made any really adequate investigation; that it allowed practically anybody to get on the witness stand and make practically any wild charge that he pleased; that in most cases persons who were accused were given little or no chance to defend themselves. To a large extent the Dies Committee in operation was just a wholesale slander machine.

The New Republic, which has consistently opposed the methods of the Dies Committee, has no objection whatever to a congressional investigation of radicalism in this country. We feel, however, that it ought to be conducted in such a way as to give the people confidence in the validity of its findings. It should observe reasonable rules of evidence. It should prepare its case in advance and not make public a wild mass of slander which is proved false twenty-four hours later

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