

DIES COMMITTEE EATS DIRT FOR MRS. ROOSEVELT

By Federated Press

WASHINGTON -(FP)-With its best bib and tucker on and its hands covered with a double layer of kid gloves, the House committee allegedly investigating unamerican activities here, ate dirt--and liked it.

Principal reason for the sudden change in diet was the presence of Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, wife of the President, at the hearing during which charges of communism levied against the American Youth Congress were discussed.

Wm. Hinckley, former president of the congress, set the dish bluntly before Rep. Joseph Starnes (D, Ala.) and Rep. Jerry Voorhis (D, Calif.), the only two committee members present, when asked by Rhea Whitley, counsel to the committee, about the program of the American Youth Congress.

Hinckley pulled from his pocket a copy of a resolution and said the resolution was being circulated as a petition by the youth congress in an effort to get as many signatures as possible. It resolved:

"That the Dies committee be immediately discontinued.

"That we support careful, constructive investigation of activities detrimental to American democracy and urge public support and congressional appropriation for the LaFollette civil liberties committee."

The resolution declared, in its preamble, that the Dies committee threatens civil rights by "(1) attempts to discredit trade unions and other American organizations under the cloak of a drive against foreign agents, (2) misuse of congressional power, intimidating members and staffs of such organizations, seizing records improperly and serving faulty subpoenas, (3) conduct of unamerican and unjust hearings, acceptance of hearsay, slander and surmise instead of evidence, and (4) denial of adequate hearing to organizations and individuals attacked."

Starnes, in the chair at the time Hinckley presented this morsel, along with a statement concerning the American Youth Congress and the committee, gulped hard but swallowed his dish like a little man. Voorhis puffed furiously on his pipe. Mrs. Roosevelt grinned while the audience broke into applause.

Whitley asked if circulation of the petition bearing the resolution, which Hinckley read slowly, was the main activity of the congress.

"No," the pudgy former head declared blandly, "I was thinking of some of the things we're doing constructively at the moment."

Starnes gulped again and reddened while Mrs. Roosevelt tried to conceal a furtive grin and newspapermen chuckled with glee. "Your organization is said to be communist controlled," Starnes said. "What is your comment?"

It was the first time a question of that nature was ever put to a witness before the Dies committee. Haggard observers gasped. Hinckley began at the beginning of the committee's hearings and started to take the witnesses against the American Youth Congress one by one.

Starnes broke in to deliver a lecture. He didn't care what the youth congress thought of the committee, he said. As far as the committee members were concerned they were not performing a duty voluntarily, they were merely carrying out legislation imposed upon them by Congress. "As a matter of fact I didn't even vote on the original resolution," Starnes said.

Jack McMichael, a tall, gangling youth with a broad southern accent, the new chairman of the organization, thanked Starnes--he said it as if he were accepting an apology--and went on with some additional comments about the committee.

"After a period of 15 months during which officers of the American Youth Congress have constantly requested an opportunity to answer charges made by incompetent witnesses before the Dies committee, a former chairman, Wm. W. Hinckley, received a telegram from the committee just 15 hours ago, informing him he would have an opportunity to be heard," McMichael pointed out.

He also challenged the authorities on the youth congress who had appeared before the committee. He listed them as "Homer Chaillaux of the American Legion who makes his living by smearing individuals and organizations with the stock label, 'communistic', J. B. Matthews, a promoter, cast out of church, labor and consumer organizations and now a special investigator for Mr. Dies by virtue of these qualifications, and Walter Steele, editor of an inconspicuous magazine."

An intimation of what was coming was given in the morning when Mrs. Roosevelt visited the committee room and took some of the witnesses of the afternoon session to the White House for lunch. She reappeared before the youth congress people took the stand and sat interestedly during more than two hours of testimony. She would make no comment following the hearing.