

## MR. DIES AND PRICE CONTROL

On November 28, 1941, the House of Representatives, by a vote of 224 to 161 adopted H.R. 5990, the price control bill. Representative ~~John~~ Dies, Democrat of Texas, voted against this essential measure. His action climaxed a campaign of several months duration against the Office of Price Administration and Civilian Supply (OPACS), its administrator, Leon Henderson, and various employees.

Attempting to disguise his attack on price control as best he could, Dies claimed that he was only interested in cleansing the Administration of potentially disloyal employees.

Dies' charges were as usual incomplete and unsubstantiated. On August 9, 1941, the very day that President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill were signing this historic "Atlantic Charter," somewhere on that ocean, Dies told the House he would not put Leon Henderson "in charge of a dog-catching unit."

In a letter to the President, released to the press on September 8, 1941, Martin Dies again continued his campaign against Henderson, and demanded the ~~immediate~~ discharge of various administrative employees of OPACS. Leon Henderson's prompt reply was, "We don't take funny letters to the President as a basis for firing anybody." (Washington Daily News, September 8, 1941)

Reverting to his favorite target, Henderson, Dies on November 25, 1941, told the House that the "residnet" would have to purge the Office of Price Administration before Congress would accede to the price control bill. (Congressional Record, November 25, 1941, p. 9361)

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Again on the following day he added "so far as I am concerned, I am going to re-commit this bill (H.R. 5990, price control) because I refuse to put into the hands of the enemies of this country vast powers to strangle our whole economic and political system." (Congressional Record, November 26, 1941, p. 9382)

During the final day of debate, Dies clearly revealed the extent to which he was opposed to the very principle of price control, thus indicating how he was camouflaging his attack behind his ostensible drive against Henderson. Dies said:

"No price fixing bill will be of any substantial help in preventing inflation unless we drastically reduce nondefense expenditures, increase the revenues of the Government, eliminate the scandalous waste in defense and nondefense expenditures; and put the defense program upon an efficient and nonpolitical basis...."

"Clean house and restore the confidence of Congress in the ability, the loyalty, and soundness of the men who are selected to administer the laws of our land." (Congressional Record, November 28, 1941, pp. 4939-40)

The tactics being used by Dies were clear. The New York Post commented editorially

"We try to keep track of Rep. Martin Dies and his projects but he moves too fast. After Dies wrote to the President and offered to prove that 54 members of the staff of OPACS (including Leon Henderson) were semi-Communists, we waited for the Congressman to produce his evidence. There wasn't a further sound, no documents, no letters, no testimony - just the plain unvarnished smear." (New York Post, September 24, 1941)

And smear it was - or an attempted smear - not alone of Mr. Henderson and his employees, not alone of price control and the work of OPACS, but a smear of the defense

program which was part and parcel of Dies' continued oral and written assault on the foreign policy of the United States as laid down by the Congress and administered by the President.