

INQUIRY IS STARTED INTO BUND AFFAIRS

McNaboe Opens \$40,000 Hearings With Questioning of 2 Men on Bill of Rights

A \$40,000 State legislative inquiry into the operations and purpose of the local Nazi movement was opened here yesterday in the Supreme Court Building under the chairmanship of Senator John J. McNaboe.

The Senator directed his questioning at anti-Semitism, which he pointed out in Paragraph Five of the published "Purpose and Aims of the German American Bund (Amerikadeutscher Volksbund)." The other paragraphs declared the opposition of the bund to communism, atheism and other "isms" of which the Senator is equally an opponent.

The offending paragraph was acknowledged as the official declaration of the bund by James Wheeler-Hill, its national secretary, and by Gustav Elmer, national organizer, who were the two witnesses yesterday.

In a condensed form, the bund proposed " * * * to build a great American movement of liberation under the swastika, the common symbol of Aryan nationalism * * * in order that the dictatorship of a small racially and ethnically alien, Jewish-International minority * * * may be broken * * *"

This was supplemented by Senator McNaboe with a reading from Adolf Hitler's "Mein Kampf," in which the swastika was defined as "the symbol of the struggle for conquest by Aryans; which will be ever and always anti-Semitic."

For almost three hours, the Senator maintained in various forms of question that this admitted position of the bund could not be reconciled with the equality of all men in the Declaration of Independence and with the freedom of opinion and expression guaranteed to them in the Constitution.

"Free Choice" Is Stressed

The bund officials maintained in answer that they could be so reconciled; that the "Purpose and Aims" was the expression of their opinion of Jews; and that the equality of all men did not prevent bund members from preferring Aryans as a free choice of associates.

The dialogue often turned into an argument in which Senator McNaboe matched the debating skill of ten years in politics and the law against the conviction of the two Bund officials, who were unrepresented by counsel and not entirely sure of the questions they were answering. When the witnesses were moved into a position which the Senator triumphantly asked them to acknowledge, however, as unconciliable with the Constitution they simply said they did not think so.

"I suppose if there were a war tomorrow with Germany you would fight on the side of the United States?" Senator McNaboe asked. "Absolutely, I would," said Mr. Wheeler-Hill.

"Even to the extent of defending this terrible Jewish minority which is also a part of the United States," the Senator asked incredulously. "That's right," said Mr. Wheeler-Hill calmly.

"Even against the Germans?" the Senator persisted.

"I have nothing to do with Germany, whatsoever," said Mr. Wheeler-Hill. "I have never been in Germany all my life."

Questioning developed that James Wheeler-Hill was born in San Francisco in 1904. His father was a British bank officer and his mother was a Russian. In 1908, he said, when he was 2 years old, his father was sent to St. Petersburg and there the boy was educated in a private school conducted by Germans. Instruction was in both German and Russian.

Parents Killed in 1918

In 1918, he said, both his parents were killed by the Communist revolutionaries. In 1920 he made his way out of Russia, at 16; finally reached Copenhagen and worked his way to the United States on a Standard Oil tanker, which he left in Brooklyn.

Senator McNaboe asked if he could produce his San Francisco birth certificate to verify all this and Mr. Wheeler-Hill promised to do so.

He explained that his dislike of Communists was joined to a dislike of Jews in 1934, when he was discharged from a clerical position in the office of The Star Printing Company in New York, now out of business, when the proprietor, a Mr. Wendel, heard him speak German to a customer.

"That was the very reason I joined the Bund," said Mr. Wheeler-Hill.

He said the Bund was called the Friends of the New Germany when he first made its acquaintance four years ago, and that it was renamed the German American Bund after Fritz Kuhn rose to national leadership two years later. He said Mr. Kuhn made him national secretary last year, as a full time job, at \$80 a week.

"I don't see why they pay you \$80," said the Senator. "There are so many things you don't seem to know about."

Mr. Wheeler-Hill had previously declared himself unable to say how many members the Bund had, or how many wore uniforms. He was sure, however, that nobody was sworn and that it was a political organization.

"Why are you worried about Germany and not about the United States?" Senator McNaboe demanded.

"That's it exactly," said Mr. Wheeler-Hill. "We are worrying about the United States. We don't like to see conditions here as they happened in Germany."

Communism Laid to Jews

"What conditions are you talking about?"

"Communistically inspired revolution," said Mr. Wheeler-Hill.

"But don't you use the word Communist as synonymous with Jewish?"

"In certain cases we bring it out," said Mr. Wheeler-Hill.

"Is your contention that communism is a Jewish movement?"

"We have proof of it."

"Yet the seven top men in the Communist movement here are native-born Americans," said Senator McNaboe.

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"That's right." "Then you are dealing pretty much in fallacy," said the Senator. "I would not say that," said Mr. Wheeler-Hill.

The Senator and his four legislative colleagues ranged on the bench on either side looked increasingly exasperated. Eventually they took a five-minute recess, and on their return Senator McNaboe said: "You have been evasive all along; that is the judgment of this committee."

Mr. Wheeler-Hill was directed to return for further questioning today at 10 o'clock and the questioning shifted to Mr. Elmer.

The committee is still trying to fix responsibility for the failure of the Bund to turn over its records to a process server with a subpoena duces tecum, who had been instructed to wait for them on the spot. Somebody told the process server, Senator McNaboe said, that the records were in the hands of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in connection with the spy cases. The result, it now appears, was to leave them unprotected in the hands of the national leader, Fritz Kuhn.

According to Mr. Wheeler-Hill's testimony yesterday, "the national leader said he would take care of it." Senator McNaboe murmured about "contempt," but no action was taken.

Mr. Elmer's story was simpler than Mr. Wheeler-Hill's. He was born in Rhenish Westphalia, in Germany, in 1891; he was in the German Army all through the World War, with some front-line service but without any wounds or decorations. His parents died and he left a brother and sister in Germany to come to America in 1926. He landed at Hoboken and remained there because there were so many Germans. He set up in the delicatessen business. He was naturalized in Jersey City in 1934. His English, he said, was "picked up."

He was attracted to the Bund, he explained, because he thought all Germans should stick together. He organized the Hoboken Germans for Fritz Kuhn in 1935 and in return received the title of national organizer, without pay. He has not organized anything since. He said organization is largely local and spontaneous, and that there are ninety-four units of the Bund now in existence in the principal cities of the nation.