

Fascist Demagogue, G. K. Smith Spending Plenty for Elections

By Adam Lapin

(The Worker Staff Correspondent)

DETROIT, Oct. 10.—On the 20th floor of one of the swank office buildings in downtown Detroit are the headquarters of Gerald L. K. Smith—silky-tongued demagogue, foe of the war effort and a potent figure in the Republican Party of Michigan.

Smith is in the money these days—despite his endless appeals for funds to his adherents.



G. K. SMITH

In his expensive suite in the Industrial Banking Building I saw a corps of office workers busily engaged in folding leaflets and putting them into envelopes for mails. Tons of literature were piled on the floor. Twice weekly Smith broadcasts from WJR, most expensive radio station in Michigan.

He publishes, on heavy, fine paper, a magazine, "The Cross and the Flag," which once a month takes his design for fascism to the people of Michigan.

He rides around in a big Lincoln limousine and he lives in Indian Village, one of Detroit's fancier residential districts.

It is easy to write Smith off as a glib buffoon, a harmless and amusing demagogue.

But the 109,000 votes which he got in the Republican Party primaries, less than 90,000 short of victory, should dispel that illusion once and for all.

Into the seething war production center of Detroit there have poured more than 250,000 migrants in the last few months. Many of them have come from the South. Many were farmers. Few have a background of trade unionism.

He tries to exploit the prejudices and the genuine grievances of the farmers of the state and of the small businessmen. He has taken over many of the contacts and followers of Father Coughlin. And he has the money to do a job for Hitler in the country's key production center.

It was to get a first hand picture of Smith's propaganda machine that I decided to visit his headquarters.

Smith wasn't listed in the directory in the lobby downstairs. Neither was his ballyhooed organization, "Committee of One Million."

CORPORATE DUMMY

Instead, his outfit is listed as the "Federation of Americanization of Michigan, Inc." Smith himself has explained that this is just a corporate dummy to take in the money from contributors.

A sandy-haired young man greeted me with a tentative smile. I told him I wanted to see Mr. Smith. He asked me what paper I represented. When I told him, the smile froze.

"Just a minute," he said, and dashed into an inner office to make a telephone call. It was soon apparent that he was calling Smith. In a few minutes he came out, and said brusquely:

"No interview."

"Why not?" I asked.

"Well, you know what happened when Spivak interviewed Mr. Smith."

The sandy-haired young man was referring to the John L. Spivak who has for years specialized in exposing fascist demagogues like Smith for publications like The Worker and New Masses.

I picked up some of the literature lying around, and left.

Gerald Smith lost the Republican

nomination for nomination in the primary campaign. But he is still very much in the political picture.

He is supporting the defeatist Republicans who are running for reelection like Reps. Clare Hoffman, Roy Woodruff and Albert Engel.

Hoffman has put Smith propaganda into the Congressional Record. Once he appeared at a House Rules Committee demanding continuation of the Dies Committee in the name of the people of Michigan. He carried with him a stack of petitions which had been circulated by Smith's Committee of One Million.

In the Senatorial race, Smith is putting on his own sticker campaign as an "independent."

Apparently he is trying to build up the strength of his own organization while maintaining his connections with some of the defeatist Republican politicians.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Smith reported the expenditure of more than \$10,000 in his primary campaign—apart from the regular overhead expenses of his outfit.

It was revealed in the course of a lawsuit a few years ago that his Committee of One Million received financial support from William B. Bell, president of the American Cynamid Company, and Lewis H. Brown, president of the Johns Manville Company.

I was told by a reliable informant that contributions for Smith used to be mailed to the office of Ernest Kanzler, brother-in-law of Henry Ford, who is now Director of Operations at the War Production Board.

Back in 1936 Smith told the United Press he intended to form an organization of 10,000,000 members to "seize the Government of the United States."

On July 23 a Special Grand Jury in Washington named "The Cross and the Flag" as one of the publications which was part of a conspiracy "to obstruct and defeat" the war effort.

The Grand Jury did not, however, indict Smith along with other Fifth Columnists like William Dudley Pelley, Elizabeth Dilling and Gerald Winrod.

Trade unionists and progressives in Detroit are asking: Why not?