

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1953

U. N.'s Loyalty Firings

Let there be no misunderstanding over the ruling of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal that 11 American employes of the U. N. were fired illegally. The tribunal did *not* decide that the U. N. must keep American subversives on its payroll. Rather, it held that refusal to answer questions asked by a congressional committee on grounds of possible self-incrimination is not by itself sufficient reason for dismissing an employe of the United Nations. In other words, the ruling seems to leave undisturbed the principle laid down by former Secretary General Trygve Lie that no one engaged in subversive activities against his own government can serve the U. N., but it insists that the U. N. should act on the basis of real evidence and not on mere suspicion.

This is a well-reasoned view. The principle becomes unmistakably clear in the tribunal's opinion in the Ruth Crawford case. Miss Crawford, a U. N. information officer, informed the FBI in 1939 that she had been a member of the Communist Party for a little more than one year beginning in 1935. Thereafter she was employed by the United States Government for eight years. When she was questioned by senatorial investigators looking into possible subversion in the U. N. she told of joining and of leaving the Communist Party, but refused to say who had invited her to join. The tribunal concluded that this refusal to answer a question that had no bearing upon her loyalty or upon her work for the U. N. was not ample grounds for her dismissal.

While that decision is anathema to some persons looking for an excuse to condemn the United Nations, it is in keeping with American standards of justice and fair play. And the principle it lays down is essential to the development of an international career service. The founders of the U. N. at San Francisco provided that its secretariat should be wholly independent. Americans employed by the secretariat are not in any sense of the word representatives of the United States. The tensions growing out of the cold war made it advisable for the U. N. to seek loyalty clearance of the Americans it employs, and screening for that purpose is now a routine matter; but the U. N. cannot be expected to respond each time that suspicions are raised on Capitol Hill unless they are accompanied by real evidence. The suggestion that the United States withhold money for the indemnities ordered by the tribunal is an attempt at the kind of dictation that would kill the world organization—as the persons suggesting the move well know.

21 September 1953

(over)

Letters

To the Editor

U. N. Judgment

Editor, *The Wall Street Journal*:

I am one of the employes of the United Nations about whom you wrote in your recent editorial, "U. S. Citizens and the U. N." (September 3). I am the one who "answered the questions" and was one of four whom the Administrative Tribunal ordered re-instated. As you are undoubtedly aware the Secretary-General chose not to reinstate us.

The reason I am writing is that your editorial shows that you are troubled, as many people are, about the deep issues involved in these cases: the admitted legality of the Tribunal's findings on one hand and pressures against the acceptance of that ruling as they have been made known here.

This conflict is going to be resolved, as I see it, only by acquainting the American people with the basis on which the Tribunal made its judgment. It had facts before it, not unsupported charges, and it acted courageously. Had the same facts been brought before an American court it would have decided as the Tribunal did. Displeasing as that verdict might have been to some, it would have been accepted.

On the night of October 14 last I was ordered by telegram, along with other Americans employed by the United Nations, to appear the next day before the McCarran committee to answer questions about my past employment and political affiliations.

By noon of the fifteenth I had answered—or admitted or asserted, as the interpretation may be—thirteen years ago I had been for a year or more a member of the Communist Party of the United States, that I was at the moment a member of the Progressive Party, and that I received the publications of several specified organizations and was in sympathy with their objectives. I had further described eleven years of employment with the United States government and five years with the United Nations.

In both instances of party membership about which I was questioned by the McCarran committee I was publicly registered as a supporter on the polling lists, a circumstance that would hardly sustain a charge of subversive activity. The Tribunal, at the time of its deliberations, also had before it the Secretary-General's own statement that during my employment with the United Nations I had at all times exercised "the necessary reserve and tact incumbent upon an international civil servant."

The free exercise of the franchise was at stake. It is difficult to see how an American could be other than gratified that the right was upheld by the United Nations tribunal.

RUTH CRAWFORD

New York City