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LABOR'S NON PARTISAN
League



October 4, 1940

Personal

Mr. John L. Lewis, President
United Mine Workers of America
Mine Workers Building
Washington, D. C.

CONFIDENTIAL

Dear John:

There is no need for me to recapitulate the events leading to the setting up of the Senate Civil Liberties Committee and its continuance. You know as a matter of personal experience that it is perhaps the one tangible achievement in which I have had my finger.

In the face of present world conditions it may well seem to have been a forlorn hope and a wasted effort. However, the facts developed in the course of those extended investigations and hearings are still of great, potential value for the fight ahead to retain such gains as the labor movement under your leadership has achieved.

By the same token, certain of the personnel of the Senate Civil Liberties Committee are important on the same basis. My information is that you or Lee Pressman have agreed to employ Ben Allen of the Senate Civil Liberties staff in a research capacity. When I say what I am about to say I don't mean to imply that I ever hold over any man the threat that may be involved in a sense of obligation. But I do want to tell you--what you may not already know--that Ben Allen's career here in Washington found its first beginning through my efforts. Its continuance likewise was, in part at least due to the continued interest of my wife and myself in his being. He lived in our home for a year or so. I think my wife and I know him, know his virtues and his weaknesses, as well as anyone in Washington.

I think he is a valuable person, though I have some inner reservations as to his basic loyalties. I think CIO would not make a mistake in putting him on its payroll providing he was properly supervised in his work from a straight trade union point of view. However, I cannot, as a matter of individual justice, see him hired and see the guy upon whom

*mind. For those unrelenting dedication. He truly built his success
at the Senate Civil Liberties Committee.*

I refer to Harold Weisberg, with whom I got involved in the unfortunate Pelley forgeries, for which I was quite as much to blame as Harold was. I watched that Senate Civil Liberties Committee function year after year with the kind of attention that one pays to an instrument or institution one has had a part in fashioning. I saw, in intimate relationship with the Committee staff, just who was doing the real work and who was riding along on the prestige of the Committee.

Harold Weisberg, as editor of the Senate Civil Liberties Committee record, did twice as much work as most of the Committee staff and four or five times as much as some of them. It was his retentive memory and unremitting attention to detail upon which Ben Allen relied almost wholly for the making of his reputation for particular knowledge about the National Association of Manufacturers and its allied bodies, and their methods, through citizens' committees and similar devices, of trying to defeat and undermine the labor movement.

Harold Weisberg's dismissal towards the end of the Committee's work by Senator La Follette, for an act of transmitting to certain newspapermen information he had been asked to transmit by Ben Allen, was a shockingly disgraceful episode. It was that episode which threw me into intimate relationship with Weisberg for the first time. I was outraged by the chairman of the Senate Civil Liberties Committee summarily dismissing a man without adequate hearing and with the backing of social-climbing and career-seeking members of the Committee staff who could not tolerate Weisberg's enthusiastic calling of a spade a spade. Ben Allen's part in that dismissal is one of the sorriest chapters in so much of his career as I know. He not only let a faithful friend down at that time, but he violated his integrity by refusing to stick up for facts which he knew to be facts.

I could submit to you considerable documentary evidence on the value Harold Weisberg has contributed to CIO--specific jobs he has done, at the request of Lee Pressman primarily, but sometimes others. As illustration of the type of work I mean, I attach a copy of a statement he prepared at Lee Pressman's request during the testimony on the Wagner Act two years ago. That statement, as I recall the circumstances, was presented for the record by Tom Kennedy, in your name.

of the record of hearings for the Senate Civil Liberties Committee. This exhibit is a meticulous listing of all firms contributing \$2,000 or more to the National Association of Manufacturers and the amounts of money they have spent for labor espionage, tear gas, munitions and such phoney front organizations as the American Liberty League, the Crusaders, the Farmers' Independent Council, etc. This particular exhibit was never questioned on so much as the dotting of an "i" by any firm or individual mentioned therein.

Harold Weisberg has his faults, as all of us do. He tends to be too ebullient and to see events and circumstances as black and white. But his enthusiasm is one of the things for which I love him. And his courageous and eager pursuit of facts is a quality possessed by few.

The sum and substance of this communication boils down to this: I believe Harold Weisberg has a greater claim to employment by the CIO than Ben Allen has. I believe he can perform fully as competent a function along the lines I understand are contemplated for Ben. I don't want to be in the position of euchering Ben out of a job, but by the same token I do want to extend myself to the best of my ability to see that justice is done to the individual upon whose shoulders Ben has risen. Harold Weisberg has been having a very tough row to hoe as a result of the unfortunate mess into which he and I stumbled, from the best of intentions--intentions which I don't need to tell you related to a defense of CIO against calumny and falsehood. On the sheer economic level Harold has been maintaining himself against great odds. I have tried to do what I can to help, but that is not enough and is not unending.

This communication comes from me without prompting by anyone, and comes very much from my heart, and I also hope, definitely, from my head. I think Weisberg's knowledge in this particular field exceed's Ben's considerably, his memory is exceptionally capacious, retentive and accurate. I think he would do a bang-up job for CIO, and I think he merits being employed by CIO.

Yours,



Gardner Jackson

P.S. I am sending a copy of this letter to Lee Pressman.

The attached copy of the Wagner Act ^{testimony} for you via Tom Kennedy + Lee Pressman is Harold's original and only remaining copy. He wants me to get it back for him.

Lewis To G. Jackson 10-7-40

acknowledges receipt
has agreed to find work for Allen.
Also show if anything can be done for
Weisberg at the present time.