

Stripling Recalls Baring Forgeries Used Against Quiz



RECALLS FORGERIES . . . ROBERT E. STRIPLING, former Chief Investigator of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, as he talks with a reporter. In his fifth article today Stripling recalls how he exposed as forgeries letters designed to smear the committee.

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Chief Investigator,
House Un-American Activities Committee, 1933-42
Edited by Bob Considine.

ARTICLE FIVE

Rep. Frank E. Hook (D. Mich.) rose one day in Congress, early in January, 1949, and brandished several photostat letters bearing the letterhead of the Silver Shirt Legion of America and the signature of William Dudley Pelley.

The letters were addressed to Chairman Martin Dies of the House Un-American Activities Committee. One read, in part:

... as you told me in your office, my organization has nothing to worry about, as we are close friends."

I had been tipped off late in 1939 that an involved plot to destroy Dies and the committee was being hatched by powerful influences in Washington.

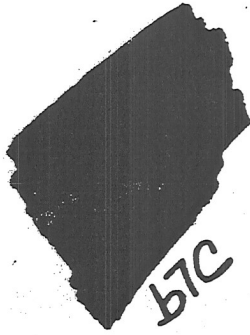
The question of whether or not the Committee had justified its existence was about to be brought before the House of Representatives.

The letters, of course, raised a tremendous furor. Dies' protests (from Texas) that he did not know Pelley and had never corresponded with the American Fascist were submerged in widespread demands that the Committee be dissolved.

Hook read the text of the letters into the Congressional Record but, curiously, refused to let any member of the committee, or me, examine them. Instead, he placed them, he said, in his safe deposit box at the Riggs National Bank.

In the middle of the demands for Dies' head, and a Rules Committee fight over whether Hook's remarks should be expunged from the Record, I kept thinking of an inveterate

- Mr. _____
- Mr. _____
- Mr. Glavin _____
- Mr. Ladd _____
- Mr. Nichols _____
- Mr. Rosen _____
- Mr. Tracy _____
- Mr. Egan _____
- Mr. Gurnea _____
- Mr. Harbo _____
- Mr. Mohr _____
- Mr. Pennington _____
- Mr. Quinn Tamm _____
- Mr. Nease _____
- Miss Gandy _____



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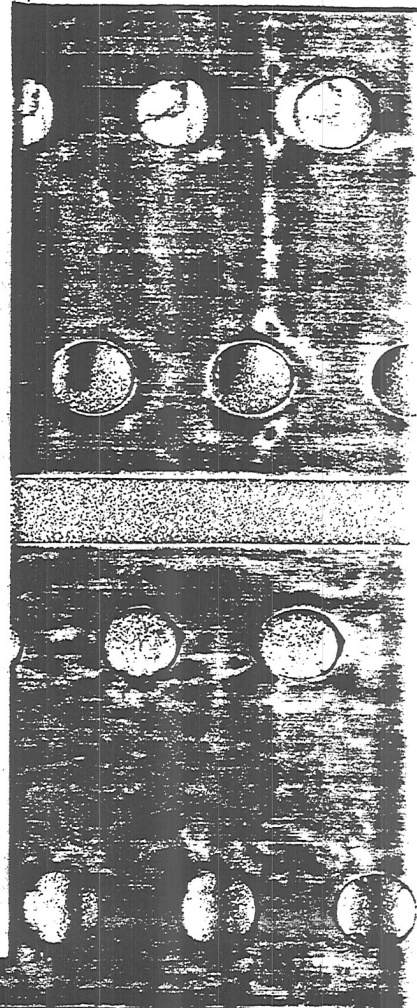
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Stripling Recalls Revealing Forgeries Used Against Probe

Continued from First Page

Washington "fixer" named David Dubouche Mayne, who was a Pelley lieutenant.

I set out in search of him and the search finally led to Springfield, Va. His small home was locked, but I found the local postmistress and asked her to have Mayne call me if, by chance, she saw him.

That was on a Saturday. Monday morning he appeared at my office in the old House Office Building.

I took a long chance and pointing at him severely, shouted:

"Mayne, you wrote those letters, didn't you?"

"Yes," he said, mildly.

"Sit down," I invited.

Then I called in the members of the Committee, put Mayne under oath and he told his story, portions of which were subsequently denied by the persons he mentioned.

He told us that Gardner Jackson, formerly (and subsequently) a \$5,600-a-year, Amherst-graduated Government economist, who was among the more articulate New Deal critics of the Committee, had purchased the letters from him.

\$105 and Promise of a Job

The price was \$105 and the promise of a job through Jerome Frank, then chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Mayne testified that Jackson's agent, one Harold Weisberg, at their first meeting, had asked him if he knew of any connection between Dies and Pelley. When Mayne answered that he knew of none, Weisberg said:

"Well, keep looking. I'm sure you'll find something."

Mayne confessed that subsequently he wrote the letters on plain paper, forged Pelley's signature, and attached a Silver Shirt Legion letterhead by means of Scotch tape. He then had the material photostated and turned it over to Jackson, who apparently accepted it as authentic.

Once in possession of the material, Jackson gave a dinner at his Chevy Chase home for ten members of Congress, including two New Deal members of the Committee, and informed them of his find. Only Hook would agree to introduce the matter on the floor of the House.

Though he was under oath, I knew it was hopeless to re-

This is the fifth of a series of 28 articles examining the Communist conspiracy in the United States. Mr. Stripling was until recently the spark plug of the House committee that uncovered widespread Communist propaganda and espionage. In this exclusive series he will show the reader, for the first time, the inner workings of the House Un-American Activities Committee. Mr. Stripling will name names, describe Red infiltration into Government circles, and give pertinent background to cases now in the public eye.

my case on Mayne's testimony. I needed Pelley, who had dropped out of sight after violating parole on a "Blue Sky" conviction in North Carolina.

I asked Mayne where Pelley could be found, but that only frightened him. So I mused aloud:

"Well, I'm glad he hasn't shown himself. If he did, I'd have to serve him with a subpoena, and if I did that it would mean that North Carolina couldn't serve the warrant it has out for him."

Mayne began to show some interest.

"Yes," I went on, with an elaborate sigh, "I'd hate to do that fellow a favor, and make it possible for him to get all that publicity..."

Pelley Appears at Office

Pelley walked into my office the next morning. He had shaved off his gray goatee and was affecting a cap.

I called the Committee to the office and let them hear his denial of ever having met or written to Dies.

We took him to a meeting of the Rules Committee to repeat his story, and when we produced the typewriter on which Mayne had written the letters, the case against Dies and the Committee was dead.

Hook insisted that he had been framed. Mayne was convicted of forgery, probably the lowest case of forgery in the Justice Department's annals. And Congress gave the Committee another lease on life.

Not much later in 1940, President Roosevelt called Dies to the White House from his home in Texas and, for one perhaps thoughtless moment, the Texan believed he had been returned to the good graces of the Chief Executive.

I accompanied him to the White House. Dies honestly expected to be ushered into the President's study immediately, but he was kept waiting for 45 minutes. And when the door of the study opened the man who emerged was Gardner Jackson.

The President told Dies that Attorney General Robert Jackson was strenuously accusing the Committee of premature exposures that imperiled national security. The truth of the matter was that the Committee was taking an aggressive lead in matters in which the Justice Department was plainly negligent.

F.D.R. Gives Dies a Lecture

Roosevelt lectured Dies at length, and the Chairman reluctantly agreed to clear all future hearings with the Attorney General. "Dies agreed, he told us,"... "purely because of the international situation."

Quietly, and I believe quite efficiently, we continued our long inquiry into Japanese spying along the Pacific Coast and in Hawaii. By the middle of June, 1941, our case was complete.

Dies, then in Jasper, Tex., informed the Justice Department that he planned to begin hearings on the Japanese case on July 1. He outlined what we had discovered.

The Justice Department's reply came a few days before the scheduled opening of our hearings. It was signed by Acting Attorney General Matthew McGuire and informed Dies that the Department, after discussing the question with the President and Secretary Hull, could not give us permission to hold such hearings.

For the remainder of my life I will always believe that our disclosures would have aroused enough alarm among the people to have caused the Japanese to abandon their planned attack on Pearl Harbor.

If Pearl Harbor could not have been prevented, then I believe our disclosures would have prepared America more adequately for the difficult days ahead.

(TOMORROW: Mr. Stripling describes the ideological scrambling following the signing of the Stalin-Hitler pact.)