

Verdict on Bridges May Have Echo in Congressional Quiz



Associated Press WIREPHOTO

Harry Bridges, West Coast C. I. O. leader, is all smiles as he reads telegrams of congratulations after James M. Landis, dean of Harvard Law School, who presided at a Labor Department hearing, held Bridges not a Communist. If the report is accepted, a warrant for Bridges' deportation would be canceled

By the Associated Press

The door to deportation of Harry Bridges, Australian-born West Coast C. I. O. leader, appeared last night to have been closed by a trial examiner's finding that he is not a Communist, but there were indications that the decision might have repercussions in Congress.

The reaction of legislators already here for the session beginning next week was varied, but some were frankly incredulous that Dean James M. Landis of Harvard law school, who sat as a special Labor Department examiner in the Bridges case, could have cleared him of any affiliation with the Communist Party.

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Representative Dempsey (Democrat), of New Mexico, commented that the House Committee on Un-American Activities had "rather conclusive" testimony that Bridges had been a Communist and should be deported.

But Senator Burke (Democrat), of Nebraska, one of the group of lawmakers who have urged that Bridges be deported, said he was "rather surprised, but I must assume that Dean Landis examined the evidence very carefully in every way."

Capper Doubtful

Senator Capper (Republican), of Kansas, a member of the Senate Immigration Committee, said he would be "a little doubtful" of the Landis conclusion, but that he did not know whether it was of sufficient importance "for Congress to dig into it."

It was accepted at the Capitol as a foregone conclusion that Secretary of Labor Perkins would not reject the findings of Landis—in the absence of some development indicating he had been misled during the lengthy hearings he conducted on the West Coast.

If Miss Perkins accepts the report, the deportation warrant issued against Bridges in March, 1938, will be canceled. The warrant was based on the allegation that Bridges was a Communist.

In an 80,000-word report, Landis summed up his estimate of the West Coast labor leader in these words: "That Bridges' aims are energetically radical may be admitted, but the proof fails to establish that the methods he seeks to employ to realize them are other than those that the framework of democratic and constitutional government permits."

The trial examiner found that Bridges had frequently "welcomed" aid and help from Communists during strikes; that he had associated "with persons admittedly Communists;" that he sympathized "with many of the objectives that the Communist Party at times has embraced," and that he refused to discriminate among Communist members of his unions. He added:

"Persons engaged in bitter industrial struggles tend to seek help and assistance from every available source. But the intermittent solicitation and acceptance of such help must be shown to have ripened into those bonds of mutual cooperation and alliance that entail continuing reciprocal duties and responsibilities before they can be deemed to come within the statutory requirement of affiliation.

"The evidence falls short of the statutory definition of affiliation."

Castigates Witnesses

The trial examiner rejected the testimony of most of the 31 witnesses who appeared against Bridges.

These included American Legion leaders, city and State police, and numerous others who said they had seen Bridges at meetings restricted to Communist Party members, had heard him tell of his membership, and testified that Bridges used a party name "Rossi" allegedly after San Francisco's conservative mayor.

Landis described one witness as a "self-confessed liar." One he said was "neither a candid nor a forthright witness." Of another's testimony he declared, "in evasion, qualification and contradiction, it is almost unique." Commenting on witness stand story of a police officer, he added "the conclusion is inescapable that his testimony is far from reliable."

The report called attention to defense contentions that these witnesses and others were engaged in a conspiracy to "get rid of Bridges because of his admittedly militant and radical labor leadership."

Among the principal witnesses for the Government were Maj. Laurence A. Milner, Portland, Oreg., a National Guard officer; John L. Leech, a Los Angeles painter; Harper Knowles, who headed the California American Legion's radical research committee, and Capt. John J. Keegan, of the Portland (Oreg.) Police Department.

The report said that there was no question about Bridges being an alien. It added that he landed in San Francisco in April, 1920, and ~~filed first papers for naturalization~~

in 1921, but was denied final papers in 1928 because the seven-year filing period had lapsed. First papers were filed again in 1928, and again permitted to lapse. A new application, filed in 1936, is pending

Two Issues Involved

The hearing by Landis presented two questions: First, was Bridges at the time the warrant was issued affiliated with the Communist Party; second, is the Communist Party an organization advocating overthrow of this Government by violence.

Landis did not make any findings as to the second question, holding that it was unnecessary in view of his decision that the evidence "establishes neither that Harry R. Bridges is a member nor affiliated with the Communist Party of the United States of America."

The trial examiner made clear that he gave great weight, when reaching his decision, to Bridges' own statement of his political beliefs.

"It was given not only without reserve," the statement said, "but vigorously as dogma and faiths of which the man was proud and which represented in his mind the aims of his existence.

"It was a fighting apologia that refused to temper itself to the winds of caution. It was an avowal of sympathy with many of the objectives that the Communist Party at times has embraced, an expression of disbelief that the methods they wished to employ were as revolutionary as they generally seem, but it was unequivocal in its distrust of tactics other than those that are generally included within the concepts of democratic methods."

Bridges expressed himself as "very happy" about the findings.

Wants to Be Citizen

San Francisco, Dec. 30 (AP).—Harry Bridges, California C. I. O. leader, said today "now that obstacles have been cleared away" by Dean James M. Landis' report on deportation charges against him, "I shall seek naturalization at the earliest possible moment."

"I have long desired to become an American citizen," he said in a written statement. "It should now be obvious through the disclosures of the proceedings, why I have been unable to fulfill that desire."

(Bridges has filed notice of his intention to become naturalized three times since he came to this country from Australia in 1920. The first two he allowed to lapse and the third was filed in recent months.)