

They're Saying In Washington

By Adam Lapin

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64 Votes Against Dies Funds Shows Fight Is Gaining—What Is Needed Now

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ON the surface the 290 to 64 vote in the House the other day to appropriate \$110,000 to the Dies Committee does not seem too encouraging. Rep. Martin Dies still appears to have an overwhelming majority in the House favoring his disruptive shenanigans.



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Without in any way minimizing Dies' admittedly strong grip on the House, the fact remains, however, that the voting showed a decided and heartening growth in opposition to the Texas Congressman. Last month there were only 46 votes cast against continuing the Committee, and this in itself was a decided advance from the small band of six which opposed Dies in 1941. This week there were 18 additional anti-Dies votes over last month—actually about 25 or 30 when it is considered that several opponents of the Committee were absent when the vote was taken.

It is important to realize that Tuesday's vote on funds for the Dies Committee followed an earlier vote authorizing the continuation of the Committee. In other words, this vote was not on the strongest and most clear-cut issue for attracting new adherents to the fight against Dies. Nevertheless the opposition vote was considerably higher than even the most optimistic observers expected. There were also many Congressmen who privately expressed their opposition to Dies but considered it expedient to go along with him on the vote. These Congressmen might have been swayed by a more persistent campaign on the part of the progressive and labor organizations which tended to relax their efforts during the past few weeks.

This latest vote shows that Dies can be defeated, that even the passage of a repeal resolution abolishing his committee is by no means beyond the realm of possibility. But a successful fight against Dies will require two conditions which have hitherto been lacking: First, a strong stand by prominent Republican leaders such as Wendell Willkie. Second, a more consistent anti-Dies stand by the Roosevelt administration.

House Republicans have been supporting Dies almost to a man. Invariably they have been giving his demagogic speeches the loudest applause. Only five of the 64 opposition votes on Tuesday were cast by Republicans. Many Republicans vote for Dies because they realize that he furthers their appeasement policies, others because they think it is good partisan politics to have the Texas Congressman continue to smear administration agencies. But Willkie or other outstanding Republicans could have a real effect in breaking this solid support by pointing publicly to the pro-Axis line which has been followed by the Dies Committee.

It is no secret that President Roosevelt and his closest advisers loathe and despise the Dies Committee. Vice President Wallace certainly spoke up plainly enough. But the opposition of the administration has never been sustained and consistent. Administration leaders, in the House, who usually play close attention to the President's instructions, have continued to vote for the Dies Committee.

Perhaps most serious of all, the administration has not challenged Dies' whole conception that not only Communists but members of a whole series of progressive organizations should be fired from the government payroll. Government employes continue to be fired because they once belonged to the American League against War and Fascism, and are grilled mercilessly by the FBI about contributions for Loyalist Spain.

Shortly after the Wallace blast against Dies, Dr. Maurice Parmelee was summarily discharged by the Board of Economic Warfare: Parmelee was one of the main targets of the Dies attack against the BEW. It is even reported that Milo Perkins, director of the BEW, seriously considered firing all 35 employes listed by Dies as "reds." There have been cases where employes have been discharged solely because of an admittedly unsubstantiated smear by Dies. And there is little doubt that most of the 4,112 case investigations of government employes by the FBI have been of alleged "radicals." More than one quarter of these cases were submitted to the FBI by Dies.

Attorney General Francis Biddle recently set up an intergovernmental committee to consider charges of subversive activities against government employes. But the chairman of this committee is Under Secretary of the Interior John J. Dempsey who was a former member of the Dies Committee and is known to share many of Dies' views. On the whole, only a few government officials like Chairman Lawrence Fly of the Federal Communications Commission have stood up against the Dies Committee.

Repeated yielding to demands for a red hunt inside the government has seriously weakened the fight against the Dies Committee. And it has also accomplished what is no doubt one of Dies' main objectives: it has diverted attention from the real job of ferreting out appeasers and fascists on the government payroll. It is a well known fact that the FBI has refused to investigate a number of well known fascists on the ground that they did not have direct foreign connections. This is hardly the only test to determine their fitness, and it is certainly not the test that was applied in the case of many progressives who have been fired.

A continued fight against the Dies Committee is important as part of the larger drive against defeatism. Remember that Dies is still carrying on his dangerous activities; and it is difficult to do an effective job of putting defeatist organizations and publications out of business while the chairman of a Congressional Committee is permitted to continue making statements that are of the greatest service to the Axis propaganda machine. A simple resolution repealing the House action in continuing the Dies Committee will do the trick. Such a resolution can be introduced, and it can be passed if it is supported by labor, the administration and pro-war Republican leaders.
