

Red Pressure Alleged:

Knox Accused of Bowing To Communist Influences

Dies Group Gets Charges on Action Reinstating Ousted Radio Operators

By WILLARD EDWARDS 11/20/42

Charges that Navy Secretary Knox yielded to pressure from communistic groups and reinstated 10 ship radio operators previously ousted on naval trial board findings that they were subversive, have been laid before the Dies Committee on Un-American Activities, it was disclosed yesterday.

The accusations were made by Fred M. Howe, general secretary-treasurer of the Radio Officers' Union affiliated with the A. F. of L. He denounced Knox for "knuckling down" to the "well-known reds" of the American Communications Association, of the CIO, a rival union.

Assertions Dismissed

In a reply to Howe, Secretary Knox dismissed Howe's assertions as probably based "on some ulterior motives or competitive politics." He said the radio men were

reinstated on the recommendation of Wayne L. Morse, a member of the War Labor Board.

150 Were Employed

Morse, well known in West Coast labor circles, hit the pages of the CIO News, official weekly publication, with a denunciation last July of Attorney General Francis Biddle's ruling against Harry Bridges, foreign-born California agitator. Morse found "twisted logic and unsound public policy" in Biddle's decision that Bridges was a "dangerous alien" and should be deported.

So anxious was Secretary Knox

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release the Communists, Howe noted, that one Leon Roux, no known left-winger, was reinstated on the fact that he is presumably dead, his ship having been missing since December 23, 1941.

In a letter to Chairman Martin Dies (D.), of Texas, of the committee, Howe recalled that he had testified as early as April 1940, that approximately 150 Communists were employed as radio officers on vessels of the American Merchant Marine.

A year later, Congress passed an act which gave the Navy the right to remove any radio officer believed to be subversive. Some 100 radio officers were removed from their vessels under authority of that act, nearly one-half of them, 47, being officials and members of the CIO union.

Reinstatement Discussed

"The CIO union protested the removal of their members in typical Communistic fashion," Howe wrote the Dies committee. "Telegrams, letters of protest and resolutions from all of the known Red Unions and Communistic front organizations flooded the Navy.

"Secretary Knox apparently became frightened and his assistant secretary, Ralph A. Bard, took up

the question of reinstating some of these men. Secretary Knox informs me that Wayne L. Morse, member of the War Labor Board, was consulted in reference to these men and their reinstatement to their ships.

"Personally, I believe that Edwin Lahey, a CIO labor adviser to Secretary Knox, is responsible for the reinstatement of these men. I do not know why it is necessary to have a CIO labor adviser in the Navy Department but Mr. Lahey has admitted to one of our officials that he interested himself in the reinstatement of 10 of these radio officers, consistent followers of the Communist party line."

Lahey yesterday said the Navy's position on the question was fully covered in Secretary Knox's telegram to Howe which stated that "in our opinion, all parties reinstated are devoting themselves wholeheartedly to the progress of the war effort, and regardless of political views, are an asset in the prosecution of the war."

Roux Was Communist

Lahey was formerly labor editor on Secretary Knox's Chicago Daily News.

"Secretary Knox doesn't know, obviously, that his office reinstated a man who was dead for more than six months at the time he was reinstated," remarked Howe in

his letter to the Dies Committee. "That man was Leon Roux. What makes his reinstatement so unusual is that each man is required to make a personal appearance for reinstatement and undergo an oral examination before a trial board.

"Roux has not been heard from since December 23, 1941, when his ship left an East Coast port. But in July, 1942, the ACA went before the Secretary of the Navy and succeeded in getting Roux reinstated to the good graces of the Navy. Just how a dead man can do those things puzzles me and I am sure that it will puzzle you. Roux was a member of the Communist party and once showed me his membership card."

Infringement Charged

Howe declared that the law permitting the Navy to keep Communists, Nazis and Fascists off Government-owned ships was passed "by an alert and angry Congress."

"By reinstating these men, you have truly nullified the law," he asserted in a statement to Knox. "It no longer has any meaning.

"By making a wholesale reinstatement of men previously removed by Navy trial boards and doing this under CIO pressure, leaves me with no other conclusion than that the law has been misapplied and improperly administered."