

(Social Justice, July 3, 1939, Page 3.)

COMMUNISM IN WISCONSIN SHOWN IN REPORT TO DIES INVESTIGATOR

"Invasion" of University, Labor and Politics Told by Former Red Leader

How Plan to Use Young Jewish Radicals from New York Backfired on Party

Milwaukee, Wisconsin -- Disclosures of Communist activity in Wisconsin--politically through the Wisconsin Conference on Social Legislation in the faculty and student body of the University of Wisconsin, and in organized labor through the Communist control of the CIO--have been given to the Dies Committee investigating un-American activities.

A voluminous affidavit by Ferrell Schnering, former Communist, was given to Thomas J. Nag, senior investigator for the Dies Committee, a month ago.

Mr. Schnering, a resident of Milwaukee, was formerly editor of the Wisconsin Voice of Labor, a Communist publication, and former Milwaukee correspondent for the Communist Daily Worker. He was a member of the Communist Party for four years, until January 1, 1936. He is now a lecturer for the Catholic Youth Organization.

Wisconsin Took on Red Glow in 1933

Communist activity began to bear fruit in Wisconsin about 1933, Mr. Schnering told the Dies investigator. In politics, he asserted, the Wisconsin Conference for Social Legislation--described as a "Communist front" organization--threatens to become a state power. He charged furthermore that the Workers Alliance, a WPA employes' organization, is led by Communists or friends of Communists.

- ~~22-1~~ Mr. Schnering then described the "invasion" of the University of Wisconsin by New York Communist youth. This influx of young Communists into the University of Wisconsin began about 1928 and 1929, the affidavit states.

"There has been widespread conjecture as to whether the University of Wisconsin is a Communist academy with a bolshevik faculty," Mr. Schnering observed to an interviewer. "As a Communist I used to wish this charge were true."

New York Radicals Saw "Opportunity"

Radicals in New York, he said, did believe that Wisconsin's state university was "Communist" and entered it because, as he said, "they were almost certain they might direct the American revolution from Madison!"

These young radicals from New York, said Schnering, were all Jews, "but," he added, "not in any sense whatever did they represent the Jewish people--it would be quite correct to describe them as a part of the minority which has been putting the Jews in bad repute."

The campus hangout of this New York clique, Schnering said, was the "music room of the Memorial Union Building." He added that these radicals became "quite odious to the rest of the student body, not because they were Jews but because they were Communists."

Schnering said he blamed them for fostering a "rather unfortunate situation" as regards anti-Semitism on the university campus.

Boys' Racial Zeal Defeated Reds' Aim

"I recall that during the school year of 1933-34 I had great difficulty with this group," Mr. Schnering explained. "I had warned them that by their actions they were generating anti-Semitism. I insisted that some of them cut their hair and press their pants."

He added that he also had insisted that they "refrain from putting members of their own group into all the leading positions of the National Student League," but that he was disobeyed, with the result that the Wisconsin student body "shunned the N.S.L. like the plague smallpox!"

"I feel quite certain that the very best way to assure minimum results from Communist efforts at the university is to keep a few of this type of Communists on the campus--even at the expense of an occasional scholarship!"

Local Auto Union Pride of Communists

Mr. Schnering's affidavit named a number of Wisconsin labor leaders as Communist party members and devoted many pages of his affidavit to the affairs of the Allis-Chalmers local of the United Automobile Workers (CIO), which he described as "the pride of the Communist party."

By 1936, he said, Communists had acquired high positions in many union locals and moved to found a state central CIO body. Representatives of the Communist party who pose as CIO officials rule the organization with an iron hand, he deposed. "They keep the rank and file in complete ignorance of what is happening in the unions. They are in a position to thoroughly trounce all those they define as ~~red~~ 'red baiters,' and anyone who disagrees with them in the slightest is so described."

Mr. Schnering declared that the Allis-Chalmers local 248, United Automobile Workers has "long been the pride of the Communist party." He named several officials as Communists and described the tactics of the "flying squadron" a strong arm contingent to back up red totalitarianism in the union.

"Flying Squadron" Called Private Army

The flying squadron was described as "a private army" of about 150 men. Those who belonged to the flying squadron had to be either members or very close sympathizers with the Communist party. A large number of them did not even work at Allis-Chalmers or belong to Local 248. It was said that a few of them had been unemployed since 1929 and never belonged to any union.

"The most alarming discoveries were brought to light," the affidavit related. "It was discovered that the flying squadron was a mob for strong arm action. Its members were equipped with brass knuckles, and one night each week was spent in drilling in the various techniques of gang fighting."

"The Communists in Wisconsin are in a better position today than they have ever been," Mr. Schnering told his interviewer. "The district council of the UAW, which, under the administration of George Kiebler, was a bulwark against the Communists, is now being swallowed by them—another 40,000 American being submerged beneath Communist leadership!"

Organize for Political Action

In September, 1938, the Communists organized the Wisconsin Conference on Social Legislation as a means of employing to political advantage the influence they wielded through the League for Peace and Democracy and the CIO, Mr. Schnering disclosed.

He named as "fellow travelers" a great number of Wisconsin persons, active as public leaders in various "front" organizations. For example, Schnering's affidavit says of Mrs. Clinton M. Barr, popular Wisconsin club woman: "I witnessed the process by which Mrs. Barr was first duped. In 1935 she made a trip to Paris for the ~~New~~ Women's International Peace Conference. Since then she has actively worked for the League for Peace and Democracy. She is not a member of the Communist party, yet it is no secret to her that the league is controlled by the party."

In like manner, the Schnering affidavit characterizes Mrs. Meta Berger, widow of the late Socialist Congressman editor, Victor Berger, and a former Milwaukee school board member: "Mrs. Berger was also greatly influenced.... and proceeded to support the American League for Peace and Democracy. It was no secret to her that the league was controlled by the Communist party—she was consciously supporting the Communist party in its activity within the realms of her own organization, the Socialist Party!"