

Saturday, May 3, 1941

Hurls Lie at



VOICE OF THE FEDERATION

Attempted



Page Seven

Frame-up



CIO Radio Reporter's Testimony Bares
Faked Statement Concocted Against
Bridges

SAN FRANCISCO—FBI efforts to deport Harry Bridges suffered a smashing defeat when Jim O'Neil, former CIO publicity director on the west coast and Bridges' personal friend, testified under oath how the FBI hounded him for six months to give false testimony.

O'Neil, whose radio voice is known to hundreds of thousands of listeners on the Pacific coast, had his broadcasting job taken from him because he wouldn't join the gang of labor spies, stool pigeons and ex-convicts participating in the frame-up.

O'Neil's testimony:

Judge Sears: Give your name and address to the reporter.

The Witness: James D. O'Neil—O'-N-e-i-l.

By Mr. Del Guercio (chief prosecutor):

Q: Where do you reside, Mr. O'Neil?

A: 1275 Washington street.

Q: Have you ever been a member of the Communist party, Mr. O'Neil?

A: No, sir.

Q: Never?

A: Never.

Q: At any time?

A: At any time.

(O'Neil testified he was publicity director for the CIO in California for two years during 1937 and 1938.—Ed.)

Q: Under whose direction were you working?

A: I was working under Mr. Bridges as publicity director.

Q: When did you obtain this position as publicity director?

A: About—it was the middle of 1937.

Q: And where did you have your offices?

A: 593 Market Street.

Q: Is that the offices that Mr. Bridges occupied?

A: The same place; the CIO headquarters for the west coast.

Q: And for how long a period did you remain in that capacity?

A: I believe I was up there about two years. That would be an approximate guess, but think it was about two years.

Q: And you then left that employment?

A: Yes. But, you see, after I left there I still retained a connection with the broadcast of the CIO news reporter. I still handled the broadcasting for them.

Q: Now, did you become closely associated with Harry Bridges during that period of time?

A: Yes. I knew him pretty well.

Q: Did you during any time that you were so employed in Mr. Bridges' office walk into his office one day and see on Bridges' desk a Communist party book in which Mr. Bridges was putting assessment stamps?

A: No. At this point I want to say that that is exactly what I told the FBI men that questioned me.

Q: Now, just a minute! I haven't asked you that. I am asking you if you saw him.

A: I did not.

Editor of Voice

Q: Were you at any time connected with the Voice of the Federation?

A: Yes. I was editor of the Voice of the Federation.

Q: When did you become associated with that?

A: It was around the first of the year in 1937.

Q: And who obtained the—what position did you hold?

A: Editor.

Q: Editor? How did you become editor of that paper?

A: I went down and applied for the job at 24 California street and I was elected by, I believe, the executive board of the Maritime Federation of the Pacific?

Q: Now, Mr. O'Neil, were you interviewed by an agent of the federal bureau of investigation on October 7, 1940 at the radio station KQW?

A: I was interviewed at the radio station on two different occasions, and I came down to 111 Sutter street and I was interviewed down there.

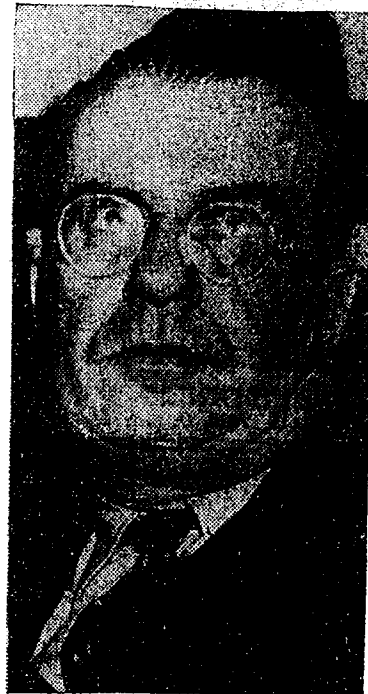
Q: What happened on the occasion that you went to the FBI offices following the interview there at the station?

A: I was asked a long series of questions in which practically every name of every individual that had ever been prominent in the labor movement on the west coast, particularly in connection with the maritime labor board unions, were brought in and asked whether they were not Communists.

Q: And what was your reply?

A: My reply was that I didn't know whether they were Communists or not, and a re-

Tells Truth



JIM O'NEIL
Exposes FBI

mark would be made to me that some witness mentioned some of these names—I certainly can't recall because I never knew him—had made a statement that they had been seen in Communist meetings with me. And my answer to that was that I had never attended a Communist meeting.

No Statement

Q: And do you recall that at the time that you first appeared at the offices of the federal bureau of investigation here in San Francisco that there was a stenographer present?

A: That is correct.

Q: And did you dictate a statement to that stenographer?

A: I did not dictate a statement to the stenographer. The questions were being asked of me, and if this is one of the questions that you have read back here, then that is the statement in which I said the only credible evidence against Harry Bridges or anybody else—

Q: Did you dictate a statement?

A: I did not.

Q: Just a minute! Wait until I get through with my question. Did you dictate a statement to a stenographer?

Judge Sears: He said "No."

Q: And did you also state as follows: "As soon as I came to 2048 Ellis street in San Francisco Craig frankly told me that he was a member of the Communist party and I at one time or another became acquainted with practically everybody of consequence in that party, meeting most of them at his home, including Bill Schneidermann, California secretary of the party, his wife, Rose, Walter Lambert, head of the waterfront section of the party, one Ross, editor of the Western Worker, the entire staff of the Worker, Pop Hanoff, Minnie Carson, Oleta O'Connor, Frank Spector, Mike Quinn, Henry Schmidt, John Shoemaker, Germain Bulcke, and others."

A: I did not.

Q: You did not make that statement?

A: No, I did not make that statement. I was asked the question if I had ever met the men at Craig's home and I stated that I had not.

Q: And did you not dictate—

A: (Interposing) I did not dictate.

Q: (Continuing)—to the stenographer that was present at that time—

A: (Interposing)—I did not.

Q: (Continuing)—that statement that I have just read?

A: I did not. No, sir. The question is—

Mr. Del Guercio: Now, just a minute!

Mr. Gladstein: Your honor, could I make a suggestion? In the first place, this is direct examination. In the second place, when a witness gives an answer "I did not" and starts to make an explanation, heretofore in this case witnesses have been permitted to complete their answers. Now, I don't see why the witness should not be permitted to complete his answer without Mr. Del Guercio's saying, "Now, just a minute!" The witness apparently has something that he wishes to add to complete his answer. I think we are entitled to hear it.

By Mr. Del Guercio:

Q: I will ask that question. Did you make any of those statements that I have read to you?

A: I did not make any of those statements. I was asked if those people had appeared at the house. One by one they

were called off to me and I answered "No, I did not meet them." Some of them I have never met. I haven't to this day met them.

Q: But you did not make the statement as I have read it to you?

A: I certainly did not.

Not Communist

Q: Did you state "I joined the Communist party in either the latter part of November or the first part of December, 1936, under the name of Ben Harrison"?

A: I did not make any such statement and I have never joined the Communist party.

The Witness: May I point out at this time that these statements that you are reading back to me were originally given to me in the form of questions which I denied. I made a statement that I had not met these people. "Wasn't it true that you knew this person or the other person? Didn't you meet them when you were living at this house?" That's the way those things appeared, not as a statement.

Q: Did you make this statement: "On New Year's day following my appearance at the Communist party headquarters I drove into the driveway at 2048 Ellis street and was met by Mrs. Craig, who informed me that a very important person was waiting to see me in the house"?

First Met Bridges

A: No.

Q: Did you make that statement at that time and place?

A: No.

Q: Did you make this statement:

"I went inside and in the kitchen I immediately recognized from his pictures Harry Bridges, who was accompanied by Joe Ring"?

A: I did not, because I met Harry Bridges in his own office several months later for the first time.

Q: Did you make this statement: "At this point I would go back to my first meeting with Bridges at the Craig home"?

A: No.

Q: Did you make this statement?:

"Present at that meeting were Mr. and Mrs. Craig, Bridges, Joe Ring, and myself."

A: No.

Q: Did you make this statement?:

"At that time I was introduced by Craig to Bridges with these words, 'Comrade Bridges, meet Comrade O'Neil'?"

A: No such statement was ever made.

Q: You didn't make that statement?

A: No.

Q: At any time, any place, anywhere?

A: May I add at that point—

Q: (Interposing). Will you answer the question?

A: I answered already.

Q: You didn't make that statement at any time, any place, anywhere?

A: No; except that I brought out the fact that on the waterfront Red baiting had become so bad that at one time Henry Schmidt (president San Francisco longshore local) bought a flaming red hat and wore it publicly, and the men were referring to each other as "Commissar" and "Comrade."

MR. DEL GUERCIO: I move to strike the answer as not responsive.

JUDGE SEARS: I think I will let it stand.

Q: Did you also make this statement: "On another occasion I walked into Bridges' office, it always being my privilege to do so after first having assured myself that he was alone, and on his desk was a new Party book, which had just been issued and into which Bridges was putting assessment stamps"?

A: I did not make that statement.

No Time, No Place

Q: At any time?

A: At any time; no, sir.

Q: At any place, anywhere?

A: No.

Q: Did you follow it by this statement: "I expressed amazement that he was doing this only with the book in plain view on top of his desk; however, he nonchalantly continued to put the stamps in place and then returned the book to his pocket." Did you make that statement?

A: I did not make any such statement. I wouldn't have been amazed — I would have dropped dead if such a thing would have happened.

Q: Did you ever make that statement to anyone?

A: This is the third time, and I am saying no, I didn't.

Q: And did you make this statement: "It is my belief

that Bridges never at any time attended any Communist Party meeting." Did you make that statement, Mr. O'Neil?

A. I have made that statement repeatedly.

Q. Did you make this statement: "Bridges never stated to me that he was a member of the Communist Party. It was always tacitly understood and assumed that such was the case." Did you make that statement?

A. No; absolutely not.

Q. You made the first statement; the first sentence, that Bridges had never stated to you that he was a member of the Communist party, but you did not make the second part of the statement, "It was always tacitly understood and assumed that such was the case." Is that your testimony?

A. May I point out that you have got one part of the statement where apparently I walked in and saw a man putting stamps in a Communist party book and then in the second place Bridges never told me he was a member of it. Would you mind telling me how you can reconcile such a thing?

Q. I am asking the questions.

A. The thing is silly, I think.

Q. I don't care what you think.

A. Well, you will care.

* * *

Q. Did you continue by stating: "Everybody in the employ of the CIO and the unions with their headquarters in the Balboa building, with one exception, were members of the Communist party"?

A. No; but that question was asked me.

Q. Did the stenographer read back your dictation?

A. There was at no time that I made any dictation to be read back.

Q. Did you indicate certain corrections to be made to the stenographer at that time?

A. I did not.

JUDGE SEARS: Did the stenographer read anything to you?

THE WITNESS: No, sir. I was aware that the questions were being taken down, but at no time was anything read to me.

Meeting With FBI

Q. Now, Mr. O'Neil, did you appear at the office of the federal bureau of investigation at 111 Sutter street, San Francisco, on the night of April 22, 1941?

A. I believe you were present and I believe—I believe there was a chap, Mr. Schofield, or some such name as that.

Q. Did you remember your being introduced to Major Schofield?

A. Yes.

Q. As head of the immigration and naturalization service?

A. I believe that was his title.

Q. Did you remember Mr. Connelley being there, the assistant director of the bureau of investigation?

A. Yes. He is sitting in the chair.

Q. And do you recall my asking you why you didn't want to appear to testify?

A. Yes. I believe I told you that I had nothing to add to the case at all.

Q. Isn't it a fact that you stated at that time in the presence of Major Schofield, Mr. Connelley, Mr. Cassidy and myself that the reason you did not want to appear to testify in these proceedings was because you had been such a close friend of Harry Bridges that, if you did testify against him, you would be called a rat?

A. No.

Q. By everybody on the coast?

A. No, sir. No such statement was ever made.

Q. You deny that you made such a statement at that time?

A. I do. I believe I told you at that time that I had been a member of the labor union since way back in 1919 when I joined the Sailor's Union; that my record in the labor union had always been a clean one and that absolutely I was going to have no connection with this case.

Q. And do you recall my asking you: "Do you believe that an alien Communist should be deported?"

A. No. If I remember you asked me, did I believe that Harry Bridges should be deported? Using the name.

Q. Do you recall my asking you: "Do you believe that an alien Communist should be deported?"

A. No, you asked me if I thought that Harry Bridges should be deported and I said "No."

'Ways and Means'

Q. Do you remember Mr. Schofield telling you that if

we did give you assurance they will not fire you (from a radio job in Marysville, Calif.—Ed) would you testify? Do you remember Mr. Schofield asking you that?

A. Yes. But that happened later out in the hall when he told me that he had ways and means of assuring me that nothing would happen in Marysville.

Q. And do you remember saying: "Yes, I walked into Harry Bridges' office, and I said, 'You g.d. fool!' He was relaxed and with his feet on the desk, and he said, 'I did not have time today.'" And then you demonstrated with your thumb on the desk how Bridges pasted the stamps in his Communist Party book? Do you remember your saying and doing that?

A. Wait a minute! I want to understand that. I walked in there? That statement says I walked in and found him with his feet on the desk and using his thumbs to put stamps in a book?

Q. No, no. Then you demonstrated with your thumb how you saw Harry Bridges put his assessment stamps—

A. (Interposing) And the time I walked in his feet were on the desk? That must have been quite a performance!

Falsification

Q. And do you remember you continuing as follows: "That is where you fellows are wrong." Did you make that statement?

A. That is where what fellows are wrong?

Q. "You fellows," referring to us, Mr. Schofield, myself, Mr. Connelley and Mr. Cassidy.

A. I might have made that statement. I have been thoroughly convinced of it for quite a while.

(A series of questions were then asked concerning the defense attorneys, Richard Gladstein, Aubrey Grossman and Carol King.—Ed.)

JUDGE SEARS: I don't think it is material here.

MR. DEL GUERCIO: Well, it is material in this sense, if the court please: Here is a witness who has made, and we will show he has made, those statements to certain agents of the FBI and who sometime later, months later, made the same statements, similar statements, in the presence of Major Schofield and myself.

MR. GROSSMAN: This is one occasion where we agree with Mr. Del Guercio. We think this is quite material because it shows how the FBI will falsify statements that were not made, and we therefore do not object to it going in and ask that the whole thing go in.

Q. And do you remember your continuing: "The meetings I attended with Bridges were closed Communist party meetings?"

A. No, I did not make that statement. I have never been to a Communist meeting of any kind in my life.

Q. I am talking about Tuesday night in the presence of Major Schofield, Mr. Connelley, Mr. Cassidy, and myself.

A. So am I. I already said "No" to it. Apparently I have to say "No" four or five times.

Q. Mr. O'Neil, do you remember making a telephone call from a pay telephone on Balboa street to Mr. Cassidy on March 18, 1941?

A. No, but I believe I informed him — I believe I called him from home to tell him that I was leaving San Francisco.

Q. And did you make this statement to Mr. Cassidy over the telephone, that same telephone conversation that on the previous afternoon, Monday, March 17, 1941, you had received a telephone call from Harry Bridges who asked you if you would take over the job of running the Bridges Defense Fund?

A. I did not. I made that statement directly to Cassidy and not over the phone. I made a brief statement that I was leaving San Francisco, because I didn't want to leave any impression that I was running away or in flight from anyone. That was why I called.

Q. You made no such statement. And didn't you over that telephone conversation ask for advice as to whether you should accept the position as head of the defense committee?

A. I did not ask for any such advice, no.

Q. And didn't you say—also at that time and place that you could act as an informant and in that way the bureau would have a pipeline to all of the activities transpiring in regard to the Defense Fund?

A. I certainly made no such statement. If I could have played a dirty game like that, I wouldn't be here under \$2500.00 bond the way I am.

I don't play that game. Does a chance come later, Judge, to explain some of these things?

JUDGE SEARS: Mr. Gladstein will ask you the questions under cross-examination.

(O'Neil was questioned if he had talked with Bridges' attorneys after his arrest. He answered "yes."—Ed.)

Q. Who were present there in Mr. Gladstein's office?

A. Harry Bridges, Mr. Gladstein, Mr. Grossman, my wife and myself.

Q. What was discussed?

Q. They asked me why I came down here.

Q. Did you tell them?

Tell the Truth

A. I told them I had been in Marysville working when two FBI men came up there and insisted that I leave immediately and come down here immediately. They had no subpoena for me, but I knew it would be a waste of time to argue for they would come back the next day, so I came down.

Q. What else was said about the Bridges case and about your testimony?

A. I can't recall, except I believe that Bridges said the advice he gave me when I went to 111 Sutter Street the first time was still good.

Q. What advice was that?

A. To get up and tell the story as it happened.

Q. You were found in contempt of court, were you not, Saturday morning? (O'Neil failed to appear in court when first subpoenaed.—Ed.)

A. That is right.

Q. And your sentence has been suspended, is that correct?

A. That is right.

MR. GROSSMAN: If your honor please, I would like to correct that. I do not know of my own knowledge, but it was in the newspapers that sentence has not been suspended, but that judgment has not been given yet.

MR. DEL GUERCIO: Yes, judgment has not been given. That is what I meant—it was postponed.

THE WITNESS: Postponed until they could see what they thought of my testimony here. That was the statement.

Intimidation

Q. During any of these interviews were you intimidated or threatened by the FBI agents?

A. Well, I don't know what you call it, but Major Schofield, in that meeting, said that if I didn't turn out to be a reluctant witness that my job would be perfectly safe; whereupon my job was lost the following day when I did turn out to be a reluctant witness.

Q. Is it your testimony that you were coerced and threatened by the agents?

A. I regard it more or less of an intimidation to say "Your job is all right provided you turn out to do the thing we want you to."

Q. That is the only thing?

A. I would say so. By the way, would you consider it an interview up at the house there when they were coming up the back stairs and also up the front and hammering on the door and demanding admittance, cars parked outside the apartment house?

MR. DEL GUERCIO: I move that that be stricken, your honor.

JUDGE SEARS: No, I think I will allow that. If you consider that an interview would you say there was an coercion in that?

THE WITNESS: I would certainly regard it as coercion; yes, sir.

Cross Examination

By Mr. Gladstein:

Q. Mr. O'Neil, during the examination that Mr. Del Guercio conducted this morning you at one time turned to Judge Sears and said, substantially, "May I explain how this happened?" Judge Sears said "You may make your explanation when Mr. Gladstein examines you." I will now ask you to explain in your own words beginning at the beginning with your first interview with the FBI and telling in chronological order as nearly as you can all of the incidents connected with your various interviews with the FBI. Will you please do that?

A. Well, the first two interviews were conducted at Radio Station KJBS. I was employed there at the time. That took place in an audition room down the hall.

At that time the opening statement was "When did you cease to be a member of the Party?"

My reply to that was that I had not ceased to be a member of the party, that I was not a member of the party and never had been.

Whereupon at that time they

began asking me questions about a number of people who are prominent in the waterfront labor movement. As I recall,—I can't recall them all because some of them I had never heard of. They obviously were from some place other than San Francisco. Henry Schmidt's name was mentioned, Bridges, Mervyn Rathborne, officials of the Newspaper Guild; in fact, officials of practically every union with which I came in contact during my two years at the CIO.

At the end of the first interview, which consumed, I should say, possibly an hour and a half, somewhere around there, I was asked who the callers were.

Q. Who asked you that?

A. Mr. Brunton at the radio station. I informed him who they were and what their purpose was. As I recall, he made the remark that if I knew anything I should go down and I could become the biggest figure on the Pacific coast by proceeding to "turn in" Harry Bridges.

I said I knew nothing of Bridges which could be of any value to the people.

I believe another interview was held—at that time I was asked to come down to 111 Sutter street, and I saw no particular reason for not going except I think the night they asked me to go down there was the night that John L. Lewis was speaking in the election. He was coming out with an important statement. I didn't want to miss it, so I postponed the meeting until the following evening. I think it was the following evening.

Says Tell Truth

In the meantime I contacted Harry Bridges. Harry laughed when I told him what had happened, that I was going to be called down.

He said: "You are only one of several who worked down at the front who have had the same thing."

He said: "The only thing is to go down and tell them the truth. You have nothing to worry about."—Which I did.

In the course of the meeting, which was read as a statement, paragraph by paragraph, the questions that were asked me now appear to be questions that were asked me corroborated by myself.

Let me see! That was, I believe, the third meeting, if I am not mistaken. Two took place at the radio station. The third one took place at 111 Sutter. There were two subsequent meetings at the house. On that occasion I was called on the phone and asked if I would come down to 111 Sutter, and I felt and I said that I felt I had nothing to add to what had already been said.

Well, they came out to the house anyway on two different occasions. I couldn't say exactly how long, but I believe that one of the sessions up there when they were going over names, calling up names of men and women both, who were prominent in the labor movement, "Did I know that they were affiliated with the Communist party?" "Did I ever attend Communist meetings with them?"

The answer was that I had not.

"Well, so and so," and somebody would be brought in who I might not know. When I say "brought in," their name brought in and I was told that they had said that I had been at such meetings.

Labor Meetings

Well, I stated that they were meetings of Labor's non-Partisan League, they were meetings of the Maritime Federation of the Pacific, they were meetings of the CIO Council.

The meetings were a great many varied labor groups, at which I was present and in which these figures were present because, for instance, I believe at that time Henry Schmidt was the president of the local of the ILA at one time and later one of the ILWU. Certainly I attended such meetings but they were not Communist meetings. And I so stated.

And yet time and again, you understand, once a question was answered that wasn't the end of it. It was brought up at the subsequent meeting, or possibly the same evening with the statement that "this man" or "that man" was reported to have seen me, or "It was reported that you were seen there, Jim, and it was a Communist meeting."

That is why this statement this morning is a composite picture of the entire six interviews and not of any one particular one.

Q. Have the agents of the FBI been watching your home?

A. They have been parked outside in a car.

Q. Have the agents of the FBI been following you around town and shadowing you?

A. Yes; they followed me the night I went down to your office.

Q. Proceed with your story, Mr. O'Neil, telling us what else happened.

A. At the time that I left San Francisco to go to Marysville I did contact Mr. Cassidy because I wanted it understood why I was leaving town.

I had previously talked to Harry Bridges and he had mentioned that it would be a good idea if I did go to work for the Bridges Defense Committee, but he also made the statement, "If you can get yourself a better job, or a more permanent job, go to it," because he didn't blame a man for doing the best he could do for himself.

So I took a job up in the northern part of the state.

I have been up there for some six weeks. When I was taken sick I had to go to the hospital and I just got out of the hospital less than a week ago.

Forced Off Job

Q. What were you in the hospital for?

A. Bronchial pneumonia. I got out of there on Saturday and the following Tuesday the agents appeared.

Q. Do you remember which agents they were?

A. Cassidy, and the other chap's name I don't recall. I don't know—I think I was introduced to him, but I don't remember his name. I don't see him here today.

They had a car with them. I had to go on the air at the time, had a broadcast to take care of at 12:25, followed by another one at 12:30. I completed those broadcasts and I realized there was no sense in trying to evade coming down here because I knew I would be served with a paper compelling my appearance. So I came down voluntarily.

I was told at that time—I said, "I have absolutely nothing that would be of any value in this particular case, as you fellows know."

They said, "There is no harm in coming down and talking to the bosses."

I said, "I have talked to the boys before and there is absolutely nothing left to be said to the boys or anybody else."

I came down here. As soon as I got down here, as soon as my attitude was found to be that I had nothing to say and I didn't intend to cooperate—I suppose that would be the word to use—I was served with a subpoena, which I signed for at the time and accepted the service of it.

Q. Since the time that you came down from Marysville, Mr. O'Neil, and didn't show the kind of cooperation that Mr. Del Guercio wanted, have you lost your job at Marysville?

A. I have.

FBI Gets Job

Q. Tell us about how your job was lost?

A. I was informed by phone, the day after I failed to appear, by the manager of the station, that he was sending my check down and didn't care to have in their employ a man who had been associated with Bridges.

Q. Isn't it a fact, Mr. O'Neil, that the reason you told the FBI you didn't want to testify in the case was because you felt that you had nothing to add to the government's case in this case, but that the mere appearance of yourself as a witness against Bridges would be played up in the press in such a manner as to blacken your name in the labor movement regardless of the fact that you had no information against him?

A. I testified this morning that I had been a member of labor unions since 1919, and I said then that I didn't want any part of this hearing; that I didn't want to be connected with it as a government witness against Bridges; not that there was any fear on my part, because there wasn't and there isn't, but it doesn't do a man any good to get his name in the headlines. "So and so subpoenaed to appear against Harry Bridges," because many men in the labor union who don't read beyond the headlines would say, "Jim O'Neil has been called to testify against Harry Bridges," without knowing the true statement of the condition of affairs.

By Mr. Gladstein:

Q. Would the answer to the question I asked you be "yes" then?

A. Yes, sir.