

How Red-Baiters Hatch Frame-Ups: Bridges Decision Bares Technique

By Louis F. Budenz

In the course of a journey from the Post Office Building in San Francisco to the Archives Building in Washington, D.C., the traveler covers a considerable mileage. The 3,400 miles between these points is a sort of outward sign of the political canyon which lies between the rulings on the deportation of Harry Renton Bridges, arising from hearings in these two public edifices.

In the California city Judge Charles B. Sears ordered the deportation of Bridges, after the second protracted series of hearings to which the CIO leader was subjected—from March to June of last year. The conservative jurist, acting as a "presiding inspector," took this position, so injurious to the American labor movement, in contradiction to the previous finding of Dean James W. Landis of the Harvard Law School.

In the nation's capital ten days ago the Board of Immigration Appeals in Deportation Proceedings unanimously recommended the cancellation of the Sears ruling and found that Bridges is not subject to exclusion from this country. In effect, the Board without a dissenting voice upheld the vindication of Bridges handed down by Mr. Landis; and incidentally, it threw a powerful searchlight on the ulterior motives responsible for the persecution of the longshoremen's leader.

The Board, in its review of the latest attempt to "get" Bridges, has produced a document which will have to become the property of the labor movement. From the cold realities of the record, examined with a dry and devastating humor, there comes forth such a damning indictment of the character of the witnesses against Bridges as will be remembered for a long time in American labor history. These untrustworthy, untruthful, dishonest bearers of false witness are the type of men who lend themselves to the "framing" of progressive labor leaders.



Bridges Wins fight against red-baiting deportation frame-up with the Board of Immigration Appeals reversal of Judge Sears decision last week. Here the West Coast labor leader is shown with his defense counsel at the hearings in San Francisco last spring. Left to right: Mrs. Carol King, George Wilson, Bridges, Aubrey Grossman and Richard Gladstein.

So impossible and obviously perjured was their testimony that Judge Sears himself, who certainly had no particular animus in favor of Bridges, felt obliged to throw out the "evidence" of 13 of the 15 who appeared against the CIO leader on the question of his affiliations."

The Judge relied only on two of the witnesses, therefore, to deliver his order against Bridges. But the Board, in a piercing examination of the testimony of this duo—James W. O'Neill and Harry Lundeberg—declares that it is shot through with the same unreliability and unprincipledness as that of the other 13.

WHAT THE BOARD SAID

Here are some of the characterizations of the "evidence" of some of the witnesses, as given by the Board:

RICHARD A. ST. CLAIR: "Patent contradictions and extreme improbabilities," creating "an atmosphere of complete unreliability."

MAURICE J. CONNALONGA: "That he lied frequently is evident; and if it were not, his story is confused and unimpressive to a degree which would have rendered it valueless had there been no cross-examination or subsequent impeachment. The tortuous convolutions of his testimony rendered it worthless on its face."

WILLIAM C. McQUISTION : "His testimony as to how and where he met Bridges varied. He attempted to bolster it by connecting it with an alleged attempt on Bridges' part to 'get' Lundeberg at a time when the record shows Bridges and Lundeberg were on terms of friendship and mutual cooperation. And finally, his testimony is replete with statements which suggest a mental state bordering on egomania."

JAMES W. O'NEIL: "O'Neill lied under oath in this proceeding when he denied making the statements. His unsworn prior statements show him therein the bragging sensationalist with little regard for precision in truth. . . . Judging from the prior statements, a feeling of drama, personal drama—even martyrdom, apparently accompanied his gift for the sensational."

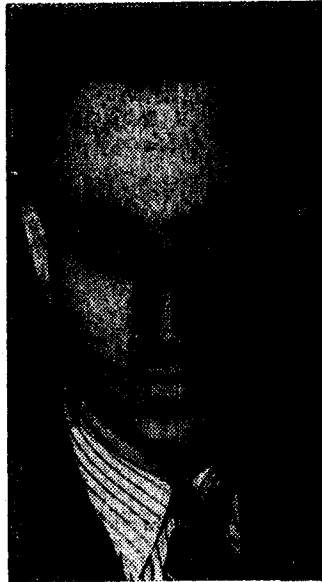
Since Judge Sears relied heavily upon O'Neill's testimony in his decision for the deportation of Bridges, the Board's analysis of this man's "contradictions" are sensational indeed. The Board finds from the record that O'Neill, in his search for the "theatrical," was guilty of the following trapeze performances in mangling the truth:

It is upon such crude horse-play that the attempt to deport a man who has been so conspicuous for constructive leadership rests. The entire business is marked down as a disgraceful black mark against those who initiated such proceedings. The caliber of the witnesses, taken from the record, can be bruited far and wide; for it is this sort of men who lend themselves to the framing up of progressive labor leaders. The degenerate McQuistions, with their strain of egomania, are the wretched stuff out of which frame-ups are arranged.

It was the mouthings of men of this type—including this very McQuistion himself — which were given full credence and publicized throughout the land by Martin Dies and his anti-American committee. It is a yardstick of the false character of the entire Dies proceedings, that even Judge Sears could not stomach the obvious fabrications of the egomania-ridden McQuistion, of whom the Texas witch-hunter had made so much.

From this Bridges case — and from the document presented by the Board—there flows a deeper political conclusion, of which the labor movement should be keenly aware. And that is: that it is the same kind of false testimony which is employed to malign the Communist Party and the platform on which it stands. The McQuistions of the underworld, who lie about the affiliations of such progressives as Bridges, are matched by the McQuistions of the campus and the journalistic office who pose as "authorities" on the Communist Party in order to produce equally lying testimony against that party and its purposes.

The Board missed this point, and to that extent fell down in presenting the full picture of the rotten fabric of red-baiting. About the character of the Communist Party it did not say "Yea" or "Nay," refusing to go into that matter, since it held that Bridges was not a Communist and never had been. There were McQuistions of the pen and platform who appeared before Judge Sears, however, to draw as false a caricature of the Communist Party as the underworld McQuistions did about Bridges.



HARRY BRIDGES

While speaking ironically of "forbidden doctrine" and in general indicating the legal disqualifications of Communist suppression, the Board allowed implications against the Communist Party to creep into its report, in its very desire to avoid the issue. For instance, in demonstrating that Bridges did not stand for the indiscriminate stirring up of strikes, the report leaves the impression that the Communists do stand for such an anarchic program. In showing that Bridges did not lend himself to dishonest deceptions, it allows the unwary to draw the inference that Communists do follow a policy of deceit.

FALSE INFERENCE

Such an inference is false. The character and conduct of the Communist Party are an open book. The party's constitution and its stand on strikes and for progressive trade unionism are such as represent the highest welfare of the people. Those who study the Board's record carefully and then observe the similar tactics employed by the men who lied against Bridges and those professorial phonies who lie against the Communist Party will draw the proper conclusions namely, that the testimony of the one group is as false as the testimony of the other.

On the one hand: "O'Neil has 'attended at least five Communist Party meetings with Bridges.' Bridges held top fraction meetings in his hotel room. Bridges reminded O'Neil that O'Neil was not attending Party meetings."

On the other hand: "'Bridges never at any time attended any Communist Party meetings.'"

On the other hand: "O'Neil did not see the name in Bridges' Party book." On the other hand: "He did see the name."

"On the other hand: 'It was not Bridges' right, his own name.'"

"On the other hand: 'It was not Bridges' own name,' it was under the name of Dorgan.'"

It was in such cheap falsification that the case against Bridges was wrapped up, in the contradictory effort to show that the CIO leader was well-known as a member of the Communist Party and at the same time that his was a deeply concealed, mysterious affiliation.

Upon such an addle-pated liar as O'Neil the Sears ruling for the deportation of Bridges largely rests. The measure of O'Neil is the measure of the whole clumsy frame-up against the longshoremen's leader. The Board denies

flatly that O'Neil's "contradictions" were "honest mistakes," and disposes of him finally in the following sarcastic terms: "Clothing O'Neil in kindly formal language, we conclude that the material incidents of his prior statements are not established by the greater weight of the evidence." Putting the same thing more bluntly, and in less "kindly formal" terms, O'Neil tore the truth to pieces, and in his yearning for "sensationalism" trapped himself into hopeless contradictions which laid bare his own falsehoods.

As to Harry Lundeberg—the only other witness upon whom Judge Sears relied in his deportation order—the Board finds immediately that the head of the Pacific Coast seamen's organization, by his own admissions in the record, "on three past occasions lied when for reason sufficient to him he deemed it expedient" to do so in the Bridges case. Lundeberg "impresses neither in truthfulness nor in forthrightness," and in proof thereof the Board reproduces more than two pages of Lundeberg's testimony which is a mass of evasiveness.

LUNDEBERG'S FANTASY

Concerning the one incident on which Lundeberg relied to try to show Bridges was a member of the Communist Party, the Board shows (and the whole business becomes laughable in Lundeberg's clumsiness) that the witness expanded and dembellished his story as he retold it on examination and cross-examination. In the first narration, Lundeberg represented that he had been asked to join the Communist Party, at a dinner at Bridges' house, by a Communist Party leader (said to be Sam Darcy), BUT Bridges took no part in the conversation. On second telling, Bridges takes part—saying that Lundeberg need not be afraid. In the third narration, Bridges is represented as becoming more active, and as saying he is a member of the Party himself. In other words, on the same witness stand, Lundeberg gave "three, successive growing versions of the conversation at Bridges' home." The Board finds from the record that no such conversation ever took place.

Both the Board and the "Presiding Inspector" drew one legal conclusion which is of some value to both labor organizations and labor leaders, when facing prospective frame-up where their every past word is examined in its most adverse light. This lay in the ruling that Bridges' membership in the Industrial Workers of the World could not be held against him under the proceedings, since at that time he was a member of that organization it advocated no doctrines which could be construed as advocating the overthrow of the government by force and violence. This recognition of the time element in judging organizations or individuals legally is something to be borne in mind by labor representatives when frame-ups on alleged past views or acts are concerned.

In the course of the Board's review of the case, there comes out definitely the real reason for the persistent persecution of Harry Bridges. Says the Board, for instance, on page 44 of its opinion: "The ILA, the longshoremen's union of which Bridges was an influential member, was a

legitimate union with legitimate grievances. The strike was legitimately directed to removing those grievances. It did."

That laconic final "it did" tells the whole tale of the cause for the repeated efforts to frame-up the longshoremen's leader. The success of Bridges' leadership, in winning the adjustment of "legitimate grievances" from the ship-owners is THE WHY of his being hounded. Those "civic organizations" and others who have worked themselves into a frenzy against Bridges have been the tools, consciously or unconsciously, of the big Open Shop interests on the West Coast.

As to Bridges himself, he emerges from this report higher in stature both as a labor leader and a man. Over and over again, the Board commends him for his "honesty" as reflected in the record, showing him to be a man who resorted to no evasions and who testified freely without previous cunning coaching.

From the tortuous search for "forbidden doctrine" which this report reveals as the custom in such red-baiting excursions as this case, it is obvious that the entire procedure of hounding labor representatives because of their real or alleged adherence to the Communist Party is a device subversive of American principles and of the American Constitution.

The entire persecution of the Communist Party as such lies in the same category. It is damaging to the whole concept of American civil liberties and to the life of the labor movement. The invasion of a man's private home, the strained attempt to rake up past conversations of years before, the large reliance on hearsay and gossip—which run through this entire inquisition—are destructive of those guarantees which the Constitution contains. The persecution of the Communist Party, as well as of alleged members of that party is a rapier's stab against all American liberties.

The board has moved to remedy a grave injustice in the Bridges case. In order that such injustices may not arise again—in order that America may be cleansed of such ill-smelling frame-ups—it is incumbent upon the American people and the government to declare, once and for all, that the Communist Party has every right to function fully and freely in the American scene.