

Instructor's Apology Halts Communist Charge Trial

Gideonse Accepts Leikind's Explanation of His Charges

The public trial which might have settled the political battle of Brooklyn College was halted yesterday shortly after it started, by a surprise apology from Seymour S. Leikind, suspended chemistry instructor, which was accepted by Harry D. Gideonse, president of the college.

Leikind was suspended last March by Gideonse for asserting that there were "zealous official efforts to conceal undercover communistic activities at the college."

His charges that "one of Earl Browder's regiments in his undercover army still operate in Brooklyn College, notwithstanding zealous official efforts at concealing it" were contained in a letter published on Feb. 26 in the *Tablet*, pro-Coughlin organ of the Brooklyn Diocese.

Leikind's Explanation

Gideonse's acceptance of the apology and his request to be allowed to withdraw the charges against Leikind came also as a surprise, because as recently as June 22, Leikind publicly maintained his assertions of communistic activities within the college.

Leikind's trial was held at the Board of Higher Education's offices, 695 Park Ave., before a committee composed of Mrs. Frances

W. Deutsch, Lawton Mackall and Howard C. Kelly.

Immediately after the hearing was called to order, Leikind read his explanation and apology from a prepared paper. He said:

"In using the word *official* in the last paragraph I was not referring to President Gideonse or any other official of Brooklyn College, or any member or official of the Board of Higher Education. I mean officials of the Communist Party.

"As to that part of my letter that refers to the student newspaper at Brooklyn College, the *Vanguard*, I wish to state that I did not intend to convey the impression that Communists control the paper.

"I also wish to state that I regret that my letter was subject to an interpretation that might damage or discredit Brooklyn College or bring the college or its official into disrepute."

'No Reflection'

Gideonse then read his acceptance. He said:

"The unequivocal statement by Mr. Leikind which has just been made to the trial committee makes it clear that Mr. Leikind was expressing his views about the Communist Party, and that no reflection was intended on the Board . . . or on the administration of Brooklyn College . . ."

Gideonse told the committee that there was no question about the right of "members of our staff to express their opinions as citizens on public questions such as the nature of Communist Party," but that there can be no responsible college administration if the staff can make statements "without being held responsible for the presentation of evidence."

Howard C. Kelly said the trial committee would recommend Gideonse's request to the Board of Higher Education early in August so it could act on it when it meets in September.

"I assume there is nothing to keep this recommendation from going through," he said.

If the Board allows Gideonse to withdraw the charges, Leikind will be reinstated with back pay from Mar. 17.