

A Swing of the Ax

Tough Frances Knight Was Behind Ouster Of McCarthy Foe Abba Schwartz

By Drew Pearson

WHAT ALL THE hullabaloo over the ouster of Abba Schwartz from the State Department boils down to is that a tough Republican woman in the State Department — beautiful, efficient and ruthless in pinning the Communist label on Democrats—got her man.

She is Frances Knight, head of the Passport Office. With some help from Jay Sourwine, counsel of the Senate Internal Security Committee; the blessing of Sen. Tom Dodd (D-Conn.), a member of the committee, and past champions of McCarthyism, the efficient Miss Knight pushed her boss, liberal Abba Schwartz, veteran foe of McCarthyism, out of a job.

The amazing thing is that Miss Knight did it with the help of such Democrats as Secretary of State Dean Rusk. President Johnson was an unwitting bystander.

Miss Knight has run the passport division for ten years, and run it well. She was elevated to high office by President Eisenhower after excoriating President Truman and the late Adlai Stevenson, and pinning the Communist label on associates of both.

Her political thinking, which is at the root of her row with Schwartz, is succinctly expressed in a letter this column has obtained. Miss Knight wrote it Sept. 30, 1952, to the late Scott McLeod, then assistant to the late Sen. Styles Bridges, the GOP New Hampshire conservative. McLeod was later to take over the Office of State Department Security and become Miss Knight's boss.

WHEN MISS KNIGHT

wrote McLeod, she was an "information specialist" in the State Department, a job she had held under President Truman for four years. Under the Hatch Act, she was not supposed to engage in politics.

Here is the letter.

"Dear Scott:

"Enclosed is a carbon of a 'basic' speech I wrote last week at the request of (Sen. Karl) Mundt (R-S.D.) and Len Hall (later chairman of the Republican National Committee). They wanted something hard hitting on communism for a Republican rally in New Jersey. When I turned it in, (Rep. Charles) Halleck (R-Ind.) wanted to have it scheduled for im-

mediate use on radio. At any rate, there are some items in it that might be helpful to the Senator.

"I tried to coin a few phrases, which at long last the committee has acknowledged and passed along to their speakers for use. While I was holding forth in Mundt's office last weekend, I heard that they planned to contact you to get the Senator to take some additional speaking engagements. Therefore, I'm sending this along in the hope it will be of some help.

"During the week, I'm down at the old stand in the (State) Department. As you can well appreciate, this cramps my extracurricular activities somewhat but not much. Right now, I'm making use of the library for further research in the 'cause.'

"Well, there isn't much new. Karl Mundt tells me that Ike's campaign got the necessary shot in the arm from the Nixon affair and that things look much better;

but no one feels sure we are on the road to success. Wayne Hood feels we might come through if the Eisenhower boys make no further blunders but there is a very noticeable feeling of uncertainty—lack of confidence in the men around Ike. One thing we all agree on is that if we get in, the Congress is going to have the controls well in hand. Ike will have to clean out his own camps before he can tackle the administration.

"Bridges could well become the pivotal leader of a group which, to all intent and purpose, will run the government. Taft will be a great factor, no doubt, but Bridges could be its key staffing man, placing his people in key spots, just like Frankfurter and Farley did back in the early days of the New Deal. I've mentioned this to you before, and it's high time the Senator started thinking seriously about it.

"Well, this business of serving two masters is getting me down. I think I'll spend the afternoon at the committee. Let me know when you get back in town.

"Best to you and Pappy—Frances."

SERVING TWO masters didn't seem to bother Miss

Knight too much, because in the speech which she wrote she excoriated President Truman as operating "the most corrupt and inefficient government this Nation has ever known."

She also excoriated Adlai Stevenson as a "glib, country club edition of Harry Truman," who used "the slickest diversionary tactics at his command" to avoid the issue of communism.

"The official strategy,"

Miss Knight claimed, is to "use the big lie technique borrowed from the Soviets.

"Gov. Stevenson could not clean house in Washington, even if he had the urge to do so. He cannot wash from his hands the stains of communism and corruption. They were indelibly imprinted on him when he reached out to grasp the political scepter from Harry S Truman.

"Communists and their fellow travelers have penetrated the innermost recesses of the Federal Government and have been able to influence our foreign and domestic policies . . . The depths to which the Communist infiltration has progressed will never be known while a Democratic Administration controls the records and protects the traitors.

"Gov. Stevenson may try to laugh off the charges of Communist infiltration in the Government, but his jokes won't clean up the traitorous record."

MISS KNIGHT continued in this vein for more than 15 pages. After working against the administration that employed her, she was rewarded in the new administration.

McLeod, in his new State Department security job, was charged with cleaning out the Communists Miss Knight claimed had penetrated the Truman Administration. Called before a committee of Congress later, McLeod swore under oath that he had not been able to find a single Communist.

The paradoxical payoff is that Miss Knight remains in the Democratic Administration of Lyndon Johnson; while Abba Schwartz, who always claimed there were no Communists in the State Department, is out on his ear.