

Anti-Subversive Panels: Victims of the Times

See also Sanford Ungar, Wk Post 27 Mar 73, filed Nix Ad.

Politics moves in mysterious ways it wonders to perform. For many years, the liberals in Congress tried in vain to kill the Subversive Activities Control Board and the House Un-American Activities Committee. But now President Nixon, who made a career out of them, has paved the way for their demise.

The rapprochement with Moscow and Peking, the nuclear armistice with the Communists and the relaxation of the cold war, all advanced by Mr. Nixon, have finally undermined the anti-Communist bodies that he promoted and exploited so successfully on his way to the presidency.

The Subversive Activities Control

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Board (SACB) has been killed by direct action of the President. He strangled it by simply denying it any funds in his new budget. So, on June 30, at the end of the present fiscal year, it will finally expire after decades of doing nothing.

More significant, however, is that the future of the House Internal Security Committee (better known as the House Un-American Activities Committee) is also in serious danger. Rep. Jerome Waldie (D-Calif.) has introduced a bill to kill off the committee once and for all.

In the past, others have offered similar legislation, but this year the situation is different. The Waldie bill, for instance, has 50 cosponsors, including a number of Republicans. Also, the appropriation for the committee (hereafter referred to as HUAC) will soon go before a House appropriations subcommittee headed by Rep. Frank Thompson (D-N.J.), one of the cosponsors of the Waldie abolition bill.

The real threat to HUAC, however, is the change of climate that has occurred under President Nixon. For years, the House has viewed HUAC with evermore contempt, knowing all too well that it has spent many millions of dollars accomplishing little or nothing. Yet each year the members voted larger and larger appropriations for the committee. Nobody wanted to be called soft on communism.

Now, however, this fear has subsided. Congress senses that the anti-Communist frenzy which gripped the American public for so long is not what it used to be. On Capitol Hill it was quickly noted that there was no public reaction against the President's demolition of the SACB.

It's hard now to believe that the HUAC, with its sterile record, could have flourished for 35 years. It began on a temporary basis in 1938, and became a "standing committee" in 1945. Since then it has issued 174 contempt citations, of which 142, or virtually all the citations challenged, failed in the courts. In the same period, only 14 contempt citations were issued by all the other committees of the House combined.

The committee wants \$575,000 for next year. Rep. Waldie points out that it has spent more money than the Armed Services, Foreign Affairs, Judiciary and Ways and Means Committees. "Surely," he observes, the legislative product of the HUAC "is not commensurate with that huge expenditure." When the present chairman of the committee, Richard Ichord (D-Mo.) was trying to persuade Congress to change the name of HUAC, he said, "What is un-American? I, for one, am not capable to give it a definite meaning." Neither could his predecessors as chairmen, but that did not deter them from smearing anyone they didn't approve of.

The style of HUAC was established at the beginning, when the first chairman, Rep. Martin Dies, charged that the 1937 sit-down strikes in Detroit were "part of a Moscow-directed insurrection."

The committee's first hearings in 1938 featured testimony against the CIO, the Campfire Girls, the Federal Theater, the American Civil Liberties Union and, hold on, the Indian Bureau of the Interior Department, which was accused of trying to spread "communism and paganism." A glance at today's

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headlines suggests that this news has not yet reached Wounded Knee.

But the committee hasn't changed much since 1938. Thirty years later it reported that the 1968 turbulence at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago was planned by "Communists and other revolutionaries." Ah, well.

The record of the Subversive Activities Control Board, originally sponsored by Mr. Nixon more than two decades ago, is equally dismal. In 22 years at a cost of about \$10 million, it has yet to register a single Communist. The board's five members have each been drawing \$36,000 a year to do literally nothing. It was nice work while they could get it.