

Hounding of Unionists Hits Shipping -- Curran

dw c/indy
Joseph Curran, president of the National Maritime Union, at a press conference in his office here yesterday put his finger directly on one of the bottlenecks in our wartime shipping. The maritime leader told the newspapermen that at least 80 American merchant ships are facing delay in sailings due to the high-handed

dismissal of 80 expert radio operators by the naval authorities on the alleged grounds they were "subversive." None of the dismissed men were given specific charges as to why they were dropped, nor were any given hearings, Curran pointed out.

Of the total dismissed, the NMU chief said, 47 are members of the CIO American Communications Association.

Present in Curran's office during the conference was Joseph Selley, president of the ACA and other officials of the communications union. Among the latter was Murray Winocur, ACA vice-president and co-author of a comprehensive anti-sabotage plan to prevent enemy agents from interfering with ship radio transmission. Winocur was one of the radio operators pulled off a ship after the dismissals started.

PUTS FINGER ON DIES

Curran emphasized one fact—that most of the ACA radio operators who were yanked off ships without any hearing were men named before the Dies Committee several years ago as "reds" by one Fred M. Howe, a former member of the ACA. Howe was expelled from the ACA, Curran related, when he was exposed trying to wreck the union and swing the members into the AFL. He later named about 50 members of the local which expelled him as "reds" at the Dies hearing.

The NMU leader stated that high officials of the U. S. Navy and the Coast Guard, in subsequent conferences regarding the dismissed men, had admitted a serious shortage of operators exists and every operator is badly needed. Merchant ships are now carrying only one radio man.

However, Curran said, the stiff-necked attitude of certain Navy officials toward the dismissed men in refusing to state specific charges against them, or to grant hearings, is tantamount to keeping ships tied up because enough operators are not available.

"The American Communications Association, and the NMU feel," Curran said, "that if any of these men are guilty it is the duty of the government to take action. We have repeatedly met with the Sec-

retary of the Navy and Coast Guard officials and asked that the men be given a hearing. If believed guilty of 'subversive' activities they should then be taken to trial."

Refusal of the authorities to take such action, Curran said, can be traced directly to Ralph Bard, an Under-Secretary of the Navy, who has shown anti-labor bias throughout the conferences held on the dismissals. All dismissals stem from Bard's office.

Curran meanwhile paid high tribute to the job the U. S. Navy is doing in the war, but implied that officials of the type of Bard are detrimental to the successful prosecution of the war. Curran also took a crack at the Naval Intelligence in the case of the dismissals. He revealed that N. I. officers have been questioning maritime unionists as to whether they believed the United States and Russia being allies "is a good thing." Other types of questions applied to witnesses who wanted to testify for the dismissed radio operators was their attitude toward "Loyalist Spain" during the civil war in that country.

CITES WATERFRONT MEN

The maritime union head went on to say that it would profit the Navy Intelligence and the government much more if they were to turn their attention to the "loading and unloading conditions" in New York and various other East coast ports.

He said he had it on excellent authority that, during the last three months, "90 fires have broken out along the New York waterfront."

"We seamen are worried about the situation," he continued, referring to the dismissals of the union radio operators. He said replacement of these men by "green" operators, with a few months training in schools, is an extremely slow process and seamen will not feel safe with any but experience marine radio men aboard.

As to the character of the 47 dismissed union men, he related the case of Winocur who left his post of union vice-president to work on a tanker when a man couldn't be found to take the job.

"Winocur is ready to sail a ship right into Hamburg," Curran said.