



International LONGSHOREMEN'S and WAREHOUSEMEN'S Union

AFFILIATED WITH THE CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS

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June 1, 1940

Dear Sir:

My purpose in addressing this communication to you is in order that you may know certain facts concerning the attempts at my deportation and certain facts in connection with my official and personal background that may not be generally known.

First, as to my personal record in connection with citizenship. On March 26, 1940, Representative Leland M. Ford placed a letter in the Congressional Record including an article that appeared in the American Legion Magazine. This letter was full of misstatements and inferences and unwarranted conclusions. The magazine article was a reprint from a metropolitan daily newspaper, the Capitol Daily of Washington, D. C., of February 15, 1939, and the statement is made that this article itself provides sufficient evidence of my undesirability.

I first filed application papers for citizenship in 1921. In 1928, prior to the expiration of my papers, I filed for second or final papers in the city of San Francisco and, after the application had been sent to Washington, was notified to appear in the United States District Court in San Francisco with witnesses to receive my final papers.

I appeared with witnesses at the time and place indicated by the notice and was then notified by the local Immigration authorities that all final steps including the actual granting of final papers must be taken prior to the expiration of first papers. I have the records to prove this, including the notice to appear at the District Court with a notation in red pencil on the notice by the Immigration authorities to pay particular attention to the date as my papers expired soon.

The point is that I almost completed the getting of my final papers, even to appearing at court with witnesses. I have since been informed by my attorneys that the advice that I received at that time was faulty and that I was legally entitled to go ahead as long as my application for final papers was filed, as it was, prior to the expiration of the first papers.

Immediately following this I filed another application for citizenship papers but was forced, of course, to wait two years under the law until I could apply for second or final papers.

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Two years later, that is, when it was time for me to again apply for second and final papers, the country as a whole and myself were affected by the depression. Very frankly, from 1930 and the following several years, the necessary money, around \$20.00, to secure final papers was beyond my ability to raise.

I had been and was still in difficulties with the company union on the waterfront and suffered blacklisting and discrimination for that reason.

At that time it took me two or three weeks to earn \$20.00 and I had a wife and two children to support.

Late in 1932, September to be exact, and from then on through 1933 and 1934 my activities along organizational lines became very much the concern of the company union and the shipowners on the waterfront.

My second set of first papers expired in 1935. From 1933 on, I was active in union matters and the union was engaged in a series of disputes with the shipowners. Because of my activities in these disputes, the shipowners were out to get me.

At the particular period my papers should have been procured the maritime unions were engaged in a sympathetic boycott or strike in support of British Columbia waterfront workers, and I, together with other officials, was called back to Washington, D. C., by Assistant Secretary of Labor, Edward F. McGrady, on this matter.

Incidentally, at this time I was publicly being accused of being a British secret agent concerned with disrupting American shipping to the advantage of British shipping inasmuch as British ships were able to ply to and from the ports of British Columbia but the American ships refused to handle strike bound or unfair cargo in support of the striking B. C. workers.

All in all, at this time my own conclusions, together with advice and information from sources I had no reason to doubt, were that I would be denied citizenship if I attempted to complete my application, mainly for the reasons I have stated here.

There were other reasons, none of them, however, the reasons charged against me by my enemies.

In addition, numerous charges had already been made against me by employer groups, the American Legion Subversive Activities Committee headed by one Harper Knowles, and others, and again it was definitely my opinion based on advice of many to whom I went that I would have a hard time procuring any citizenship papers until these charges were investigated by Immigration authorities or some other governmental authority and I was cleared of these charges.

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I was afraid to risk being refused citizenship knowing that such refusal based on false statements would react against me and my union activities.

The American Legion article claims other acts that make me undesirable, namely, not behaving as a person of good moral character, and second, by swearing to false statements.

These charges are made on the basis of conclusions not drawn from facts but on baseless assumptions regarding my marriage and the legitimacy of my daughter.

The facts are as follows: I have two children -- one a stepson and one my own daughter. My stepson, Kenneth McCley, was born on July 27, 1916, in Marshfield, Oregon, and my daughter, Betty, was born December 26, 1924, in San Francisco. It should be noticed that the Immigration official checking the records merely stated that he found no records and from this failure to find records the deduction is made that I am not married and therefore my daughter is illegitimate. It is also claimed that I have made false statements because on one set of papers I said I had one child and on the other set that I had two children.

It is correct that on one set of papers, the recent ones, I stated I had one child living at home, my own daughter. My stepson at that time had left home. He left home to join the United States Army and in the last two or three weeks has just re-enlisted for his second period and is now stationed at the San Francisco Presidio.

My marriage is legal. I have my marriage certificate. I should not be held responsible for failure of investigators working secretly to find such records. At no time was I asked or approached by any government official to produce the records.

I might also mention that at no time did I make any effort to conceal anything from the local Immigration authorities in San Francisco and that I sought their advice regarding the filling out of my application papers for citizenship.

Certain other matters should be mentioned. In addition to being an organizing force in the trade union movement on the West Coast, I have engaged in other forms of activity in connection with my official position.

No one can deny the improvement in the conditions of the maritime workers since they were organized. No one can deny that the organization of the longshoremen in 1934 led to the organization of all other maritime unions where before that time none existed. Through organization, the Pacific Coast longshoremen have won American wages, hours and working conditions and eliminated longshore unemployment. The method of hiring and dispatching longshoremen to so equalize the work, create jobs and relieve unemployment was made the subject of a study by the United States government, and the conclusions reached by this study enthusiastically endorsed the progress made through waterfront organization and the beneficial effect on the maritime industry.

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All charges of union dictatorship and gangsterism that have been made can best be answered by simply pointing out that I have taken the lead and been mainly responsible, together with other of our union leaders and members of the rank and file, in building what is, as far as we know, the most democratic union in the American labor movement.

All officials of our International union including myself are subject to an initiative petition of recall that can immediately remove us from office, upon being signed by any fifteen per cent of our membership in good standing.

The recall can remove any official, including myself, without a trial and our union constitution prevents any retaliatory steps being taken against those persons or groups that initiate the recall petition. After the recall petition is circulated, the officials are immediately removed and then placed on trial. If necessary, the results of the trial can be referred by the petition signers to a secret ballot of our entire membership.

All officials including myself must be elected each year by a secret ballot of our entire membership and must receive a majority of all votes cast to be elected. Both primary and final elections are held in order to assure a majority of votes being received by the elected officials.

In the last three years I have been unopposed for office despite numerous nominations made against me, all of whom declined.

In addition to union activities, organization, etc., given solely to the matters of hours, wages and working conditions, we have also been in the forefront on issues of a somewhat different nature.

It is less than two years ago that I wired the President of the United States concerning Nazi spy and sabotage activity in West Coast aircraft plants. I personally sat down with Congressman Jerry Voorhis on this matter and did everything possible to bring it to the attention of the proper governmental authorities, including the Department of Justice. It was also brought to the attention of the government that the brother of one of the German agents that was arrested in the New York spy ring some time ago was still at that time holding an important position in the Boeing Aircraft plant in Seattle, together with other Nazi Bund members.

I attempted to bring to the attention of the Federal government and also stated to Congressman Voorhis that our union people in the aircraft plants had noticed that German and Japanese agents apparently buying airplanes had easy access to airplane manufacturing plants in California, whereas many American people were closely questioned and excluded from these plants.

It should be remembered that my telegram to the President of the United States concerning this Nazi activity was dispatched just a few hours prior to the crash of the Douglas plane at the Douglas flying field in Southern California, when it developed that a so-called Douglas mechanic turned out to be a French army officer flying in the plane in complete violation of the law. We knew at that time that the same had occurred with agents of other foreign governments.

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During the Italian campaign in Ethiopia our men protested bitterly against the quantity of war materials that were being shipped over Pacific Coast waterfronts to the Italian forces and government although ostensibly destined for the Italian Red Cross.

On numerous occasions we bitterly opposed placing aboard American and Japanese ships huge shipments of scrap iron, airplane engines, chemicals and other war materials for shipment to Japan to be used against defenseless and innocent Chinese people. Our men have handled, against their will, thousands of tons of this material, knowing well what it was to be used for, and knowing well that at some time in the future it might be returned to us from Japanese airplanes in the form of Japanese bombs, and from Japanese cannon in the form of shells.

We have on numerous occasions done everything possible to bring to the attention of the public and authorities the extent of Japanese spy activities in the Pacific Coast fishing fleets. We know and everyone should know that ocean-going fishing craft with a cruising radius of some 6,000 miles, powerful up-to-date two-way radios, better mine and submarine detecting equipment than is carried on United States naval craft, operate along the entire Pacific Coast seaboard. On numerous occasions our fishermen organized into the CIO have observed these craft in forbidden waters, such as naval anchorages, mine areas, etc.

My supporters in the union and I were of the opinion that the thorough airing of the charges in the nine-weeks trial on Angel Island had cleared the way for me to gain citizenship. This hearing has been attacked as a whitewash on the part of Dean James M. Landis.

I need make no defense of Dean Landis, the Immigration Department or any others concerned, but the fact remains that no one government witness in the hearing could point to a single example, even though they were asked to, or any statement or action by me or our unions tending to undermine or overthrow the American form of government or to any action of the unions that could be considered un-American.

The main witness who was employed by the steamship interests of the Pacific Coast to build a case against me, no matter what methods must be used, we found impossible to get on the witness stand, namely, Stanley Morton Doyle: an employers' labor spy who utilizes his badge of membership in the American Legion to cover and further carry on his activities.

The decision of Dean Landis, his reasons, and the record in this case speak for themselves. The charges were found to be merely hearsay charges originating with the employers' paid labor spies and agents and sympathetic officials in the police department and governmental agencies of some Pacific Coast cities.

The point is made in connection with the present Allen Deportation Bill that I admitted association with "known communists".

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Of course, being on the witness stand and under oath I told the truth in every detail without attempting to evade any question. I explained that as the ranking official of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union and, in addition, as the West Coast CIO Director of all the Pacific Coast states, it was my official duty to meet with politicians and persons representing every type of organization.

I can give instances where I have had associations with numerous political and religious leaders that did not at all commit me to their policies. The same is true as to meetings with any communist officials. I accepted help from any source, including communists, if I believed that such help was given in good faith and was of benefit to our union movement.

In not a single instance has it been shown that such associations were for any other purpose or used for any other purpose.

I should like to mention finally the fact that at present we are engaged in negotiations attempting to secure a contract covering longshore work on the Pacific Coast. For some months past we have attempted to have American shipowners and operators execute a contract for a period of at least three to five years aimed at preventing any stoppages of work or strikes between longshoremen and employers for this length of time.

Our union membership and I well know that the present attempts to railroad me out of the country simply because I am undesirable to a minority group of American people is being used to prevent the successful negotiating of this contract.

I have never been and I am not now concerned with my own personal welfare in these matters. In 1934 I was offered first \$50,000 and then an offer to name my own price if I would betray the union. This offer came from those interests who have constantly sought my deportation under false charges.

I am a resident in this country by choice, not by accident, and I am very familiar with American institutions, civil liberties and American democracy, and I appreciate and support them.

I myself sought the investigation and hearing by the government into the charges against me with a view of getting them out of the way so that I could complete my citizenship. Those forces that howl so much against my not being a citizen are the same forces that will leave no stone unturned to prevent me from becoming naturalized.

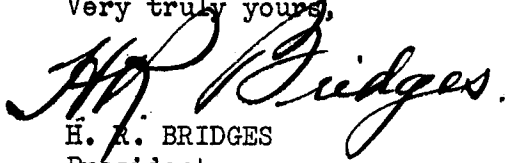
The passage of the Allen Bill will be a victory for powerful minority forces. It will certainly not be a defeat for me or what I represent. The defeat will be to American civil liberties and democracy and will be looked back on in the future, if successful, as such acts that occurred in the last World War were ultimately regarded, such as the changing of the name of "hamburger steak" to "liberty steak", etc.

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In concluding this somewhat lengthy communication, I merely want to repeat what I said at the outset, that I believe that the representatives in Congress should know the facts of this case. The facts as I have stated them here are correct and are a matter of official record in some form or another.

With the personal appreciation of myself and the full appreciation of our union membership for your past efforts on our behalf, I trust that everything possible will be done in the interests of the American labor movement and American democracy to prevent the passage of this piece of private interests legislation.

Very truly yours,



H. R. BRIDGES
President

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