

# What We Are Fighting For

## How Long Do We Have to Endure the Dies Committee?

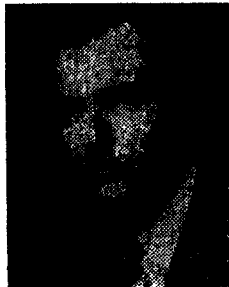
*Last week a majority report of the Dies Committee made an accusation of Communistic connections against 27 members of the Union for Democratic Action, Time Magazine, the New Republic and PM. On Thursday, Rep. Jerry Voorhis of California, a member of the Committee, filed a minority report which contained much clear thinking and raised the question whether an agency which arrogates to itself the right to censor people's ideas is not itself un-American. The report was almost overlooked by the press. A passage from it was run in this column Tuesday. Today the editor of the column continues the discussion.*

"It might be well to settle this once and for all," said Mrs. Roosevelt, referring to the latest outburst of the Dies Committee.

I agree. The time has come to raise the question whether the Dies Committee is not the most successful subversive organization in America—and to keep the question raised until the Committee is either reformed or buried.

There are two kinds of government: constitutional government and absolutism. The essence of absolutism is the unrestrained use of power; this is government by coercion. The essence of constitutionalism is that power is made responsible, made accountable to the public will; this is government by consent. This simple antithesis, from which there is no escape, is the basis of all straight thinking about politics.

We must never forget that the alternative to a loyal upholding of constitutional government is the submission to pure force, pure gangsterism. We must not be confused by the fact that this gangsterism normally justifies itself in terms of the citizen's "duty" to the



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"state." These pretty words are nonsense. If the citizen is not governed by consent, he is governed by blackjack—by the brownshirt bullies, the secret police, the concentration camp, the blood of hostages poisoning the earth.

The moral of these reflections is that unless we take our political institutions seriously, and uphold them high-mindedly, they must decay. All institutions decay if they are not served with devotion. And in this case the price of decay is the destruction of America; there can be no America without constitutional government.

I charge that the Dies Committee is a danger to our system of government. A constitutional government is supposed to be responsible and accountable; the Dies Committee is not. Nobody seems able to hold it to account. So long as it can wheedle appropriations out of Congress

it can blacken the reputations of increasing thousands of American citizens, thereby dragging down our way of life with a light heart and a frivolous mind.

A constitutional government is supposed to provide a citizen with recourse. So far there is no recourse against the attacks and the innuendos of this subversive Committee. What does a citizen do when he has been smeared by these un-Americans who collaborate with Mr. Dies? The courts can do nothing for his grievance. In the press the melodramatic vaporings of the Committeemen are more interesting than the complaints of the unjustly wounded. So what does the citizen do? His grievance festers, and he does nothing.

Luckily for America, Martin Dies is still something of a freak. In spite of his subversive tendencies, he is still more of a horrible example than a threat. But suppose we do not profit by the example? Suppose we allow Dies to go his dangerous way unattacked? Suppose we treat him as if he were just a good American gone slightly loony? Do we not thereby abandon one of the most precious defenses of constitutional government: the tradition that not even the government itself can make irresponsible charges with impunity?

Specifically, what is to become of our system of government if a man like Martin Dies is allowed to impute—without trial, without any form of hearing—un-Americanism and Communistic sympathies to a man like Frank Kingdon and to the Union for Democratic Action, of which Frank Kingdon is chairman? The fact that the imputation is nonsense will not prevent every howling crackpot in and out of Congress from calling Frank Kingdon and the UDA "Communistic." And the victims of this irresponsibility have no recourse.

I charge once more that the activities of the Dies Committee tend to undermine confidence in constitutional government. They are therefore subversive and un-American. As Mrs. Roosevelt said, "It might be well to settle this once and for all." Apparently, no one can interfere with these activities except Dies's fellow-Congressmen. They can at least stop appropriating the money to keep this deleterious sideshow open.—HERBERT AGAR