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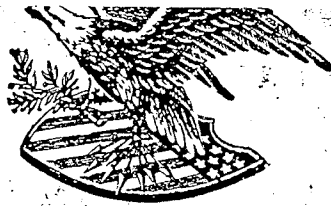
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New Republic

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF WASHINGTON
9 AUG 1948

AUGUST 9, 1948

PERIODICAL DISK



SPECIAL SESSION

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WITCH-HUNT IN THE NORTHWEST

SEATTLE (NR correspondent)

THE METAL-FRAMED WINDOWS of the 146th Field Artillery Armory in Seattle look out on a high-school football field dedicated to the men who died fighting for freedom.

The windows look in on a courtroom where academic freedom is under attack.

The University of Washington, one of the 10 largest schools in the United States, is on trial. The state legislature's all-Republican Little Un-American Activities Committee, headed by A. F. Canwell, a 41-year-old ex-deputy sheriff who married rich, is testing the faculty for purity of thought.

The committee began by charging that 150 members of the university faculty were Communists or Communist sympathizers. Then it set out to substantiate its charge. Committee gumshoes attended classes as students and shadowed professors through the Gothic halls beside Lake Washington. The "Little Un-Americans" promised immunity to suspected radicals who tattled on each other. They threatened others ("We'll fix you so you'll never get another job anywhere"). They warned one professor not to marry his fiancée: her former husband had been too liberal. They entered a church to ask a minister why he had protested their activities.

Then, in a klieg-light hearing, with the National Guard and state patrol for protection, the Little Un-Americans read the political sins of the faculty into the record.

¶ Among a thousand faculty members, they had unearthed one who would bear witness against his colleagues. Dr. Sophus Winther, of the English Department, swore he remembered seeing some faculty men in closed Communist meetings 11 years ago.

¶ Five faculty members admitted previous Party membership, swore they had quit the Party, but on grounds of conscience refused to reveal the names

of others who had attended meetings.

¶ Three faculty members and three leaders of the off-campus Repertory Theatre refused to answer the ritualistic, "Are you now or have you ever been a member. . . ."

The troupe of professional anti-Communists now playing the Un-American circuit flew in from the East to testify. Hearst's Howard Rushmore told of the "commie spy ring." Dr. J. B. Matthews, granddaddy of fellow-travelers—and now a male Mrs. Dilling—attacked "Eisenhower and his fellow travelers at Columbia," condemned Dr. Edward Condon and Professor Harold Urey for guilt by association, and named Albert Einstein and Arthur Schlesinger Jr. as America's two top fellow travelers. Canwell hammered away with his gavel to silence the snickers.

One high point of the hearing came during the testimony of Dr. Garland Ethel, one of the accused faculty members. "I should like," he said, "to make a statement of my principles. . . ."

"No more quotations from Shakespeare!" shouted Canwell. Ethel, an English professor, justifying his refusal to name men he had known were Communists in 1936, had taken the advice of Polonius: to thine own self be true.

On the fourth day, Canwell unveiled his star witness, George Hewitt, a professed ex-Communist. A glib, persuasive man, Hewitt claimed to have met one of the "reluctant witnesses" in Moscow in 1932, to have taught two others at a special high Communist school in New York.

Hewitt talked for two days—one too many. On the second day of his testimony, an attorney for the defense managed to get a statement into the record indicating that the libeled witnesses had proof they were elsewhere on the days named by Hewitt. Hewitt hedged. Denied the right of cross-examination, defense attorneys asked the county prosecutor to check Hewitt's testimony

for perjury. The Un-Americans hustled their star witness aboard the first plane out of the state.

A good trouper, Canwell went on with his show. Professor Melvin Rader, a philosopher, was summoned to the stand. He denied present or past Communist Party membership, and in an hour's eloquent testimony, certain to become a legend on the Washington campus, demolished the Canwell theory of guilt by association. An enthusiastic newspaper man called it "the best thing of its kind since Mr. Deeds."

An hour later, Canwell adjourned the hearing.

But the battle is far from over. The Little Un-Americans plan to cite all reluctant witnesses for contempt of the legislature: the penalty may include one year in jail.

In all this, unhappily, the university has cowered like a whipped dog before the Canwell committee. Long before the hearings began, an "understanding" was reached between the committee and the Board of Regents, dominated by businessmen and by the Red-hating labor boss, Dave Beck. As the prisoner of this agreement to cooperate with the committee, Raymond B. Allen, the university president, has watched in silence as his faculty members have been smeared and shamed, and has even suspended from the faculty outstanding liberals cited for contempt by the Little Un-Americans. Canwell expects Allen to fire all the reluctant witnesses.

But the local chapter of the American Association of University Professors is standing by the men the university has failed to defend. It has warned the university that if any faculty member is fired for reasons outside the tenure code (which specifies moral turpitude, felony and treason), the AAUP will blacklist the university. Even today Washington does not rank high in academic standing among state universities; the Canwell committee may well lower it to the level of Louisiana State under Huey Long.

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