

Red-Baiters are Red-Breeders

By W. D. Hoffman

Here the free spirit of mankind at length
 Throws its last fetters off; and who shall place
 A limit to the giant's unchained strength,
 Or curb his swiftness in the forward race?

—Bryant.

The dominant note of the Dies Committee Investigation to date has been one of repression and fear. One would gain from the voluminous testimony taken in Washington that American institutions are being threatened by the written and spoken word.

No evidence has been adduced of overt acts against the government, though if the committee finally turns its guns on Fascism and Nazism it may find something in that direction in the regimentation and drilling of groups bent on destroying democratic institutions.

The testimony on Communism has been confined entirely to attacks on expressions of opinion and the activities of a negligible group who at least have adopted the American way of legal action under democratic processes through a lawful political party.

Communism like Fascism has shown no tolerance of free opinion. Inimical to democratic processes as they both are, it is a strange commentary on Americanism if it is to adopt the alien idea of repression, as advocated by the witnesses of the Dies Committee.

That attitude is the chief threat to Americanism today. It would overthrow the constitution, its guarantees of free speech, and adopt the alien philosophy of repression in its place.

That is the most active force in behalf of Un-Americanism in the United States. To this group the Bill of Rights of the forefathers means nothing. They have been sold completely on the European idea of the muzzle. Given a free hand, they

would pass laws nullifying free speech and free press, all in the name of what they misname Americanism.

Significant in the evidence was that offered by the lady from Los Angeles representing the "Better American Federation." To those who dwell in that part of the country the activities of this organization are notorious. It was instituted by reactionary business groups to maintain Los Angeles as "the open shop town," its first platform boldly announcing its primary purpose to war on organized labor. Of recent years it has been working hand in glove with police clubbers under Captain "Red" Hains, breaking up meetings, beating prisoners, spying on civic betterment groups, compiling a "red list" that includes practically everyone in the environs of Los Angeles who opposes political corruption and organized vice. Its specialty is the making of "reports" on college professors, lecturers, reformers and progressives generally, such reports insinuating Communist leanings to those upholding the best traditions of American citizenship.

In actuality such groups as this are doing more to implant Communism in America than any other forces. They are doing their best to label every worthwhile defence of our institutions as Communistic, thus making that word synonymous with civic righteousness and all liberalism. Under the mask of "Better Americanism" they are speeding the wrecking of Americanism and the institution of the alien doctrine of suppression and compulsion in its stead.

The witch-burnings of Salem, the accusations and spying neighbor against neighbor in that dark period are brought forcibly to mind in the testimony before the Dies Committee.

A charge is made against an enemy or a group; it is heralded by radio and the printed page throughout the country, with no refutation and no presentation of the facts. Anyone may charge anyone else with being a Communist, if he so much as raises his voice against the wholesale exploitation of our time. Fortunately, however, such tactics over-reach themselves, at least among people who think. A Hearst's desperate attempt to label the president of the United States as a Communist proved a boomerang, so the efforts of the radical-baiters in Washington will prove unavailing.

There is little menace of Communism in these United States except as the witch-burning plunderbund breeds Communism by its own Fascist activities. The American way is not the way of Moscow, Rome or Berlin. It is the way of the free discussion and free examination under a democracy. Only he who is afraid of the truth fears to hear. To bring a fallacy into the full light of day is to expose and destroy it. With Voltaire we may disagree with all that a man says but give our lives for his right to say it. In darkness error marthés. Hence no real American will suppress even the Big Business propaganda of the Dies Committee. But he will insist that those attacked be given their day in court. That is the safeguard of our democracy.