

DUBINSKY OUT OF TUNE WITH LABOR ON McCARTHY

(The author of this article, Rose Wortis, veteran builder of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union since its earliest and most difficult days, has in the recent period been incapacitated by serious illness. But she has been closely following events especially in the ILGWU and the labor movement generally.)

By ROSE WORTIS

THE LATEST FEATS of Senator McCarthy and the other witchhunt committees in Congress in calling James Wechsler, editor of the N. Y. Post, artists, novelists, scientists, teachers and others before their respective committees has caused deep concern among even the most cautious liberals and even conservatives. They are beginning to see that the object of these witchhunts is not only the persecution of the Communists but all who cherish our American heritage of freedom.

The recent conference of the strongly anti-communist ADA which was addressed by Frances Biddle and James Carey, secretary of the CIO who condemned McCarthyism in the strongest terms.

Carey's speech was symptomatic of the anti-McCarthy sentiment developing in the trade unions as expressed by Walter Reuther, president of the CIO, Hugo Ernest of the AFL Hotel Restaurant Workers and others.

These public figures of various walks of life are beginning to see that behind the smoke-screen of fighting Communism there is a carefully conceived plan to weaken and destroy the trade union movement and all forward looking movements and organizations. These Americans are beginning to speak out against the new type of hero glorified by McCarthy, the informer, whose role throughout history has been to serve reaction against every progressive thought and movement.

AT THIS CRUCIAL TIME, David Dubinsky, president of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union with a membership of 430,000 counting in its ranks thousands of immigrant workers, Negro and Puerto Ricans, a membership which has always been counted as a most progressive section of the American labor and people's movement comes to the rescue of McCarthy.

In an article printed in the May 9 issue of the Saturday Evening Post under the title, "How I Handle the Reds in My Union" Dubinsky not only endorses McCarthy and all his committees but gives his wholehearted support to the position taken by the discredited and despised stoolpigeon and informer Louis Budenz.

Dubinsky particularly spits his venom against the so-called "fellow travelers" by which he means support of peace, of friendly relations with the Soviet Union, labor unity and all other progressive measures supported by the Communists.

Lest the reader think that I am exaggerating I want to quote from the article:

"Right now the Kremlin's outfit in this country is groggy from the blows rained on it, and can be given a knock-out punch.

Every effort to expose the Communists should be continued. The congressional investigations of un-American activities should not be hampered, but on the contrary, should be aided and encouraged.

"Investigation and a search for knowledge and information are a primary function of a democratic legislative body. Those



DUBINSKY

who berate informants on the Communists as 'squealers' are at best indulging in a childish prejudice. In effect, they give aid and comfort to the mortal enemy of our nation.

"I cannot insist that every member who leaves the Communist Party must instantly turn and tell all he knows. It isn't given to all of us to have the strength of character to admit mistakes and hit the sawdust trail to conversion in public. I do say, however, that the idealism and mortal compulsions that moved the honest adherents to join the party should serve them when they quit the party.

"The honest ex-communist will want not only to fight them. He will need to do so for the same reasons that originally moved him to join them. It might be more pleasant and more convenient for him to drop out quietly and never have anything more to do with them, but if he aligned himself with them out of a deluded belief that they support his ideals and principles, he will now want to oppose them as enemies of these principles and ideals. He will then disregard personal convenience in order to further his convictions and aspirations."

MUCH AS I KNOW Dubinsky from my years of work in the ILGWU, much as I know about his cynical and contemptuous attitude towards workers, his underhanded methods of work, his constant scheming against his own colleagues at the slightest sign of disagreement, I was still shocked to read this vile piece of McCarthyism written in the name of a trade union president.

The contents of this article are in conflict with the expressed sentiments of the ILGWU membership. At pre-convention meetings the most important locals of the union unanimously adopted resolutions condemning McCarthyism and instructing their delegates to introduce these resolutions at the Chicago convention.

Dubinsky's glorification of informers as people who have the strength of character to admit mistakes will not stand well with the membership. It violates the most basic precepts and traditions of the labor movement.

The history of the ILGWU itself will show that in the efforts to organize the union the workers suffered much from stoolpigeons and informers. Among the Jewish people especially no crime is considered as despicable as that of an informer.

To bolster up his argument and show what a great talent he has in saving the souls from communism, he cites an example of a mythical Mary Williams

who became disgusted with the "bureaucratism" existing in a "Communist-controlled" union and whom he personally won to the great cause of the Dubinsky "democracy."

I don't know much about the mythical Mary but I do know that one woman vice-president, Rose Possetta, a supporter of Dubinsky's policies and chosen by him to serve on the GEB, was made so uncomfortable by Dubinsky's bureaucratic method of leadership, which reduces the vice-presidents to mere rubber stamps for his personal policies, that she resigned.

DUBINSKY crows with particular joy at the persecution of the Communists. "Right now," he writes "the Kremlin outfit in this country is groggy from the blows rained upon it and can be given a knockout punch."

I am sure that the workers neither in the ILGWU nor in the labor movement generally will share Dubinsky's elation. They know from bitter experience in Germany, Italy and other countries where Fascism triumphed for a time that persecution of the Communists was but a prelude to the outlawing of the trade unions and the people's movements.

As far as the "knockout punch" I think Dubinsky rejoices too soon. Recent history shows that others have tried to accomplish this feat—in fact declared to the world—that the Communists and their countries have been wiped out only to discover that Communist theories and ideologies is winning greater masses of the people.

Dubinsky may think that this crawling on his belly before the McCarthys will save his skin... but he is sadly mistaken, as seen by the numerous attacks launched against him by Westbrook Pegler.

McCarthy and his stooges can look up the record. After all, Dubinsky at one time was a Socialist and mouthed Socialist phrases. He supported Loyalist Spain and even made contributions to Russian War Relief. The ILGWU is on record for health insurance, FEPC, public housing and other social legislation which by McCarthy standards spell "creeping Socialism." In the eyes of McCarthy even Dubinsky is not safe.

Dubinsky's playing up to McCarthy—his policy of subordinating everything to Wall St.'s anti-Soviet war, his so-called "labor statesmanship" which recorded such high praise in the capitalist press, has proven very costly to the garment workers. Their conditions have steadily deteriorated since the end of the war. From a position of the most highly paid workers they have been reduced to the category of lowest paid. While the gross profits of the employers have remained at the high point of 100 percent, the purchasing power of the workers have gone down by one-fourth; the speed-up increased by 25 percent and unemployment four times greater than in any other organized field.

There is great dissatisfaction among the garment workers with these lower standards and conditions and sooner or later, Dubinsky will find that the "Reds" whom he has killed and buried so many times have come to life again ready to fight as they always did for the welfare, the best interests of the workers and for a democratic workers union and not "MY UNION" as Dubinsky is in the habit of speaking of the ILGWU.