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7-11 THE WHITE HOUSE

DE FILE NO. (50)

A8-5/891

WASHINGTON

FILE NO.

OFF NO.

1 of 1

May 4, 1942.

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MEMORANDUM FOR

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

I agree with your memorandum of May first in regard to the employment of radio operators whose only offense is being a Communist. The Soviet people in Moscow are said to have little liking for the American Communists and their methods -- especially because it seems increasingly true that the Communism of twenty years ago has practically ceased to exist in Russia. At the present time their system is much more like a form of the older Socialism, conducted, however, through a complete dictatorship combined with an overwhelming loyalty to the cause of throwing every German out of Russia. That being so, the American Communists are going along with us almost unanimously in the help we are giving to Russia in winning the war.

There are, however, a good many cases of radio operators who

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

-2-

have failed in the pre-war period to give weather information to other ships or to planes; or who have sought to foment what amounts to a form of mutiny on the high seas.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'FDR', written over a horizontal line.

F. D. R.

April 30, 1942

Miss M. Enrol

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

Public Act 351 (approved December 17, 1941) makes it unlawful during the emergency to employ as radio operator on any American merchant vessel any person whose employment has been disapproved by the Secretary of the Navy.

This Act is administered by a five man Board consisting of Admiral Staton as Chairman and representatives of the Navy Department, Coast Guard and Maritime Commission. The Board has considered some 90 cases and discharged 33 men. About 25 have appealed and 8 have been reinstated.

Appeals are heard by local boards convened by the Commandants of the Districts. The "defendent" is not informed as to the basis for his discharge.

The cases involving cowardice, insubordination, drunkenness or pro-Nazi sympathy present little difficulty. But most of the cases involve operators charged with Communist Party membership or Communist sympathy. The Board automatically discharges any operators whose investigation record is sufficiently convincing on the score of Communist sympathy, irrespective of his competence and record of conduct in his job.

Many of the members of the American Communications Association (CIO), including the President, Vice President and possibly other officers, have been or may be discharged. The total number of radio operators on the ONI suspect list is about 600 and about 500 of them are "Communist" suspects.

I understand that the Board rests its practice of automatic discharge of all alleged Communists on the policy of Congress expressed in various enactments prior to the Russo-German War, which forbid Federal employment of Communists, Bundists, etc.

The problem presented by the present method of administration of Public 351 is whether identification with Communism, even if sufficiently proven, is sufficient grounds to disqualify a man without some other evidence of incompetence or unreliability in his job as a radio operator on a merchant ship. In other words, in view of the present military alignments, political considerations and shortage of qualified radio operators, should we discharge operators because of their political opinions only? Or should we say that hostile political opinion is only one element of fitness and a man must not be discharged whose record in his job is in all other respects satisfactory.

Adlai E. Stevenson

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May 1, 1942

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Adlai Stevenson

My dear Mr. President:

I hate to bother you with things like this but this involves a policy which can only originate with you.

I am attaching a report by Adlai Stevenson on the subject of disbarring men from service in the Merchant Marine as radio operators under the present law. My present disposition is to disregard a charge against the radio operator who, in other respects has done his duty well and obeyed orders, solely because he is called a Communist, even where the proof is pretty substantial that he has been a Communist. Of course, in other respects where there was insubordination or drunkenness or any other thing, we make short shrift of them.

With Russia as our ally, it seems to me the course I have outlined above is the only one we can pursue, although I confess to you a grave doubt as to the ultimate loyalty of these men if later difficulty of any kind should arise between us and Russia. For some strange reason, these American Communists seem more loyal to Russia than they do to the United States but, as I said, this difficulty is not present at the present time, although it may be later.

I should like to have you confirm to me whether my thought runs along parallel channels with yours on this subject.

Yours sincerely,

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FRANK KNOX

The President
The White House

G. H. C. [Signature]

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1 December 1943

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. ADLAI STEVENSON

Subj: Furnishing of evidence by War and Navy Departments to Select Committee of the House of Representatives to investigate the Federal Communications Commission.

- 3,11,14,15 May 1943 Rear Admiral S. C. Hooper, USN (Ret.), submitted statement to counsel for Select Committee of the House of Representatives to investigate the Federal Communications Commission.
- 4 June 1943 Rear Admiral J. R. Redman, USN, Director Naval Communications, submitted statement to counsel for Select Committee.
- 5 June 1943 Commander F. O. Willenbacher, USN (Ret.) submitted statement to counsel for Select Committee.

All of the above statements were exploratory in character and were made only after full assurance by Mr. Garey, counsel for the Select Committee, that statements submitted would be used, if at all, only in a manner consistent with naval policy. No copies of these statements are now available in the Navy Department, having been sent to the White House along with all files, papers and documents relating to matters which might be the subject of investigation by the Select Committee.

- 5 June 1943 President sent telegram to Secretary of War, in substance, as follows:

"I have been given to understand that Colonel Guest has been requested to testify before a congressional committee concerning a purely administrative matter relating to the exercise of war powers. I do not wish

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him to give this testimony. Please see that he does not do so. This matter is under consideration by the White House and is not a matter for congressional investigation. Some Army officers have already told one side of this story which is thence in the process of going to the public. You may end definitely all Army talk on this subject. As stated, the whole matter is under study by the White House and no action has been taken."

25 June 1943

Counsel for Select Committee addressed letters to the Secretaries of War and Navy requesting the appearance, as witnesses, of certain military and naval personnel, including the Secretaries of War and Navy and the production of certain documents, reports and memoranda.

25 June 1943

President sent following memorandum to Secretary of Navy:

"I understand that a naval officer has been asked to testify before the Cox Committee in regard to a purely administrative matter relating to the exercises of war powers as between the Army, Navy and the F.C.C.

I do not wish this officer to testify. Please see to it that he does not do so. The matter is still under consideration by the White House and is not a matter for Congressional investigation. Already some Army officers have told one side of the story on the Hill and thence, of course, it is in the process of going to the public.

I think you might end definitely all Navy talk on this subject. As I stated above, the whole matter is under study by the White House and no action has been taken."

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26 June 1943

Secretary of the Navy directed Rear Admiral Redman to make sure that no official of the Navy Department be permitted to testify before the Select Committee.

30 June 1943

Secretary of the Navy addressed a letter to the President on 25 June 1943 requesting information as to whether or not certain of the material requested by counsel for the Select Committee, none of which dealt with matters then under study by the White House, should be furnished the Committee. The Secretary of War addressed a similar letter to the White House.

2 July 1943

Rear Admiral Willson Brown, Naval Aide to the President, addressed the following memorandum to the Under Secretary of the Navy.

"The President directs that all papers demanded by the Cox Committee be boxed up and sent to the White House where they will be impounded until further notice. The President authorizes informing the Committee that he, the President, refuses to allow the documents to be delivered to the Committee as contrary to the public interest."

The War Department received similar instructions from the President.

3 July 1943

The Secretary of the Navy informed the counsel for the Select Committee by letter that:

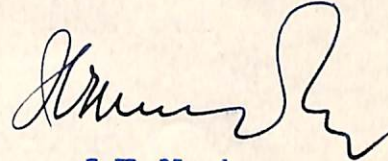
- (1) The Secretary of the Navy declined to permit the appearance of naval officers, active or inactive, before the Committee as such appearance would be incompatible with the public interest; and
- (2) The President had authorized the Secretary of the Navy to inform the Committee

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that he, the President, refused to allow the documents described in the letter of 25 June 1943 to be delivered to the Committee as such delivery would be incompatible with the public interest.

3 July 1943

The Secretary of the Navy addressed a letter to the President reporting the action taken. A copy of this letter, together with its enclosures, is attached hereto.



J. V. Murphy
Captain, U.S. Navy
Acting Director of Naval Communications

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON

July 3, 1943

My dear Mr. President:

The documents and papers requested by the House Select Committee to investigate the Federal Communications Commission have this date been sent to the White House, in accordance with your instructions.

The above Committee has been informed that the documents and papers requested will not be made available to the Committee, since it has been determined by the President that such procedure would not be compatible with the public interest.

There are enclosed herewith a copy of Rear Admiral Wilson Brown's memorandum of July 2, 1943, transmitting your instructions in this matter, and a copy of my letter to Mr. Eugene L. Garey, General Counsel of the Select Committee, in reply to his letter of June 25, 1943.

Respectfully,

JAMES FORRESTAL,
Acting.

The President,
The White House.

COPY

July 2, 1943

MEMORANDUM FOR:

The Under Secretary of the Navy.

The President directs that all papers demanded by the Cox Committee be boxed up and sent to the White House where they will be impounded until further notice. The President authorizes informing the Committee that he, the President, refuses to allow the documents to be delivered to the Committee as contrary to the public interest.

Very respectfully,

Wilson Brown,
Rear Admiral, U.S.N.,
Naval Aide to the President.

Copy to:

Mr. Adlai Stevenson
Captain Inglis (Asst. D.N.C.)
Mr. Rudolph Forster

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

WASHINGTON

July 3, 1943

Sir:

Reference is made to your letter dated June 25, 1943, requesting the presence of the Secretary of the Navy and certain naval officers before the House Select Committee to Investigate the Federal Communications Commission. Request was also made in your letter that the Committee be furnished with certain documents and papers from the files of the Navy Department.

I must decline to permit the appearance of the naval officers, active or inactive, before your Committee as such appearance would be incompatible with the public interest.

The President of the United States authorizes me to inform the Committee that he, the President, refuses to allow the documents described in your letter to be delivered to the Committee, as such delivery would be incompatible with the public interest.

Very truly yours,

JAMES FORRESTAL,
Acting.

Mr. Eugene L. Garey,
General Counsel,
Select Committee to Investigate
Federal Communications Commission,
House of Representatives,
Washington, D. C.

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