

HUAC on the Make

The Circus is Coming to Town!

Thorne Dreyer

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NEW YORK, Sept. 24 (Liberation News Service)—The HUAC circus is coming to town once more. And the fireworks should fly in Washington.

Thus far, six people have received subpoenas to appear before the House Un-American Activities Committee on Oct. 1. Those now set to appear before Amerika's anti-commie tribunal are Tom Hayden, Rennie Davis, Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, Dave Dellinger and Robert Greenblatt.

HUAC is up-tight about Chicago.

The National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee (NECLC), in a statement issued today, called the hearings an "attempt by the Johnson administration to use every mechanism at its disposal to legitimize the action of Mayor Daley and the Chicago police."

Jerry Rubin told LNS that he plans to use the hearings as a stage for a theatrical assault on HUAC and as a platform to call for disruptive actions on election day. Two years ago, in August 1966, Rubin and others then appearing before HUAC set a precedent for such activities by disrupting the hearings and refusing to take the tribunal seriously. Rubin appeared in the uniform of an American Revolutionary soldier.

How others will react to the hearings is not now known. A spokesman for the NECLC suggested that the six will probably use different approaches. Yippies Rubin and Hoffman, whose approach has always been the media-bathed politics of spectacle, will no doubt be the most lively.

Rubin said he plans to wear a uniform again, though he hasn't decided what it will be. "The best thing would be to come nude, and have a fuck-in right there in the chamber. Of course, that would probably mean a year in jail."

Lawyers for the six will include Michael Kennedy and Henry di Suvero of NECLC, William Kunstler of the Law Center for Constitutional Rights, and Gerald Lefcourt of the National Lawyers Guild.

With the exception of Greenblatt, those subpoenaed could have easily been predicted. The media creates for the movement leaders who are not necessarily of our own choosing. And it certainly cannot be denied that some of those "leaders" play the press to the hilt. There is no question, however, that all of those being called before HUAC played very significant roles in the Chicago activities and have been instrumental in the development of the movement in this country. But anyone who was in Chicago must see the absurdity of this effort to pick out the "commie instigators" and pin them with the rap.

The most prominent figures in the group are probably Tom Hayden and Jerry Rubin. Hayden, along with Rennie Davis, was one of the founders of SDS. He essentially wrote the Port Huron Statement in 1962 and served as SDS president the next year. He started the Newark Community Union Project in 1964, and was one of the first Americans to visit North Vietnam. Hayden and Davis were coordinators for the National Mobilization activities in Chicago.

Rubin, a founder of Youth International Party (YIP), first made the limelight as a leader of the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley in 1964. He headed Berkeley's Vietnam Day Committee the next two years and ran for Mayor of Berkeley in 1966.

Abbie Hoffman worked with SNCC in the south for three years. He helped to initiate the New York Diggers in 1967, and the Yippies this year. He was criticized in radical circles for accepting a position on the Mayor's Youth Board (part of the New York urban pacification program) last year.

The press has played Hayden and Rubin up as the real leaders of the movement. Hayden is invariably identified as the leader of SDS although he no longer identifies himself with that organization and is often criticized by SDS members for not being directly responsible to any movement collective.

Rubin is also a freewheeler who answers to no constituency. Several stories in the capitalist press have identified him as head of the Progressive Labor Party, an organization from which he could not be farther apart.

Despite the fact that the function of a Congressional committee is to produce legislation, HUAC has been responsible for only one law during its 30 years of existence. Its single piece of legislation was the McCarran Act, which established a mechanism for labeling organizations subversive. HUAC has been used primarily as an instrument of intimidation, as an informal black-listing set-up, particularly during the McCarthy era in the 1950s. And, until two years ago, when Rubin and crew refused to deal with it as legitimate, it seemed to do its job. In the past, those subpoenaed were bullied by the racist crew, pleading the Fifth, with their heads bowed. But, after the confrontation in August 1966, many thought HUAC had breathed its last: it had been made a laughing stock.

What will happen this go 'round is anybody's guess. The conditions are certainly different. On the one hand, the movement is much more together, its numbers far greater and its tactics more militant and imaginative. But the minions of repression are consolidating their forces and, this time, the disruptions will be no surprise.

A History of Racism

Since its formation in 1938, HUAC has been used mainly as a tool for Southern racists to red-bait the civil rights movement.

The best exposition is a glance at some of the men who have spearheaded it:

— Martin Dies, chairman from 1938 to 1945, was a racist from Texas. Under Dies, HUAC declared that "communism is a world-wide political organization advocating (among other things) absolute social and racial equality."

— John Rankin, representative from Mississippi, was the man responsible for making HUAC a permanent body and was the power behind it for many years. He once called Walter Winchell a "communistic little kike."

— John Wood, representative from Georgia, an ardent segregationist, was chairman in the 1940s and early 1950s. He once said of the Ku Klux Klan, "The Klan is an old American tradition, like illegal whiskey selling."

— Edwin Willis, representative from Louisiana, chairman since 1963, led the Southern opposition to the civil rights bill in Congress in 1964.

— Joe Poole, recently deceased, representative from Texas, recently served as temporary chairman. He is remembered for many jewels of bigotry, including a vitriolic attack on the underground press.

— Two northern chairmen included Rep. J. Parnell Thomas of New Jersey, who served two years in jail for conspiracy to defraud the government, and Rep. Harold Velde of Illinois, who opposed mobile library service in rural areas because "the basis of communism and socialistic influence is education of the people."

— Another HUAC chairman, Rep. Francis Walter, was involved in a project designed to show that black people are genetically inferior.

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