

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS - STATE UNIVERSITY
OF IOWA CHAPTER, Iowa City, Iowa

To Members of the General Assembly:

The subversive activities bill of 1951, now under consideration in the Iowa general assembly, has for its purpose the detection of subversive persons, who seek to overthrow our government by force, and the prevention of the teaching of a philosophy which calls for the overthrow of our government by force.

We are vigorously opposed to Communism.

We feel that Communism should be fought bitterly, and with all the strength we have.

How can the American people best do this?

One answer comes from the experience which many of us on this faculty had in the armed services. We learned that good "intelligence" is very important. What did we mean by good "intelligence"? Good "intelligence" meant learning everything possible about the enemy's weapons, his methods, his forces, his strong points, his weak points, his methods of thinking, and everything else about him.

In its schools this nation also needs good "intelligence" about Communism.

This nation must "know the enemy."

And we emphasize the fact that teaching about Communism is one thing--and that teaching in favor of Communism is another. (We are strongly opposed to the teaching in favor of Communism; it must not be permitted in our schools.)

Will the proposed bill hinder or slow up any persons who really want to teach Communism in our schools? We have a strong feeling that the bill will not do this job.

March 23, 1951

First of all, experience shows that Communists are apparently happy to sign the kind of "written statement" required in this bill.

Such a statement gives them protection. They are on the record as being "loyal" (and they aren't at all worried about committing perjury).

Communists also know that usually a number of persons of unquestioned loyalty will feel that such a statement is an attack upon "academic freedom." What is "academic freedom?" It is simply the right of completely free discussion, and of completely free inquiry. It is the unhampered search for truth. "Academic freedom" has been one of the great strengths of education in a democratic society. (And "academic freedom" has been denied completely under the Soviet system, which is another reason we are vigorously opposed to Communism.)

So Communists know that under a "written statement" plan the spotlight will be directed away from the Communists, and will be directed toward the people who refuse to sign the statement.

And so the Communists sign it, and keep right on working while attention is focused on the non-signers.

In the second place, a "written statement" plan will keep many young people from learning the facts they need to fight Communism.

How will this happen?

Let us take the case of a high school teacher (and of course this law applies to every high school and to every grade school teacher in Iowa) who is giving her class a history of Communism. She is doing this in preparation for talking about Communism today--its methods, its weaknesses, and the reasons it has gained in strength.

As sometimes happens, one of her students may be listening carelessly, and at home reports that "today Miss Jones taught us Communism." Then there is trouble and experience shows that in such a case the teacher is often thought guilty until she proves herself innocent. And no matter what happens, there will be a messy disturbance.

March 23, 1951

What will happen?

The answer is simple: Many teachers may easily be pushed in the direction of avoiding all discussion of Communism.

And experience indicates that when Communism is made a kind of secret, a sort of mystery, something that isn't talked about, that more young people are attracted to it.

So we feel that the "written statement" method in this bill will out down on the kind of teaching about Communism that we must have.

It is a part of our American tradition that we "look at the facts, and then make up our minds." We check performance on its merits, whether the problem is the improvement of strains of oats, the quality of automobiles, or the character of governments. We must have free discussion of all the facts.

What do we think should be done?

We feel that the administrative officers of the schools concerned can be trusted to guard the loyalty of their institutions. They are watchful. And students can be depended upon to be watchful also. If Communism were advocated in any Iowa school, the uproar from students could be heard in Des Moines without the aid of microphones. Finally the Teachers of Iowa are aware of the dangers of Communism and are watchful.

We feel that the present system is an adequate check on the character and quality of teachers--and that any "written statement" or "preliminary investigation" system will only serve to keep students from getting facts which they must have to be capable and well equipped citizens in these critical times.

Paul E. Huston, M. D. , President
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