

TESTIMONY OF RACHMIEL FORSCHMIEDT

Sanitarian, King County Health Dept., Seattle, Washington

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: The hearing will be in session.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Chairman, there are one or two people that we have promised would be given the privilege of the stand today. I would like to ask that the witness George Hewitt step aside until nine-thirty tomorrow morning. I would like very much to definitely put him on at nine-thirty tomorrow morning, and I think there are some people that might be interested in the things that he will testify to at that time; he will detail the program and the teaching in the Lenin Institute. He was actually an instructor, a teacher in the Lenin Institute; and also his personal conferences with Joseph Stalin, and he's had numerous personal conferences and he has a digest or official transcript of his conferences with Mr. Stalin.

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: Well, he will—it is understood that he will be the first witness in the morning, then.

MR. HOUSTON: Now we will —Mr. Forschmiedt take the stand?

RACHMIEL FORSCHMIEDT, produced as a witness, after being first duly sworn, was examined and testified as follows:

MR. HOUSTON: Have you heard the instructions that have been given to the other witnesses, Mr. Forschmiedt?

MR. FORSCHMIEDT: I have.

MR. HOUSTON: Will you please state your name?

MR. FORSCHMIEDT: Rachmiel Forschmiedt. Rachmiel Forschmiedt. D like in dog.

MR. HOUSTON: Are you a resident of the—King County, Mr. Forschmiedt?

MR. FORSCHMIEDT: Yes, sir.

MR. HOUSTON: In the State of Washington?

MR. FORSCHMIEDT: Yes, sir.

MR. HOUSTON: Where were you born?

MR. FORSCHMIEDT: In New York City.

MR. HOUSTON: And when were you born?

MR. FORSCHMIEDT: February 21, 1903.

MR. HOUSTON: What is your occupation?

MR. FORSCHMIEDT: Senior Sanitarian in the Seattle, King County, Department of Public Health. I would like to correct the misstatement which has done my superior officer an injustice. Mr. Butler is the Chief Sanitarian, and he's sitting here now. I am just a senior.

MR. HOUSTON: How long have you been employed on that position, Mr. Forschmiedt?

MR. FORSCHMIEDT: August 1st, 1937.

Pleads Bill of Rights and Won't Answer

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Forschmiedt, are you or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?

MR. FORSCHMIEDT: Mr. Houston, in asking me to answer that question

you are asking me to violate the supreme law of the United States of America, the Constitution of the United States—

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: Mr. Forschmiedt, you will be responsive to the ques—that is a question that may be answered by “yes” or “no” and one which this Committee of the Legislature feels it has every right to ask and—

MR. FORSCHMIEDT: (Incoherent).

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: The question will be placed again. I want to advise you that your failure to testify—your failure to reply will be considered by this Committee as contempt of the Legislature and we will proceed against you—

MR. FORSCHMIEDT: I want it clearly understood that I have no contempt for you, Mr. Canwell, or the Legislature of the State of Washington. I am simply stating that I do not want to violate the Bill of Rights—

MR. FORSCHMIEDT: (Incoherent)

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: You are not being placed in jeopardy in this—

MR. FORSCHMIEDT: You are, Mr. Canwell—

MR. CANWELL: You will either desist and answer the questions of the Committee or be considered in contempt.

MR. FORSCHMIEDT: I beg to differ with you, sir. I am not in contempt and I disagree with you there.

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: Will you answer the question of the interrogator as to whether you have been—are or have been a member of the Communist Party? Do you answer or do you refuse to answer?

MR. FORSCHMIEDT: I refuse to violate the law of the United States—

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: Step aside, please.

MR. HOUSTON: Well, is Mr. Davis here yet? Is Mr. Davis in the audience, has he come back yet?

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: I think that we will go into the matter of Mr. Davis this evening—I do not wish to state the reasons why we are being so lenient with Mr. Davis. I think that we will go into that but let's not pursue it further here.

Howard Smith Returns to Stand No Intention to Offend Negroes

MR. HOUSTON: Will Mr. Howard take—Mr. Smith take the stand for just a moment again.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Smith, in your testimony this morning, was that not just a slip of the tongue and you meant no disrespect for Mr. Hewitt or any other member of the colored race, did you? Make that clear.

MR. SMITH: Oh—I—I was thinking of something else, I believe, but I have only—why, heaven's sake, I've housed 10,000 colored people in this town and if I said “nigger” I probably meant “Negro”—

MR. HOUSTON: You just made a mistake, that's fine—

MR. SMITH: —since I have no incensed feeling against Negro people. I've got lots of friends here.

MR. HOUSTON: Now, I will ask you, Mr. Smith, did you see the last man that was on the witness stand?

MR. SMITH: Yes, sir.

Identifies Forschmiedt as Communist

MR. HOUSTON: Who was that man?

MR. SMITH: That is Rachmiel Forschmiedt.

MR. HOUSTON: Do you know whether or not Mr. Rachmiel Forschmiedt is a member of the Communist Party?

MR. SMITH: Rachmiel Forschmiedt is a very high member of the Communist Party.

MR. HOUSTON: Did you so know him while you were a member of the Communist Party?

MR. SMITH: Yes, sir.

MR. HOUSTON: Did you attend meetings with him?

MR. SMITH: Yes, sir.

MR. HOUSTON: Did you make a record of the meetings that you attended where he was present and you were present?

MR. SMITH: Well, I sort of made a file on each fellow and got broke down into files. I think I have some notes that were taken on Rachmiel Forschmiedt in my pocket if you're allowed to use notes.

MR. HOUSTON: Were these notes made at or near to the time of the meetings?

MR. SMITH: I used to attend the meetings and I never wrote anything in the meetings but I developed a good memory for names and faces and when I went home I immediately took and wrote these things out.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Chairman, I believe under that explanation that this is an exception to the hearsay rules. Here are notes that were made at or near to the time of the occurrence. I believe they are permissible in any court of law and I would like to recommend that the witness be permitted to use them to refresh his memory at this time.

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: I think that is entirely all right.

MR. HOUSTON: Yes, you may read the notes, Mr. Smith.

MR. SMITH: When I diagnosed one of these Communists I always looked in newspapers and saw what he wrote and in the "People's Times" on September 15th, 1947 he wrote an article. On October the 31st, '45 in "The New World" he wrote "Whose Blood." On August the 22nd, '45 in the "New World" on "Sanitations"—on—"Sanitarians"; September 19th, '46, the "New World's" "Hard To Get Teachers"; September the 13th, '46 "Non-White Teachers." These are all articles that he wrote.

Recounts Many Communist Meetings That City Health Employee Attended

MR. HOUSTON: Do you have a record there of all the meetings that you attended with him?

MR. SMITH: Yes, I'll read you everything that I've got and you can keep what you want.

December, the 6th, '45, "Win the Peace" rally at the Moose Hall, sponsored by the Communist Party; he was there and I was there.

On November the 12th, '45, Communist Party massed meetings, Ship Scalers. The purpose was—that's the Ship Scalers' Hall—the purpose was protesting U. S. intervention in Chinese Civil War. Huff and Reeves spoke and Forschmiedt was there. Huff and Reeves are head of the Communist Party here in Seattle.

On April the 13th, '45, a leadership meeting at Communist Party Headquarters, Carl Reeve's mother's activities in the party—that's Mother Bloor—he was there.

On June the 10th—no—let's see, no, on June the 11th, '44, Northwest District of the Communist Party, that was a convention at Victory Hall. The purpose of this convention was desire—desire of the political association and set up the Communist Party again. He was there.

On May the 7th, '44, 10:00 a. m. at Unity Convention at Victory Hall. A hundred and nineteen delegates, thirty-one visitors, purpose to coagulate actives in the election of delegates to New York. This was a plenum.

Worker's School, April 19th, '44, 7:30 to 10:00 p. m.—10:30 p. m., Victory Hall. Barbara Hartle,—and this was a compulsory attendance, you had to attend it and they taught the spirit of Marxism.

On March the 7th, '44, member, a ship committee, 340, Mabel Conrad. He was at that meeting.

On March the 25th, '45, Communist Political Association at Moose Hall, to listen to a report from the National Committee meeting, Communist Headquarters in New York, that the delegates had returned.

January the 17th, '45, "Leadership School." This was the leadership training school that you had to have an invitation to—by the head office, to be a student there. Carl Reeves was the teacher. I got to looking into what branch he belonged to. He belonged to the West Seattle Branch in 1935, and Gretchen Cook was the name, I think, of the executive secretary, and there was 4511 36th Avenue Southwest.

On December the 4th, '44, attendance on Williamson's Rally, Shipscaler's Hall. Carl Brooks was chairman. Carl Reeves, Jesse Harris and Barbara Hartle were alike on the rostrum. Forschmiedt was at that meeting.

Now his branch used to hold their Communist meeting in the parish of St. John's Episcopal Church, West Hanford Street and California Street.

On August the 25th, '44, all-out King County Communist Party Political Association, Reeves and Huff, Victory Hall, 7:30 p. m. This was for the 1944 political campaign. Earl George, a Negro, and Louise Brockway were two other Communists that were there. Forschmiedt was there.

Victory Hootenanny, Polish Hall, 1718 18th Avenue, August the 5th, '44, and this was a movie on the negro soldier. This was one of those places where the Soviet films were shown.

MR. HOUSTON: What is a "Hootenanny"?

MR. SMITH: A "Hootenanny"—its a place where everybody goes, and they set up a bar, and they sell beer and whiskey, and they usually have—they used to have them in the Polish Hall where the actresses from the Repertory Playhouse—they were the "Topical Players" then—used to entertain the people, and then you always visited all the different Communists, and those that were under cover could come there and you couldn't prove they were Communists by being in the Polish Hall. It was more or less a public meeting. You would get a lot of look-see guys in there, and you would get people that wandered in there, and you could get in if you had enough money to buy a ticket.

MR. HOUSTON: That's fine, thank you. Now—

MR. SMITH: I think that is—let's see, on January 23rd, '45, a meeting in large executive committee of the Communist Party. That's all executives met there.

February 12th—

MR. HOUSTON: Now wait a minute, was Mr. Forschmiedt at that meeting?

MR. SMITH: What is it?

MR. HOUSTON: Was Mr. Forschmiedt at that meeting?

MR. SMITH: **Yes, he was at all these meetings.**

MR. HOUSTON: **Everyone that you have read?**

MR. SMITH: **Oh yes.**

MR. SMITH: **He was there?**

MR. SMITH: **Everyone.** Then I looked up where he come from. I thought he was one of those NKVD guys, myself, but I found out he wasn't. He might be some connection, but—

MR. HOUSTON: Well that's all, we—that's fine, Mr. Smith.

MR. SMITH: Oh, incidentally, I have a few more notes here that he—

In 1931 and '32, he worked for the P.I. as a reporter.

He worked for the American Broadcasting Company from 1930 to '31.

MR. HOUSTON: Well that's fine.

MR. SMITH: That's all I have on him.

MR. HOUSTON: Well that's fine, thank you.

(Demonstration by Mr. Forschmiedt.)

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: He had his opportunity to talk under oath and he didn't wish to do that.

(Witness Excused)

TESTIMONY OF FLORENCE BEAN JAMES Co-Director, Repertory Playhouse

MR. HOUSTON: Mrs. Florence Bean James?

FLORENCE BEAN JAMES, after being first duly sworn was examined and testified as follows:

MR. HOUSTON: Mrs. James, have you heard the instruction—

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Chairman, may I enter my appearance as counsel for Mrs. James?

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: The record will show that Mrs. James' counsel is in attendance.

MR. HOUSTON: You have heard the instructions to other witnesses, have you not, Mrs. James, to speak directly into the microphone and to answer questions audibly and not nod, because the machines can't record a nod.

MRS. JAMES: All right.

MR. HOUSTON: Will you please state your name?

MRS. JAMES: Florence Bean James.

MR. HOUSTON: Are you a resident of the City of Seattle, Mrs. James?

MRS. JAMES: I am.

MR. HOUSTON: How long have you lived in Seattle?

MRS. JAMES: 25 years.

MR. HOUSTON: Where were you born, Mrs. James?

MRS. JAMES: I was born in Pocatello, Idaho.

MR. HOUSTON: And what was the date of your birth?

MRS. JAMES: Oh, I can't remember the date of my birth. I am 55 years old.

MR. HOUSTON: What is your occupation, Mrs. James?

MRS. JAMES: I am co-director of the Repertory—Seattle Repertory Playhouse.

Refuses to Answer

MR. HOUSTON: Mrs. James, I will ask you if you are or ever have been a member of the Communist Party?

MRS. JAMES: Mr. Houston, I resist with everything I have your right to ask that question, and I stand on my constitutional rights to refuse to answer it.

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: Mrs. James, knowing that you have been in the hearing room, I know that you have followed the form of procedure here. We wish to advise you so there will be no mistake that we expect a direct answer to that question, and will proceed against you for failing to testify if you do so, and I want to be sure that you understand the possible penalties for refusal to testify.

Now I will ask Mr. Houston to ask that question again. It may be answered by "yes" or "no," or you may—if you take the alternative, of course we will proceed to cite you for contempt.

Will you ask the question again, Mr. Houston?