

A

generation of New York City teachers dreaded opening their home mailboxes, a lingering fear left over from the 1950s. If they'd been almost anywhere on the left, there was a chance they'd find a letter from Superintendent of Schools William Jansen politely directing them to show up for a meeting with Saul Moskoff.

Lesser known than the high-profile national hunts for communists in government agencies and show business, local outbreaks of Cold War fever revved up after World War II, and took a toll on teachers. Communist Party

membership, past or present, was a sure-fire red flag. So was membership in the Teachers Union. The TU, organized in 1916, worked aggressively for teachers' rights, for civil liberties, and for civil rights and better schools for black and other minority children in city schools. The union itself, along with individual teachers, was a prime target. As part of a widespread government battle against communism, investigators also targeted labor unions in other sectors. But because teachers work with children, the citizens of the future, their unions were especially vulnerable to the anti-communist politics of the time. The TU's ties to the Communist Party ultimately led to its ouster from both the AFL and CIO and to its eventual disbanding in 1964 as the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) became the bargaining agent for the city's teachers.

additional interrogations, with Moskoff or with school administrators. These were transcribed, and placed in each teacher's file along with information from the FBI, the New York police undercover BOSSI (Bureau of Special Services and Information) unit, New York and New Jersey state troopers, congressional sources, and teacher-informers. Moskoff then wrote highly detailed memos to Jansen and Board of Education members summarizing the interviews and file information. They concluded with his recommendations for handling each case. Moskoff left in 1958, but kept his hand in until the investigations wound down in the early 1960s.

One teacher, Minnie Gutride, committed suicide days after two board administrators pulled her out of her classroom on December 21, 1948, to interrogate her in the principal's office, according to newspaper accounts. In March 1950, Jansen recommended firing a probationary teacher 10 days before she would have gotten tenure. He announced it to the press before notifying her, resulting in a gaggle of reporters at her home. A history teacher, Louis Jaffe, was subjected to on-and-off questioning by administrators after writing an article on academic freedom in 1948. He was among eight teachers suspended for refusing to answer questions before Jansen about their political beliefs and Communist Party ties. In late 1950, they were

Teachers Union newsletter.

Who Threatens Your Child's Future?

Your children are **NOT** threatened by the teachers under attack—teachers who have devoted their lives to helping your children.

Your children are **NOT** threatened by the Teachers Union, whose representatives many of you have met at the Board of Education, City Hall and Albany—always fighting for more and better schools for all the children.

Your children **ARE** threatened by those responsible for the poor school conditions—the budget cutters, the Chambers of Commerce, the Citizens' Budget Commissions. You have met them too at City Hall and in Albany. You have heard them call for cuts in school budgets.

Now, under cover of the war program and armament expenses, they are demanding more boldly than ever that the needs of the children be sacrificed.

Your children **ARE** threatened by the Timones and the McCarrans, and by the pressure groups behind them which are opposed to public education.

Now the red hysteria makes it possible for them to push their aims more openly. They smear the public schools as "communist" and so seek to discredit them altogether.

Your children **ARE** threatened by those who stand to profit by war, and who would use the schools to further their aims. They are the people who have brought to your children the tensions which result from under-the-desk Atom Bomb drills, fire-proof identification tags, and talk of inevitable war. They have changed the atmosphere in our schools from one of freedom to one of fear.

It is up to you to protect your children's right to a true, American public school education.

What You Can Do

- Keep up the fight for better school conditions all year round.
- Discuss the situation at the Parents Association meeting at your school. The teachers under attack would welcome an opportunity to debate the issue with any representative of the Board of Education.
- If it is not possible to carry out the above suggestions, arrange an informal gathering of parents in your community.
- Send resolutions from organizations and individual letters to the Mayor and to the Board of Education, asking that the witch-hunt be stopped and that teachers be judged on professional performance—and that the Superintendent of Schools and the Board of Education devote their energies to the needs of the children.
(We would appreciate copies of such letters and resolutions.)

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION SEND FOR THE FOLLOWING WHICH WILL BE SENT TO YOU FREE OF CHARGE:

"Searchlight"—a 303 page exposé of the New York City school system.

Teachers Union Brief—presented to the City Planning Commission, Oct. 17, 1952—detailed facts and figures on school buildings and overcrowding.

Keep Freedom in the Schools—a 22 page pamphlet issued by the eight teachers who were recently on trial.

Teacher News—weekly publication of the Teachers Union.



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