

JANSEN LAYS SMEAR TACTICS TO C. I. O. UNION

Says He Will Keep Up His Inquiry Into Allegations of Red Activities.

TEACHER'S SUICIDE IN DISPUTE

Mrs. Gutride Had Been Questioned —Union Sought to Blame School Officials.

Superintendent of Schools William Jansen today declared that officers of the C. I. O. Teachers Union were attempting to "smear" a legitimate inquiry he has been conducting into allegations of Communist activity on the part of the three or four teachers in the school system.

"If by these tactics they expect to prevent me from performing the duties of my office they are mistaken," Jansen declared. "I shall continue to do my duty notwithstanding any attempts to smear this office."

The latest controversy between the union and the school officials centered about the apparent suicide of Mrs. Minnie Gutride last week at her home, 200 East 16th street. A few days earlier Mrs. Gutride had been questioned at her school in Staten Island by Assistant Superintendent John Conroy and Nicholas Buccl, law secretary of the Board of Education. Mrs. Gutride was a member of the union.

On Friday Mrs. Rose Russell, legislative representative of the Teachers Union, declared that the "intimidation" to which Mrs. Gutride had been subjected, probably was a factor in driving her to take her life. The Police Department, attributing the woman's death to "apparent suicide," said she had left four notes, one of which stated that she had been suffering from cancer.

Warns of Intimidation.

Last night Mrs. Russell made public a letter she had sent to every member of the Board of Education stating that "this terrible event should serve as a warning as to the atmosphere of fear and intimidation which will permeate the schools in the wake of the witch hunting which the Superintendent seems to

on December 21 protesting the manner of questioning conducted by Conroy and Buccl.

Jansen, questioned today, bitterly resented the attempts of the union to imply that school officials were responsible for the apparent suicide of the teacher.

"It is always regrettable when a human being takes his life," he said. "In questioning Mrs. Gutride we did no more than carry out the duty imposed on this office. Certain accusations had been made against this teacher. Before proceeding any further we naturally questioned her. This office made public no information about these charges—as is usual in such cases—pending further information.

"As for a witch hunt, which the union attributes to me, let me say this: We have some 40,000 employees in this department. Within the last few months I have questioned, altogether, three or four of them. No one was questioned except on the basis of specific accusations which had to be investigated before further proceedings—if any. I do not regard such official inquiry as a witch hunt.

"If the union officials expect that by such smearing tactics they will stop this office from making legitimate inquiries they are mistaken."

Lederman Also Questioned.

The union disclosed that Abraham Lederman, its president, also had been questioned last week. This questioning took place in Jansen's office.

Its statement added:

"The manner in which Mrs. Minnie Gutride and Abraham Lederman were questioned without prior notice and without any opportunity to prepare or to get legal advice showed a shocking disregard of all humane considerations and of all the rights and safeguards which teachers on tenure have won through the years.

"While the superintendent in each case had the Law Secretary of the Board with him and a stenotypist, the teachers were ordered to answer questions right then and there. Mrs. Gutride was threatened with charges of insubordination and legal action. Mr. Lederman was told that refusal to answer under those circumstances could be used as a charge of 'insubordination.'

"In each case the teacher involved had a long and superior record of service to the children. There had never been a word of complaint from supervisors or parents in regard to conduct or utterance in the classroom.

"It is, therefore, very clear that performance in the classroom and service to the children are no longer regarded by Superintendent Jansen as criteria for judging teachers. Instead, political tests are to be applied, such as probing into thoughts, opinions and associations. In this, he is following the proposals set forth in the Buccl brief as well as the approach of the Teachers Union.