

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Board of Higher Education  
City of New York

FROM: Earl A. Martin,  
Brooklyn College

DATE: August 29th, 1938.

On August 5th, 1938, I was called before a sub-committee of the Dies Committee investigating un-American activities, that was meeting in the Federal Building at 2 Foley Square and given a subpoena. They asked me to dictate a statement concerning communism at Brooklyn College. I requested the privilege of preparing a formal statement. The request was granted and I prepared a statement which I later changed in form but not in substance.

On August 23rd, 1938, I read this statement before the Dies Committee in Washington. The enclosures mentioned in the paper together with other copies of THE STAFF extending back to 1935 were presented to the committee and are now in its possession.

In order that there may be no misunderstanding concerning my position, I am herewith enclosing a copy of the aforementioned statement, and setting forth a brief summary of my opinions below:

1. Aside from the communist doctrines of which I disapprove, I believe that any political party, including the Communist Party is guilty of unethical conduct when it uses an educational institution as a base for spreading its propaganda. This has been done by the Communist Party in Brooklyn College.

2. In Brooklyn College and elsewhere, the Communists have spread their doctrine anonymously. This in my opinion is particularly vicious and will lead to the formation of opposing secret organizations which in the end will cause violence. There has already developed in Brooklyn College a second anonymous publication "College Comment" which represents the opposing point of view.

3. The Communists have carried on a campaign of villification against those in positions of responsibility. The result of this has been a lowering of morale and a lowering of discipline. If the administrators in Brooklyn College are as reprehensible as described in these publications, it is the duty of those under them to prepare formal charges for submission to the Board of Higher Education. I am opposed to this campaign of villification.

4. The Communists in the college have not only spread their particular political philosophy by general articles presented in THE STAFF, and by including with these in the same envelope other pamphlets on Communism, but they have also frequently taken a position on matters of college policy that any civic minded citizen would consider outside of the realm of party politics.

The Board of Higher Education can easily verify the truth of the statements I have made above, as well as the truth of the statements made in the report. As for myself, I wish to say that I have never been the type of individual that waves the flag to simulate patriotism or who seeks publicity for self-aggrandizement. I have become involved in this situation

because forces are at work in Brooklyn College that run counter to my loyalties as a citizen of the United States, and my conception of what membership on a faculty in an American college should represent.

Respectfully yours,

*Earl A. Martin*

EARL A. MARTIN

## COMMUNIST ACTIVITY IN BROOKLYN COLLEGE

The Communist Party has been very active in Brooklyn College for several years. Their chief publicity organ is a periodical known as THE STAFF which is "issued monthly by the Brooklyn College unit of the Communist Party of America". Besides the regularly printed STAFF, there are numerous mimeographed sheets that the Communist Party distributes at the College. THE STAFF and a considerable number of the mimeographed sheets (together with other Communist publications) are mailed to members of the College staff as second class mail. Besides these, Communist circulars are handed out to students on the campus or on the streets just outside the campus. All Communist publications that concern the College are anonymous. THE STAFF has printed addresses for mailing contributions and articles but those who have gone to these addresses have reported that none of these are the headquarters of the paper. The regularly printed publication bears a Union label that has been defaced to such an extent that it cannot be identified. In one or two instances, a number appears adjacent to this Union label but it is very doubtful whether this number has any significance.

I am herewith presenting for your inspection a considerable number of copies of the aforementioned STAFF. All of these have been received by me or other members of the Department of Biology and are taken from the files of that Department. The articles that appear in this paper may be classified under the following general headings:

- A. Personal attacks on Administrative Officials of the College.
- B. Appeal for greater democracy.
- C. Dissemination of general information concerning the Communist program and specific information concerning the Communist program in Brooklyn College.

D. Attempt to discourage loyalty to American institutions.

A. Personal attacks on Administrative Officials of the College.

There have been repeated personal attacks on the administrative officials of the College. The general idea that the President, Dean, and Departmental Heads are dictators, who rule with an iron hand, appears frequently in different articles. Your particular attention is called to the reference listed below. I believe that you will find this one of the principal characteristics of Communist literature, not only at Brooklyn College, but elsewhere.

Enclosure A-1 "Another Robinson in the Making?" THE STAFF, January 1938

" A-2 "Our Departmental Heads; I - Martin Meyer." THE STAFF, March 1938

" A-3 "Hillary and Tammany". THE STAFF, March 1938.

B. Appeal for greater democracy.

An appeal for greater democracy has been one of the outstanding points stressed in the Communist publications. The idea of the whole group in the College voting on all major decisions in College policy is one of their major tenants. I do not believe that the Communists have any intention of abiding by democratic decisions. This is shown by the article in THE STAFF that was published after the majority of the Faculty of the College had condemned the action of the Communist Party and the Teachers' Union, with regard to the methods they had employed in supporting the case of Klein, a tutor, who was later dismissed by the Board of Higher Education.

Enclosure B-1 Article in THE STAFF entitled "Local Hearsts on the Move", May, 1937

" B-2 Mimeographed sheets of THE STAFF, dated May 1937

" B-3 "A democratic Front at the College", THE STAFF, dated May-June 1938

" B-4 "Behind Its Red-Baiting", THE STAFF, February 1938

C. Dissemination of general information concerning the Communist program and specific information concerning the Communist program in Brooklyn College.

It has never been possible to eliminate political propaganda entirely from our educational institutions. Nevertheless, most civic minded citizens concede that politics should be kept out of our institutions of learning. In almost every publication of THE STAFF, there are articles spreading the gospel of Communism.

In an article in THE STAFF, dated May 1, 1935, entitled "Why Communists?" (Enclosure C-1), the writer states:

".....We did not seek positions at this College for the purpose of spreading "communist propaganda" among you. To the contrary, we have turned towards Communism for the most part during the period of our service to the College, this period of the crisis, of unemployment and misery, of world economic and political chaos. We have become Communists because we have found that the Communist Party alone has a clear realistic program through which not only our present problems can be solved, but by means of which a new and better society may be realized. At the same time that we are Communists we are Americans. In fact, it is precisely because we are Americans, because we love our country, that we seek to overthrow the power of the industrial barons and financial dictators in order that the great body of American people might live a decent life. We are the true heirs of the American Revolution of 1776. We believe literally in the words of the Declaration of Independence that, "whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, (life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness) it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government."

Later in the same article, the writer states:

"We have learned through experience of the rapacity of our own capitalist class, through our experience of its complete domination of our government, through its increasing terrorism against any who struggle for a better life, that only the united struggle of the broadest strata of workers, farmers, and white collar groups, led by a militant fighting party, the Communist Party, with a scientific understanding of our society and a clear view of its objectives, can lead our country out of its misery into better social order. We are therefore members of that party, co-workers with all the oppressed of the earth for a socialist society."

In December 1935, in an editorial in THE STAFF, entitled "Student and Teacher", the writer declares:

"....We see that in the Soviet Union, where the working class won power by the November Revolution of 1917, the exploitation of labor by capital has been abolished and a new society has arisen in which the opportunities of education and the benefits of the arts and sciences are the common property of all. We see that educational institutions are flourishing there as never before in history and that students and teachers are welded together in a common effort which as its aim the fullest well-being of all society."

Quoting further:

"Some teachers honestly fear the loss of their jobs under Communism. That is a completely unwarranted fear (save for incurable reactionaries), as is shown by the fact that even to-day in the Soviet Union a large proportion of teachers in institutions of higher learning were teachers in the same institutions in Czarist days. No, it is not Communism we need to fear in the interests of our jobs, but the inevitable retrenchment that is taking place in education in America to-day under a declining capitalist rule. And if our efforts do not prevent the coming of Fascist reaction we know full well that educational budgets will be drastically cut, the number of students in our colleges will be diminished by economic pressure or by law (as has happened in Nazi Germany), and all honest and liberal teachers will be thrown out of their jobs. Particularly is this true in public institutions such as ours. We are Communists and we combine our efforts as students and teachers because we know that only a Socialist society will expand educational facilities and provide jobs for an ever increasing number of graduates in all fields of activity."

(Enclosure C-2, THE STAFF, December 1935)

In January 1936, THE STAFF published an article entitled "Communist Teachers". This article which is quoted below states the position of Communist Teachers in public institutions.

"THE STAFF has carried several editorials on teachers as Communists. Two fundamental questions have yet to be discussed. They are concerned with what Communist teachers

teach and with the right of teachers to engage in political activity. Both of these questions were answered by I. Anter, organizer of the New York District of the Communist Party, in an open letter to Dr. Harold G. Campbell, Chairman of the Board of Superintendents. In answer to the scurrilous attacks of Hearst on all liberal and progressive elements in our schools, calling them all indiscriminately "Communist" and attacking them for teaching Communism. Anter insists that Communists do not teach communism in their classes. His letter says "May I emphatically state that teachers in our public schools who may be members of, or influenced by, the Communist Party, do not teach Communism in the Public Schools. The Communist Party maintains its own instructional staff for the purpose of teaching the principles and objectives of Communism to anyone who may be interested". The point has been made that Communist teachers cannot help but interpret their respective subject-matters in Marxist terms. No one can deny the truth of this, but does not every teacher interpret his subject from some standpoint (in fact he cannot be a good teacher if he does not do so)? As Communists we exercise only the same right exercised consciously or unconsciously, by all teachers, whether Democratic or Republican, Protestant or Catholic. We seek to throw the fullest and best knowledge on whatever comes before us and to present the various points of view to our students for their criticism and analysis.

"As for our independent political activity Anter's letter continues: "We emphatically maintain that teachers, just as any other Americans, have the right to choose whatever political affiliation they desire. Moreover, school officials have neither the moral nor legal right to question teachers as to their political opinion or activity. It is basic in our very concept of American democracy, that political affiliation or activity cannot be the criterion of a teacher's right to teach in our public schools."

(Enclosure C-3, THE STAFF, January 1936, editorial entitled "Communist Teachers.")

Also attention is called to the editorial in THE STAFF, June 1937, entitled "Commencement" (Enclosure C-4, THE STAFF, June 1937)

The above articles are obviously attempts to convert members of the Faculty and students to Communism. It is my opinion that propaganda



of this sort has no place in American educational institutions. While there is no written law against the publication of political propaganda in our schools and colleges, neither of our major American parties have indulged in this method of propaganda to any great extent.

D. Attempt to discourage loyalty to American institutions.

In spite of the fact that there is ample evidence to-day to show that any country incapable of defending itself cannot survive, the Communists in the United States carry on propaganda against any program in this country and others, except Soviet Russia, to protect themselves in case of war. The R.O.T.C. has been ridiculed, as well as appropriations for the defense of the United States. The only conclusion that I can draw from this program is that the Communists are not loyal to American institutions and do not consider them worth defending. The columns that appear frequently in THE STAFF entitled "In the Rocket's Red Glare" and "Bombs Bursting in Air" are obviously attempts to ridicule American patriotism.

When any normal human being is associated with an organization, or is a citizen of a country going through a difficult period that threatens to destroy its very foundations, the natural response is to resolve differences of opinion and work together to restore it to a healthy condition. This is not the attitude of the Communists in Brooklyn College. Particular attention is invited to the articles in THE STAFF, dated June 1936 and June 1937, entitled "Commencement". These articles, by taking advantage of the present economic situation, discourage loyalty to the American form of government by such statements as "You are entering upon a

hostile world, which regards you as so much surplusage, a world that would rather call you a "lost generation" than do something to retrieve you; a world filled with turbulence, alarms, and preparations for wars; a world which, while it has no social use for you, will not hesitate to call you to sacrifice yourselves on the field of battle."

(Enclosure D-1, THE STAFF, June 1936).

At the time these articles were written, the Federal Government and the City of New York were in the process of spending approximately six million dollars to erect the new Brooklyn College.

Summary:

The activity of the Communists in Brooklyn College has done great damage to the institution. It has lowered the morale of the Faculty and has created a feeling of distrust of one colleague in another. Inasmuch as all publications are anonymous, it is impossible to make any correct estimate of the number of Communists on the Faculty and in the student body. The fact that no leaks have occurred through those responsible for these publications indicates that it is a small group on the staff of the College. Furthermore, from my general knowledge of the Faculty and of the student body, I am personally convinced that the majority are not Communists.

However, even though the group is in the minority, they are well organized, very articulate, and exert an influence out of all proportions to their numbers.

How to combat this propaganda that emanates from foreign isms is a problem that demands careful study. The citizens of the United States

have been accustomed to a form of government that is flexible and which permits a great deal of personal freedom. This condition can only exist where the average citizen conforms voluntarily to ethical conduct in cases where no laws cover the situation. It is to be hoped that your investigation may go a long way towards making the average citizen conscious of the danger that exists to American freedom in the spread of these foreign isms, and thereby start a regeneration of American ideals among the people as a whole.

August 18th, 1938 \*

EARL A. MARTIN,  
BROOKLYN COLLEGE

\* I am requesting that this report be substituted for the one delivered to you on August 16th, 1938.