

Deposition of a Father Concerning His Son

In the next instance, I have a deposition taken of one S. P. Davis, an elderly gentleman, who lives in Burlington, Washington.

When Mr. Davis was contacted, he advised that he had had a partial paralytic stroke, that it was utterly impossible for him to attend such a hearing, and upon contacting his physician I was so advised that to be brought into a hearing of this kind that it would be a matter of endangering his health.

Consequently, the deposition of Mr. S. P. Davis was taken and I shall present it at this time.

STATE OF WASHINGTON
COUNTY OF SKAGIT

"The witness, S. P. Davis, being first duly sworn, testifies as follows:

MR. WHIPPLE: Will you identify yourself, please?

MR. DAVIS: My name is S. P. Davis. I live at Burlington, Washington, and have lived in this state for 59 years.

MR. WHIPPLE: What relation are you to Phillip Hunt Davis?

MR. DAVIS: I am his father.

MR. WHIPPLE: Was your son, Phillip Hunt Davis, ever employed by the University of Washington?

MR. DAVIS: Yes, he was employed as a teaching fellow at the University of Washington from January 1, 1947, until June 30, 1947.

MR. WHIPPLE: Do you know whether or not your son was ever a Communist?

MR. DAVIS: Yes, he was for several years.

MR. WHIPPLE: In what department at the University was Phillip employed, if you know?

MR. DAVIS: In the Foreign Language Department. He was always good in foreign languages.

MR. WHIPPLE: Going back to the Communist Party, when did it first become apparent to you that your son was getting interested in Communism?

Phillip H. Davis Indoctrinated at Bellingham

MR. DAVIS: Phil first got indoctrinated in Communism during his high school career at Bellingham. He was on the High School debate team. It was about this time that the Young Communist League was functioning so actively at the Normal School at Bellingham, and he joined the Young Communist League in his senior year at high school, and then he went out to the Normal School and became very active in the young folk's branch of the Communist Party out there. He thought he had me in ignorance as to what was going on, but I soon knew from the crowd he was running with, and the kind of speeches he was making to young groups, that he was a goner so far as Communism was concerned. While he was attending the Normal School at Bellingham a Communist Party member told me on several occasions about the good work that Phil was doing in the Communist Party out at the Normal School. I resented all this and tried to talk to Phil about it, but he would always brush me off with some statement to the effect that I wouldn't understand what Communism was about anyway. Finally I became alarmed and went to the Normal School and tried to have a talk with the President of the Normal School, about Phil. That was Charles H. Fisher. He was President then. I complained to him about the activities of these young Communists and

the Communist Party generally there at the Normal School and told him how they were weaning my son away from his home, and from the church and from everything decent, for that matter, and **all the consolation I got out of Fisher was the statement: 'Mr. Davis, some day you will be proud of your boy, he's all right.'**

I have never forgotten that statement when I think back on what happened to him during those years and since then. If I remember correctly, he went to the Normal School at Bellingham during 1929, 1930, and 1931. Then he started getting into trouble because of his Communist Party activity. They were always calling on him to speak somewhere, as he was a good speaker, or they would call on him to help put over some front movement or whatever the line was at the time.

MR. WHIPPLE: Mr. Davis, may I interrupt to ask you if Phil got into any trouble with the authorities during this period because of his Communist Party activities?

MR. DAVIS: Yes, it seems to me that he was always in some kind of trouble because of his activity in the Communist Party.

MR. WHIPPLE: Would you specify any trouble he may have gotten into with the authorities?

MR. DAVIS: Yes. The first I recall was when he was arrested on November 24, 1931, at Bellingham. That specific charge was being a disorderly person and distributing Communist handbills.

MR. WHIPPLE: Mr. Davis, I hand you what has been marked for purposes of identification as Committee's Exhibit"

MR. WHIPPLE: I would like to have a number for this, Mr. Canwell.

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: The Committee's Exhibit, No. 18. You will mark it No. 18.

MR. WHIPPLE: Thank you, sir.

University Authorities Warned

MR. WHIPPLE: "Mr. Davis, I hand you what has been marked for purposes of identification as Committee's Exhibit 18, the same being a photostatic letter written on the stationery of the Bellingham Police Dept. dated March 7, 1941, and written to August Dvorak."

MR. WHIPPLE: That name is August Dvorak.

"Professor of Education, University of Washington, over the signature of William I. Stone, Stone, Chief of Police, in which he says:

'Re: Philip H. Davis
PD, No. 0639-Bellingham
PD, No. 21070, Seattle

The above subject was arrested by this department November 24, 1931, and charged with Disorderly Person (distributing Communist handbills). The case was dismissed.

The dismissal does not mean he was not guilty. **This man has been in an institution for observation (mental). He has for a number of years been known as a Communist agitator or to use the Communist term "Agit-prop."**

Hoping the information contained herein will prove of some value to you, I remain

Yours truly,
William I. Stone
Chief of Police'

Now, was this the Bellingham arrest you referred to above?

MR. DAVIS: Yes.

MR. WHIPPLE: **Then this arrest and the contents of this letter was known to the University of Washington some six years before he was employed as a teaching fellow out there?**

MR. DAVIS: **That is correct.**

MR. WHIPPLE: Was he ever arrested in any other city because of Communist Party activity that you know of?

MR. DAVIS: Yes, he was arrested here in Seattle in November sometime in 1935 for passing out Communist Party handbills to high school students. He got some kind of a small fine and jail sentence, but appealed the case to a higher court, and like the case over at Bellingham, it was dismissed.

MR. WHIPPLE: I hand you herewith what has been marked for purposes of identification as Committee's Exhibit No."

MR. WHIPPLE: 19?

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: 19.

"19, a photostated copy of a letter written to Mr. August Dvorak, Professor of Education, University of Washington, on March 7, 1941, in which Mr. E. W. Yoris,"

MR. WHIPPLE: That's spelled Y-o-r-i-s.

"Chief of Detectives of the Police Department, states:

"Re: Philip Hunt Davis

As requested in your letter of the 3rd, we have checked our records relative to the above-named man and find that he is the same as our local No. 21070, having been arrested on November 11, 1935, for violation of Section 5, Ordinance 32192, **passing out Communistic handbills to high school students.** On November 13, 1935, he was given a \$25.00 fine and 8 days. This sentence was appealed and was dismissed on February 4, 1936."

"He is also the same as Bellingham, Washington No. 639, arrested on November 24, 1931 and charged with vagrancy—a Communist attending Normal School preparing to teach in public schools. This charge was dismissed on February 23, 1932.

We trust that this information will be of service to you.

Very truly yours,

E. W. Yoris

Chief of Detectives'

and I will ask you if that is the Seattle arrest you referred to?

MR. DAVIS: That is correct.

MR. WHIPPLE: **Then this arrest and the contents of this letter were also known to the University of Washington also some six years before he was employed as a teaching fellow out there?**

MR. DAVIS: **That apparently is correct.**

MR. WHIPPLE: Did your son ever preach Communism or expound its doctrine around your home?

MR. DAVIS: Yes, he was continually talking it.

MR. WHIPPLE: Briefly, what was the Communist Party line or doctrine he advocated?

Compelled to Close His Home to His Son

MR. DAVIS: Well, my home was really broken up because of his preaching Communism. He was constantly bringing Communist literature into the

home in an attempt to influence his sister, his mother and all of their friends. He preached the idea that sexual promiscuity was excusable and he tried to influence my daughter and her associates along this line. His idea was that since crime was a violation of law, do away with the law and you will have no crime. Also, that since sin is a violation of the moral code, then do away with the moral code and you will have no sin. He preached this to his sister and her associates, and consequently I could not keep my wife and my daughter under the same roof with him. In fact, it became so bad that finally I had to close my own home in 1930 to my own son. It was something that was hard to do but I had to do it to protect the rest of my family. He would tell me that he was ashamed of me because I would not contribute time and money to Tom Mooney's defense. From 1926 and 1927 he has practically done nothing except promote the activities of the Young Communist League or the Communist Party. Of course, he has also made a meager living since then, but was unable to hold any job for any length of time, all because his mind was more on Communism than on the job at hand. **He bragged about helping organize the Abraham Lincoln Brigade on the University of Washington campus. This was a Communist controlled organization that was sent to Spain to fight in the Spanish Revolution where many of them lie buried even today. He bragged about organizing a Communist group when he attended Whitman College, just after he got out of high school. He also bragged of his activities for the Communist Party while attending the Normal School at Bellingham.**

MR. WHIPPLE: Mr. Davis, were you yourself ever a member of the Communist Party?

MR. DAVIS: I carried a Communist card for about four months.

MR. WHIPPLE: When and why did you become active in Communist Party affairs?

MR. DAVIS: About 1930 I wanted to find out what was going on and started working for the Communist Party to get the answer. Specifically, I got just as far behind the Communist movement as I could, hoping to find out what it was that would enable them to virtually take my own son away from me. For instance, during the waterfront strike of 1934, I was a special deputy out of the King County Sheriff's Office and during this strike I was spokesman for a Communist from the Communist Party chosen to confer with the Railway Firemen and Engineers as they were going to throw a picket line across their tracks at Pier 40 or 41. During this waterfront strike I overheard Harry Bridges giving directions on the day they held the big mass meeting near Pioneer Square. These conversations were right out in the open—not closed affairs—but I knew, as did everyone else that was there, that he was a Communist Party member because he was directing all the details of this mass meeting, and this mass meeting was called and sponsored by the Communist Party, and the Communist Party lined up and furnished all the speakers that day. So you see for a time I was trying to associate with the biggest party members in this Northwest area. All the time I had hoped to find out what hold they had either physically or mentally on my boy. They finally caught up with me and made it so hot I had to drop out of their movement. By this time I had come to the definite conclusion that there was nothing I could find out or could do that would change Phil's thinking, and it became apparent to me that his mental condition had become affected as a result of Communism. He developed a persecution complex and began showing it in his actions.

Committed to Sedro Woolley

MR. WHIPPLE: In what manner did this mental complex manifest itself?

MR. DAVIS: He got the idea everyone was against him. Just as an illustration, he went in one of the local stores there at home and got angry and threw his shoes in the face of the merchant, swearing and yelling all the time. Later he went into the bank to get waited on and I guess because they were not waiting on him as fast as he thought they should, he got angry and cussed everybody out there at the bank. On another occasion he spit on the new car of one of the guests who was located at the printing plant where he worked. Why he did these things I don't know except that this persecution complex seemed to affect his mind. As a result of these escapades and mental tantrums a few of the business men there at Burlington decided he ought to be sent to a mental institution.

Consequently he was sent to the Northern State Hospital at Sedro Woolley on June 6, 1933. I did not participate in his committal, but I understand he got a fair hearing before the sanity board. The complaint was filed against him by one of the deputy sheriffs. He hadn't been at the mental institution but a few days until all of the Communists in the country started hammering on the governor and superintendent of the hospital to release him. In fact, he was only in the institution about twenty days. The superintendent of the hospital told me that his examination revealed that Phil had a psychopathic personality with episodes of psychosis. On the day he was released there were a bunch of fellows hanging around the hospital demanding that he be turned loose, and I was told they were Communists, and their conversation was the Communist Party line at the time, claiming they represented the unemployed, the employed, farmers and other working class bodies. I was later informed by persons who were in a position to know, that it was a group whose business it was to get members of the Communist Party out of a jam any time they got into one.

The superintendent of the hospital, Mr. Rugge, said they were paroling him to me, and I was working in Bellingham at the time as a salesman and I put him in my car and took him with me to Bellingham and offered to get him a room at Bellingham when he got there, but he said he had friends he could stay with, and I didn't know at that time, but the Communist Party had him billed for a speech that very night. I learned later that he made the speech, and I never saw him from then on except on one or two brief occasions, because he left Bellingham the next day or so and went to Tacoma and got a job with a Communist Party newspaper.

MR. WHIPPLE: Are you familiar with his activities of recent years?

MR. DAVIS: No, except that I understand he was teaching out at the University of Washington during 1947, and I didn't know until recently that he was not still there. I don't visit him any more nor does he visit me. I certainly hate to report to you the things I have reported, but my loyalty to my government comes ahead of anything, so far as I am concerned. My other son wrote me from a battlefield in France during the last World War that if we could see just how the rest of the world was living that we would be proud of America and the fact that we were citizens of the United States, and that it was too bad that we had to go to all this expense and trouble to make the world safe for Communists. This son, Wilbur Davis, gave his life in France in defense of his country and I trust that in reciting these facts it may cause some young man or woman to stop and think before taking up

this Communist philosophy; and it has always been a mystery to me how Phil could get a teaching position at the University of Washington as late as 1947 when his record as a Communist had been so well known for several years. Not only did they have in their possession evidence indicating that he had been arrested for Communist activities in Bellingham and Seattle, but with any kind of investigation on their part, they would have known that he had been committed to Sedro Woolley as well. If there has ever been any adjudication showing him cured of this psychosis they referred to, I have never heard anything about it. All I know is he broke his parole the very first night he had been released to me, and I had no further control over him. I sincerely hope and trust that he will some day get straightened out in his thinking and can yet be of credit to his country that his brother Wilbur was.

MR. WHIPPLE: Thank you, Mr. Davis, that is all."

MR. WHIPPLE: That is the conclusion of the deposition.

MR. HOUSTON: Thank you Mr. Whipple.

MR. CAUGHLAN: May I hand you—

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: You may leave it at the office if you wish or take it up with us at the close of this hearing.

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: You may take this communication, some one from this—(indicating staff at counsel table).

You will desist in passing out literature or press reports or whatever they may be in this hearing. You'll have to do it outside of this hearing.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Chairman, I—this concludes the witnesses that we have scheduled for today and it is my suggestion that we recess now until tomorrow morning.

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: We will now be in recess until 9:30 tomorrow morning.

(Recess)

(July 21, 1948. 9:30 o'clock A. M.)

Pursuant to adjournment, the hearing was resumed at 9:30 o'clock a. m., July 21, 1948.

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: The hearing will now be in session, and I wish to again caution against any demonstrations by the audience. I feel, that having been cautioned, if there are demonstrations we will be justified in requesting arrests; because of—of information supplied this Committee, we feel that this admonition is again necessary and I want to state it so that no one will misunderstand, that we will not tolerate any interference with the orderly procedure of this hearing.

A VOICE: Mr. Chairman, may I present an important communication from me and my associates?

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: You may do so in writing.

THE VOICE: May I explain for your record what the subjects of this communication are?

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: No, you may just hand your message to the officers of this Committee, or make some other arrangement. We—

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: There will be no speeches in this hearing from the back of the room.

We will not attempt to proceed until we have order.