

TESTIMONY OF MR. JESS FLETCHER Labor Leader

JESS FLETCHER, called as a witness, after being first duly sworn, was examined and testified as follows:

MR. WHIPPLE: Will you state your name, please.

MR. FLETCHER: Jess Fletcher.

MR. WHIPPLE: Where do you live, Mr. Fletcher?

MR. FLETCHER: I now live at Monroe—just out of Monroe. My home's at 8731 Phinney Avenue, Seattle, King County.

MR. WHIPPLE: You have for many years, until recently, been a resident of the City of Seattle, have you not?

MR. FLETCHER: That's right, thirty years, I believe.

MR. WHIPPLE: Thirty years.

Now, I will ask you, Mr. Fletcher if you have not been prominently identified for many years at Local 6 of the Local Building Service Union?

MR. FLETCHER: That's right. I organized it.

MR. WHIPPLE: And was its president for many years?

MR. FLETCHER: Yes.

MR. WHIPPLE: Mr. Fletcher, I will ask you if you have ever been a member of the Communist Party?

MR. FLETCHER: I have.

MR. WHIPPLE: Will you state, please, to the Committee, when you first became a member of the Communist Party?

MR. FLETCHER: Sometime in '37.

MR. WHIPPLE: And when, if you remember, did you get out of the Communist Party?

MR. FLETCHER: Around '44, they quit inviting me to their doings. I—the Party said then they expelled me later on.

MR. WHIPPLE: They expelled you later on?

MR. FLETCHER: Yes.

MR. WHIPPLE: Now, Mr. Fletcher do you remember who recruited you in the Communist Party?

MR. FLETCHER: No, I—they—I wasn't recruited. They just took my money and said I was a Communist. They didn't give me nothing to show for it, but they said I was a Communist.

MR. WHIPPLE: Said you were a Communist?

MR. FLETCHER: Yes, a good one.

MR. WHIPPLE: And they also publicly expelled you at a later date.

MR. FLETCHER: Oh yes, they pu—they give it to the press that they expelled me, but they didn't tell me the date that they did it.

Paid Dues to Professor's Wife

MR. WHIPPLE: Now, during these years that you claim that you were a member of the Communist Party, did you pay any dues into the Party?

MR. FLETCHER: And how!

MR. WHIPPLE: To whom did you pay those dues, Mr. Fletcher?

MR. FLETCHER: To Professor Eby's wife, or my wife paid it to her.

MR. WHIPPLE: Is that the Lenna Eby whose name was referred to by your wife a few minutes ago?

MR. FLETCHER: That's right.

MR. WHIPPLE: Now, did you know Professor Harold Eby?

MR. FLETCHER: Yes, very, very well.

MR. WHIPPLE: What business or occupation did he have during the period of time that you were a member of the Communist Party?

MR. FLETCHER: He's an English professor at the University of Washington.

MR. WHIPPLE: Is that the same Professor Eby now that is a professor at the University at this time?

MR. FLETCHER: That's right, —that's right. Quite a decent fellow, too.

MR. WHIPPLE: Now Mr. Fletcher, during this period of time you were in the Communist Party, did you ever have occasion to sit in any closed Communist Party meetings with him?

MR. FLETCHER: Oh, yes, lots of them.

MR. WHIPPLE: Did you ever have any closed Communist Party meetings at your home?

MR. FLETCHER: Many of 'em.

MR. WHIPPLE: Did you ever have any closed Communist Party meetings at his home?

MR. FLETCHER: Yes.

MR. WHIPPLE: Did he ever attend any closed Party meetings at your home?

MR. FLETCHER: Yes.

MR. WHIPPLE: And you ever attend any closed Communist Party meetings at his home?

MR. FLETCHER: Yes.

MR. WHIPPLE: And was he at both places?

MR. FLETCHER: Always.

MR. WHIPPLE: I wish you would state for this record if you can, Mr. Fletcher, some conservative idea of the number of Communist Party meetings you have attended in which Professor Harold Eby has been in attendance?

MR. FLETCHER: Oh, anywhere between fifty, or two hundred—I don't know. We were meeting all the time. They "meet" you to death. There was a meeting all the time, pretty near. There was always some serious thing happening in the world someplace, and they are going to have a meeting about it.

Rappaport Says Mrs. James Was a Good Comrade

MR. WHIPPLE: Now, I wish to direct your attention to the name Florence Bean James, Mr. Fletcher. Do you know who that person is?

MR. FLETCHER: Oh, yes, very well.

MR. WHIPPLE: Who is Florence Bean James?

MR. FLETCHER: She's the head of the Repertory Playhouse.

MR. WHIPPLE: Now, how long have you known her?

MR. FLETCHER: Ever since I have been in the Communist Party.

MR. WHIPPLE: Did you ever have occasion to have any business with her during the period of time that you were in the Communist Party?

MR. FLETCHER: Oh, yes, I—I was head of the Union and—

MR. WHIPPLE: Are you referring now to Local 6 of the Building Service Union?

MR. FLETCHER: That's right, and they usually put on plays out there, and they would come to union leaders and sell nights for a play. The union would buy the house out and fill it with their members.

MR. WHIPPLE: What house do you refer to?

MR. FLETCHER: The Playhouse—or the Playhouse out here—

MR. WHIPPLE: The Repertory Playhouse?

MR. FLETCHER: The Repertory Playhouse, yes.

MR. WHIPPLE: All right. In that connection did you have any unusual experience with Florence Bean James?

MR. FLETCHER: Yes, she came to me to buy the house out, I think some—it was quite a sum of money, I forget the exact amount, and I didn't feel like taking it, and I don't—I told her I wouldn't take it. Later on I was contacted by Morris Rappaport.

MR. WHIPPLE: Who is Morris Rappaport?

MR. FLETCHER: He was then the district organizer of the Communist Party for the Northwest, and Rappaport brought this to my attention and told me that he thought I should buy that night, and Mrs. James was a good comrade and I should support the cause, and I bought it and wrote the check.

MR. WHIPPLE: Now could you tell us approximately when that was, to the best of your recollection?

MR. FLETCHER: Oh, it was somewhere around '38 or '39,—somewhere there.

MR. WHIPPLE: I think that is all, Mr. Fletcher, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Fletcher, that's all.

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: You may be excused from attendance.

(Witness Excused)

TESTIMONY OF ALBERT OTTENHEIMER OF REPERTORY PLAYHOUSE

MR. HOUSTON: Will Mr. Ottenheimer take the stand?

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: Will you be sworn?

MR. OTTENHEIMER: I'm being sworn under protest, Mr. Canwell.

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: Will you be sworn?

ALBERT M. OTTENHEIMER, after being first duly sworn was examined and testified as follows:

MR. OTTENHEIMER: I wish to draw your attention, Mr. Canwell, to the absence of my attorney.

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: You mean by your attorney, Mr. Caughlan?

MR. OTTENHEIMER: No, I mean by "my attorney" Mr. Clifford O'Brien, whom you ejected this morning. However, I'm not complaining of that at the moment, because his presence here would serve no useful purpose except to give the idea of how counsel is really allowed to protect the interest of his clients.

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: I would like to have time for all these speeches, but we haven't.

Now if you will proceed with the questioning.

MR. HOUSTON: Have you heard the previous instructions as to speaking into the microphone and not nodding, but answering audibly, Mr. Ottenheimer?

MR. OTTENHEIMER: Ad nauseam; Mr. Houston.

MR. HOUSTON: Will you please state your name?

MR. OTTENHEIMER: Well I'm the Albert Ottenheimer who sat here four days hearing himself and his associates villified by the greatest collection of liars and perjurers I ever heard.

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: Knowing Mr. Ottenheimer's profession, I don't want to deprive him of every opportunity to put on—well, I don't want to deprive him of every opportunity of answering here and I just wish to instruct him to make his answers responsive, or we will have to consider that he is refusing to testify, and he will be removed.

Now, if you will go on with your questioning.

MR. HOUSTON: Are you a citizen of the City of Seattle, Mr. Ottenheimer?

MR. OTTENHEIMER: I am, Mr. Houston.

MR. HOUSTON: Where were you born?

MR. OTTENHEIMER: I was born in the City of Tacoma.

MR. HOUSTON: How long—

MR. OTTENHEIMER: September 6, 1904.

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

MR. OTTENHEIMER: 25 years.

MR. HOUSTON: What is your occupation?

MR. OTTENHEIMER: I am an actor, and an artist.