

TESTIMONY OF JOSEPH COHEN
Associate Professor of Sociology,
University of Washington

JOSEPH COHEN, produced as a witness, after being first duly sworn, was examined and testified as follows:

MR. HOUSTON: Will you please state your name, Mr. Cohen?

MR. COHEN: Joseph Cohen, Cohen.

MR. HOUSTON: Where do you live, Mr. Cohen?

MR. COHEN: 1456 Thirty-eighth Avenue, Seattle.

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

MR. COHEN: Since 1909.

MR. HOUSTON: What is your occupation?

MR. COHEN: I am on the staff of the University of Washington, in the Sociology Department.

MR. HOUSTON: Are you married?

MR. COHEN: Yes, sir.

MR. HOUSTON: Do you have any children?

MR. COHEN: Yes, sir. Three.

MR. HOUSTON: Where were you born, Mr. Cohen?

MR. COHEN: South Bend, Indiana.

MR. HOUSTON: And when were you born?

MR. COHEN: October 1, 1904.

MR. HOUSTON: Where was your wife born?

MR. COHEN: My wife was born in Russia.

MR. HOUSTON: When was she born?

MR. COHEN: I believe it was in 1912, but I'm not sure.

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Cohen, I'll ask you if you are, or ever have been, a member of the Communist Party.

MR. COHEN: No, sir, I am not now and I never have been a member of the Communist Party.

MR. HOUSTON: Have you ever been a member of the Communist Political Association?

MR. COHEN: No, sir, I have not been a member of the Communist Political Association.

MR. HOUSTON: Have you ever been a member of the Communist Party of the United States of America?

MR. COHEN: No, sir, I have never been a member of the Communist Party of the United States of America.

MR. HOUSTON: Have you ever been a member of the Young Communist League?

MR. COHEN: No, sir, I have not been a member of the Young Communist League.

MR. HOUSTON: Have you ever been solicited for membership in the Communist Party?

MR. COHEN: I do not recall ever being solicited for membership in the Communist Party, or any of these other organizations you've just mentioned.

MR. HOUSTON: Were you ever a member of the National Student League?

MR. COHEN: No, sir, I was never a member of the National Student League.

MR. HOUSTON: Were you a signer of a petition to free Earl Browder in 1941?

MR. COHEN: I could not have been a signer of that petition, no, sir.

MR. HOUSTON: It's so stated—

MR. COHEN: To the best of my recollection. I— I would say that I am practically certain that I did not sign any such petition. I might indicate, Mr. Houston, that the word "Joseph Cohen" is a very pop—common name.

That's a popular name, and I don't think it's so popular now in some circles, but the committee has made some errors of that kind before, which I was able to correct before this hearing.

Denies Dr. Winther's Testimony

MR. HOUSTON: Did you hear the testimony of Dr. Sophus Keith Winther's here?

MR. COHEN: Yes, sir, I did, and I would like at some time during this testimony to comment on it, at any appropriate time.

MR. HOUSTON: You may do it right now.

MR. COHEN: Well, he made the remark that he assumed that I was a member of the Communist Party in 1935 and '36. I wish to state that he had absolutely no basis for any such assumption. I never attended any meetings of the Communist Party with him or with anyone else. I never paid him any money for that purpose, or any other purpose.

MR. HOUSTON: Well, I just think we ought to keep this record straight. Now, I have before me a transcript of the proceedings of the first day's hearing here, and that was not what Dr. Winther said.

MR. COHEN: I was just going from my memory.

MR. HOUSTON: Yeah.

"Question: **Do you know Professor Joseph Cohen?**

"Answer: **Yes, I do.**

"Question: **Was Professor Cohen a member of the Communist Party at the time you were?**

"Answer: **Yes, he was.**

"Question: I will ask you if you can identify or know this party."

—and he had your picture with him, taken in our office.

"Answer: **Yes, that is Professor Joseph Cohen.**

"Question: **And that is the man that sat in the Communist Party meetings with you?**

"Answer: **Yes, sir.**

"Question: **And he is a teacher at the University of Washington?**

"Answer: **Yes.**"

MR. COHEN: My comment is that Sophus Winther certainly knows me—there could be no question of identification, but he's mistaken in saying that he sat with any meetings of the Communist Party with me.

MR. HOUSTON: Was his wife also mistaken when she testified?

MR. COHEN: Yes, she was. She indicated that she did all the things that he did. I presume that includes saying all the things that he says.

MR. HOUSTON: That's all I have.

MR. COHEN: May I—

MR. HOUSTON: Wait, do you know a man by the name of Nat Honig?

MR. COHEN: That's just the point I wanted to comment on. There—I thought I heard Mr. Whipple reading a deposition state that someone by the name of Nat Honig, whom I do not know, knew of assignments that I had in the Communist Party. That is an absolute and unmitigated falsehood. Neither he nor anyone else could have any such knowledge.

MR. HOUSTON: Have you ever been accused of being a Communist before?

MR. COHEN: Have I ever accused of being—

MR. HOUSTON: Have you ever been accused of being a Communist before?

MR. COHEN: Before this hearing? Yes, Mr. Coleman of this Committee accused me of being a Communist and of hav—of this Committee—and of having made speeches in Geneva, Switzerland.

MR. HOUSTON: Were you in the Federal service—in the service of the Federal Government, during the war?

MR. COHEN: Yes, sir.

MR. HOUSTON: Were you called in there and asked questions if you were affiliated with the Communist Party?

MR. COHEN: When I was called in by Mr. Coleman, I took the initiative in calling to Mr. Coleman's attention—

MR. HOUSTON: I'm speaking of your Federal service, now.

MR. COHEN: Yes. I was commenting on that question.

MR. HOUSTON: Well, it's a different Coleman from the Coleman of this Committee, isn't it?

MR. COHEN: I'm now referring to a conversation I had with Mr. Coleman of your Committee. And Mr. Coleman called me in to confront me with certain accusations of having been a member.

The allegations that he made were that I had made speeches in certain parts of the world where I have never been. I tried to get completely from him any basis there might be for such charges and my attorney advised me at that time to turn over to him the transcript of the conversation between—or an interview between myself and members of the F. B. I., and since you've referred to it I'd like to comment on that.

Every person going into the Government service is subject, of course, to a loyalty check, and there was a question raised in my case and it's quite clear to me now that's just where the question came from.

My case was investigated, a complete report was made and I was completely exonerated. And if the Committee wishes any further information it could get it from Mr. Copeland, who reviewed the information completely. He's available in this community.

MR. HOUSTON: Were you ever interviewed by any F. B. I. agents?

MR. COHEN: None other than the—for the occasion of this interview, the copy of which—a transcribed copy of which I turned over to this Committee on my own initiative.

MR. HOUSTON: You have a copy of an interview that you've had with the F. B. I., then.

MR. COHEN: And so do you in your records have a copy of the same interview.

MR. HOUSTON: That you—

MR. COHEN: Which I turned over to you at the init—my initiative, at the suggestion of my attorney.

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: Well, Mr. Cohen, so that we understand each other, Mr. Coleman of our Committee approached you, telling you what we had in our files—

MR. COHEN: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: —regarding your case.

MR. COHEN: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: Have you any objection to that having been done in advance of the hearing?

MR. COHEN: No. I stated to Mr. Coleman that I was quite ready to speak with him and answer any questions. I would speak in complete confidence, and I hoped that he would let me know what information he had so that it could be corroborated in advance of these hearings. Apparently I got some but not all of the information.

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: You have no objection to his having approached you?

MR. COHEN: No, sir, not at all.

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: That is all. You may be excused. Thank you for appearing.

(Witness Excused)

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: We will be in recess for about 10 minutes.

(Recess)

MR. HOUSTON: Mr. Chairman I believe that I have concluded with the witnesses, and suggest that the hearing be concluded and that the witnesses now under subpoena be released from subpoena until called at a future date with a new subpoena—re-subpoena.

CHAIRMAN CANWELL: Before that is done, I wish to state that in the case of Professor Rader, two professors at the University, Professor Brents Sterling and Professor Joe Harrison, volunteered to appear as character witnesses for Mr. Rader. We have been trying to get in touch with them this afternoon. We would be happy to have them appear as character witnesses. However we are willing to concede that many professors and other people would appear for any person mentioned in these hearings as a character witness. We have tried to limit witnesses to people who have pertinent information. We were, however, unable to reach these people or we would have had them here.

We had another request to testify, whereby a Miss Maureen Meserve, who states that she has been a student in the Repertory Playhouse for the last year, and is willing to testify favorably for the Ottenheimers—Al Ottenheimer and the Jameses. In that no testimony has been adduced covering that period of time regarding the Jameses, or Mr. Ottenheimer, and due to the fact that she could not testify in any pertinent manner, we are not going to introduce this young lady as a witness. However, we are willing to concede that she would—her testimony would be favorable to the Jameses and Mr. Al Ottenheimer.

We will now release all people under subpoena and will adjourn—I am reading the wrong letter. I believe the woman who offered to—I believe you are correct. I thought I had that letter here. The name is Miss Brown—yes,

there it is. Joe Ann Brown. That is why I couldn't find the date, September 1—covering a period between September 1, 1947 to June 1, 1948, the young lady states that she was present in plays at the Repertory Playhouse and could testify favorably for the Jameses and Mr. Ottenheimer during that period of time. We will not put the young lady on the stand. We will concede that she could testify as to her relationships with them, and we will now adjourn subject to a recall of this Committee, and if necessary a re-issuance of some subpoenas at a later date, but all persons presently under subpoena by this Committee are dismissed from that subpoena.

(WHEREUPON adjournment was taken)

(CERTIFICATE)

I, RUSSELL N. ANDERSON, the stenographic reporter employed by the Un-American Activities Committee of the State of Washington to report the proceedings of its hearings held on July 19, 20, 21, 22, and 23, 1948, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct transcript of the matters therein set out.

I do further certify, that the transcript of the proceedings above referred to was verified by Adalyn M. Odey, Wilfred Berger and myself as being true and correct, we having compared word for word said transcript with the electronic recordings taken of the proceedings and the testimony given at said hearings.

RUSSELL N. ANDERSON.

APPENDIX
A COMPARISON
OF
THE COMMUNIST PARTY LINE AND THE ACTIVITIES
AND AFFILIATIONS
OF
CERTAIN PROFESSORS AT THE UNIVERSITY
OF WASHINGTON
AND
OFFICIALS OF THE REPERTORY PLAY HOUSE

Source material for the description of the Communist Party Line consisted of the Daily Worker of New York, which is the official organ of the American Communist Party and shows the changes in the foreign policy of the Soviet Union, and Appendix IX, Report of the Special Committee on Un-American Activities, U. S. House of Representatives. The First Report on Un-American Activities in Washington State—1948—contains an account of the Communist Party Line with detailed source references listed. In the present document summaries, based upon this detailed account, are used.

Source material for the activities and affiliations of the various individuals mentioned herein consist of: Appendix IX; excerpts from the People's World, Communist Party publication of California, and the New World, Communist Party publication of Washington State; daily newspapers, pamphlets, brochures, letter heads, books and articles which material is on file with the State of Washington Un-American Activities Committee.

COMMUNIST PARTY LINE PRIOR TO 1935

Prior to August 1935 no distinction was made by the Communists between fascist and democratic governments. They were all termed capitalistic and had to be destroyed by a revolution and replaced by a proletarian dictatorship.

Certain Activities and Affiliations Prior to 1935

October 1, 1930—SEATTLE POST INTELLIGENCER—

An article in this issue of the P.I. states that **Mrs. Florence B. James** becomes an assistant professor of English at the University of Washington today. **Mr. and Mrs. Burton W. James** are to head the department of dramatic arts which was placed under the English department last year.

February 24, 1934—SEATTLE TIMES—**"Learning About Russia From Dr. Garland Ethel."** By Virginia Boren.

"Whether they wanted to learn about one more nation in the Washington Athletic Club's Neighbor Nation series, or whether it was just curiosity that attends all lectures on the United States newly recognized neighbor Russia, there was an unusually large group of women in the club's main lounge yesterday morning. And they stayed to ask questions of Dr. Garland Ethel, member of the University faculty, not only in the lounge but in the dining room dater, where a no-host luncheon honored Dr. and Mrs. Ethel.

"No mere description of a unique government system was this lecture. Dr. Ethel went into the philosophical motives behind the theories, and interspersed his discussion with bits of information he had picked up in Russia a few years ago when he lived there for some time.