

THIS BUSINESS OF UN-AMERICANISM

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I find myself perpetually astounded, as I survey the world, that none other of its more than a hundred countries has set up a body parallel in name and purpose to our House Committee on Un-American Activities. This committee has been so successful in ferreting out and extirpating un-Americanism, that one would surely think the world, or at least the more civilized countries, would copy our triumph. Alas, we are alone.

Take our mother country, Britain, for instance. There is no parliamentary committee or commission therein, that I ever heard of, on Un-British Activities. It would seem, the island being as small as it is, and the sources of evil so near, that such a committee would find much work to do. Some question might be raised, of course, because the British are a conglomeration, whether it might not be better to set up separate committees, or at least subcommittees, on Un-English Activities, Un-Welsh Activities, Un-North-Irish Activities, and Un-Scotch Activities. (This last committee might also double as a budgetary watchdog.)

Should not the whole world take note of our model? There's Iceland, for instance, a small place, relatively defenseless, and with a military base on it belonging to a foreign power. Unless the Icelandic parliament speedily sets up a Committee on Un-Icelandic Activities, I predict that un-Icelandic ideas and doings will creep about that land. Maybe they creep already.

The same is true in the Congo, a trouble spot if there ever was one. The Congo needs many things, of course, one of them certainly being educated, thoughtful people. The Congolese should look around, search out the summits of civilization, and borrow judiciously. Possibly the most unique gift that could come from the United States, unique in that no other country seems to have thought of it, is an investigating and exposure committee of the sort here considered. Let the Congolese start with a Committee on Un-Congolese Ideas and Activities, and struggle up from there.

Another case that troubles my mind is little Panama. Here, shrunken by geography, the Colombian and Costa Rican borders lie near. And, to confound ideological purity, a great foreign power lies right slap-dab down the middle. This is worse than any problem we face. How hold down un-Panamanian activities and ideas? A Committee on Un-Panamanian Activities is clearly the first step, but these backward people seem not to have thought of that yet.

The illustrations given only start to show the need. The world is full of countries, and of creeping ideas and activities. Let there be created, to protect the appropriate peoples, in France a Committee on Un-Frenchism, in Tanganyika a Committee on Un-Tanganyikanism, and so to the antipodes. With a hundred such committees busily at work, the daily newspapers will be more interesting to read.

A professor I know says that my plans head the wrong way. Let our Congress -- both houses jointly, he says -- replace the present committee with a Committee on Unhuman Activities. Whatever is inhumane, let that be investigated. My objection to this is that it implies there is something more important than patriotism.

This professor's ideas, and probably his activities too, should be investigated. Indeed, if my own superior proposals are carried out, the resulting number of committees would more than equal the world's hundred countries, for this idea grows apace with me. It was in Oklahoma that I first opened my eyes; it was in this, my native state, that I was weaned and formed the first firm thoughts of youth. But more than once, in the elapsed years, I have been jolted and embittered by sundry new ideas and activities. There are those who say, resigned and cynical, that such is life, and the joltings and buffetings cannot be stopped.

But some of these ideas, and also activities, clearly came across the borders. Should not a state keep out unstate ideas? If the Oklahoma Legislature would only set up a crusading Committee Against Un-Oklahoman Activities, the clash of ideas in my brain might be stilled, and my troubled life simplified. One of my colleagues goes to conferences over in Arkansas, and it is certain that he comes back tainted. Soon ideas may start creeping in from Texas, and that could be overwhelming.

Who knows how widely this beneficial committee might be copied? In time there might be a full fifty such purgatory state committees. Our lives would be purer, and the daily news more lively.

One last thought: There is even danger from my neighbors. A poet once said (he was a foreigner; and probably, like other poets, should be investigated) that no man can be an island unto himself. But the fellow in the next office, or the teacher at the head of the classroom, may warp or endanger any of us. I see only one solution: Each man should turn himself into a Committee on Un-Meism.