

EDITORIAL

Mr. Biddle and Mr. Dies

The blast against the Dies Committee by Attorney General Biddle lived up to the predictions we made about it in The New Republic last week. Mr. Biddle shows that of the last thousand or so government employees listed by Dies as subversive characters, only two have actually deserved this title. A very large proportion of all Mr. Dies's names, says the Biddle report, come from untrustworthy sources. Many of them are taken from the mailing lists of Communist "front" organizations. In numerous instances the men accused had never heard of these organizations; but even if they had, membership is not illegal, or any proof of subversive activities, or Communist Party membership. In some cases, jealousy or malice of fellow employees has put an innocent man or woman on the Dies list. Morale has been greatly harmed by the witch-hunting of the Dies Committee. It has also cost \$100,000 and put a heavy burden on the FBI at a time when its services are needed for the protection of the country against the danger of real saboteurs. We cannot remember such plain speaking about a congressional committee by a federal agency in a long time.

Mr. Dies, under this heavy indictment, has tried typical cuttlefish tactics. He announces he is about to produce a new list of the names of fifty "high government officials" with Communist connections, all of them earning more than \$7,500 annually (a crime in itself among the Dies supporters). We remember several previous occasions on which Mr. Dies, in a tight corner, has made similar high-sounding promises of revelations that are to come. Rarely has he ever made good, and we have the strongest doubts that he will this time.

The Federated Press charges that on the Dies list of 1,100 persons accused of subversion, there was not one Nazi or Fascist. Yet the FBI picks up hundreds of such persons; only this week, it arrested a government employee on charges of doing Japanese propaganda. Mr. Dies looks in only one direction, and there is plenty of danger in others.

Let no one suppose that the Biddle report has put an end to the Dies persecution of New Dealers and liberals. It will go on; Congress does not seem to have sufficient collective courage to stop it. Meantime the Civil Service Commission continues to investigate charges of radicalism against government employees in ways which violate Anglo-Saxon principles of law, and with a personnel which in many cases is of shocking low quality. As Thomas Sancton points out in this issue of The New Republic, almost anybody can get and hold a government job more easily than can a conspicuous anti-fascist of some years' standing.