RED HAWAII:
THE POSTWAR CONTAINMENT OF COMMUNISTS IN THE
TERRITORY OF HAWAII

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Introduction

"You must know what is among you before it is too late":
The Public Perception of American Communists

This thesis examines the discourse of domestic communism as it developed in Hawaii after World War II. It looks at images of Hawaiian communist party members as presented in the local and national media, in Hollywood films, in court cases, and in government hearings. Specifically, this study focuses on representations of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) during the 1949 dock strike, which resounded with charges of communist influence. It likewise analyzes the notions about communism that emerged in the 1950 hearings of the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) regarding the territory of Hawaii, in the 1952 Warner Brothers film Big Jim McLain, featuring John Wayne as a HUAC investigator sent to Honolulu to break up a communist cell, and in the 1952 trial of the "Hawai'i Seven," ultimately convicted of conspiring to advocate the violent overthrow of the United States government. One of the major themes linking these events was their common emphasis on managing the public's perception of the communist menace. In each of these cases, public reaction was key to the success or failure of anticommunists in Hawaii.

1 Ichiro Izuka, The Truth About Communism in Hawai'i (Honolulu, HI: by the author, 1947), 3.
In each one of these events or discursive texts, anticommunists attempted to influence the public perception of domestic communism. This was true whether they were trying to convince a national audience that a handful of Moscow-based radicals manufactured the dock strike, or whether they proved to a twelve-member jury that members of their community belonged to an international conspiracy to overthrow the government. In every case, they stressed that the power to stop these subversives rested in the community itself. In order to contain domestic communists successfully, citizens needed to help break the dock strike, to testify and to ostracize those named in front of HUAC, and to vote to convict in the trial. This thesis is an inquiry into the tools employed by anticommunists. It finds that their reliance on public action to contain the communist menace meant that much of their work concerned convincing American citizens that they faced a dire threat.

The danger that the Communist Party allegedly posed conflicted with stories of an often disorganized and thwarted organization that emerged from the testimony of former communists. In his appearance before HUAC, ex-communist Ichiro Izuka discussed the party’s efforts to go underground after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Members were instructed to bury or burn all communist literature and party records. While most of their comrades burned their books, Alice and Peter Hyun

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chose to bury theirs on property they rented in Koko Head. They subsequently moved and, in 1945, the new tenant uncovered the trunk when he plowed his field. According to Izuka, the Communist Party sent him, Alice Hyun, and Jack Kimoto to retrieve the books.

Upon arriving at Koko Head, they could not find the hidden trunk, so they asked the farmer to direct them to it. After having unearthed the books, they decided to burn them, then and there. None of them smoked, however, and as Hyun walked back to the farmer's house to ask for a match, the three were arrested by agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), who had photographed the entire event. Izuka, Hyun, and Kimoto were questioned for five or six hours before being released without charges.3

Communists in Hawaii did not appear to be clever and hardened international conspirators, but this did not stop professional anticommunists from claiming that the Territory of Hawaii was in the grip of a vast and secret conspiracy. Shortly after island stevedores went on strike for higher wages in 1949, Nebraska Senator Hugh Butler claimed that the strike was the quintessential attack by domestic communists. Dismissing the longshoremen's legitimate grievances, Butler wrote that "a relative handful of Moscow adherents in the islands, 

3 HUAC Transcript, 1395-1401. While Izuka set the date as May 1945, he was not confident he was correct. Historian T. Michael Holmes dates it to 1943; see T. Michael Holmes, The Specter of Communism in Hawaii (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 83, but the Honolulu Star-Bulletin sets it in 1946; Honolulu Star-Bulletin, April 11, 1950, 1.
operating chiefly through the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, has presently sabotaged the economic life of the Territory."4 Beginning with the ILWU dock strike, communism came to dominate public political discourse about Hawaii.

It is important to understand that these events did not occur in isolation. They fed into and off of the fears raised by communism's global spread. In August 1949, the State Department announced that China had fallen to the communists, and the Soviet Union seemed poised to engulf Eastern Europe. A little over a month later, news of the Russian's first atomic detonation was announced. This news came as a shock in the United States, where experts did not expect the Russians to produce an atom bomb for at least three more years.5 In February 1950, the British announced that Dr. Klaus Fuchs had confessed to passing English and American nuclear secrets to Russia while he worked on the highly classified program from 1943 to 1947.6 This seemed to explain the Soviet's early development of atomic weapons, and punctuated the fear of communist espionage already established by the Alger Hiss scandal. In one historian's words, in the cold war the United States did not just face the threat of war with another nation but rather a “vast and fundamental conflict between ways of acting and thinking, the kind of

4 Senate, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. Statehood for Hawaii: Communist Penetration of the Hawaiian Islands. 80 Cong. 2 sess. 1949, 1. Hereafter referred to as the Butler Report.
6 Ibid., 137.
clash... which time and again had set whole civilizations crashing
down.  

The sources examined in this thesis include newspaper
commentary, House and Senate hearings and reports, a motion picture,
and trial transcripts. They provide a wide view of the Hawaiian
communist threat as it manifested in popular culture and political
discourse, in labor disputes, in Congressional hearings, and in the
courthouse. They also present a detailed account of who the Hawaiian
communists were, how they operated and recruited, and what their
ultimate goals were. I argue that the discourse that developed made
"communist" synonymous with criminality and treasonous, revolutionary
anti-Americanism. Anticommunists in Hawaii painted a detailed picture
of the threat the Communist Party of the United States of America
(CPUSA) posed, and they publicly demonstrated how they actively
protected Americans from the menace of communism.

The dock strike, HUAC hearings, Big Jim McLain, and the Smith
Act trial all presented the Territory of Hawaii as a place threatened by
communist influence and infiltration. This fed into and off of the
national fear that brought HUAC to Hollywood in 1947 and fifteen other
Smith Act trials between 1948 and 1957 to courtrooms scattered from
Puerto Rico to New York City. Hawaii was seen as a vulnerable and

7 Ibid., 61.
strategically valuable territory, as a place where communists could dominate local politics through their control of union leaders.

Communism also emerged as a key issue in the battle for Hawaiian statehood. Before World War II, objections to statehood focused on the looming military threat of Japan in the Pacific and on the uncertain loyalty of the territory’s large population of Japanese immigrants. The World War II combat records of the all Japanese-American 100th Infantry Battalion and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, as well as the continued efforts of Nisei soldiers later in Korea, ended any serious doubt as to the loyalty of Hawaii’s immigrant population and made it politically unwise to accuse Japanese-Americans of disloyalty. The threat of internal subversion was still used by statehood opponents after the war, however. Historian Roger Bell noted it was still possible to level the charge of being the “enemy within” against the allegedly communist-controlled ILWU, whose membership was largely composed of Asian migrants. Bell concludes, “Thus, conveniently, opposition to trade unions and anti-Japanese sentiment converged.”

Even though debates over admitting Hawaii as to the United States tended not to be overtly racial, racism and the desire to preserve Jim Crow laws in the South motivated much of the opposition to Hawaiian statehood. Early on, President Truman tied Hawaiian and Alaskan

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8 Roger Bell, Last Among Equals: Hawaiian Statehood and American Politics (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984), 82. The 442nd was the most decorated unit in the history of the U.S. military.
9 Ibid., 120.
statehood to his civil rights initiatives. Southern Democratic senators in particular opposed statehood as their ability to filibuster civil rights legislation would be threatened by the admission of four new senators.\textsuperscript{10} Though Hawaii had been solidly Republican between 1902 and 1946, statehood was also opposed by conservative Republicans who feared that Hawaii’s representatives would tilt the balance in favor of liberals in the closely-divided Senate.

In 1945, Hawaii’s territorial Senate called for immediate admission as a state. Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes also endorsed statehood, and in 1946 President Truman announced his support. The cold war magnified Hawaii’s strategic importance to the United States. This was recognized by General Douglas MacArthur and Admiral Chester Nimitz, both of whom were in favor of admitting Hawaii as a state. The United States House of Representatives also consistently supported statehood. Never between 1947 and 1959 did a House majority oppose it.\textsuperscript{11} Attaining Senate approval was much more difficult. In 1948, the Senate held several hearings on statehood for Hawaii. In March the Senate reported that Hawaii was “able and ready” to become a state.\textsuperscript{12} Later that year, Senator Hugh Butler of Nebraska performed his own investigation and came to very different conclusions. Butler titled his report, released in June 1949, \textit{Statehood for Hawaii: Communist

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 179.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 128.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 130.
Penetration of the Hawaiian Islands. In the introduction, Butler wrote that his visit to Hawaii left him with "the deep conviction that international revolutionary communism at present has a firm grip on the economic, political, and social life of the Territory of Hawaii." Butler concluded that "statehood should not be considered seriously, in my opinion, until the people of the islands demonstrate by positive steps a determination to put down the menace of lawless communism."13

The "positive steps" taken by the people of Hawaii included attempts to break the allegedly communist ILWU, prompt action to oust identified communists from the state constitutional convention, and convicting the Hawaii Seven. None of this ultimately overcame objections to statehood which remained rooted not in anticommunism but in racism and the drive to maintain partisan power. This thesis interrogates both the intentions and the results of anticommunist activists in "Red Hawaii."

Chapter one focuses on charges of communist infiltration of Hawaiian labor unions in the 1949 strike of ILWU dockworkers. For nearly six months, longshoremen in Hawaii staged a strike against the seven largest stevedoring companies in the territory, seeking to resolve the 30 percent wage disparity between stevedores in Hawaii and those on the West Coast who were performing the same work. The conflict was long and bitter. Both national and local figures used the dock strike to

13 Butler Report, 1.
demonstrate the danger of a communist conspiracy. Working largely from newspaper coverage and congressional testimony regarding the strike, this chapter assesses the diverse political and business interests that seized on the strike to strengthen their anticommunist cause.

With the exception of T. Michael Holmes' *The Specter of Communism in Hawaii*, scholarly work on the dock strike has been focused on biographical, labor, or legal issues. This chapter centers attention on the heated rhetoric the strike generated. It seeks to explain why charges of "red infiltration" resonated so widely in the territory of Hawaii, and demonstrates how the ILWU's opponents used charges of communism to shift public support away from the union. This chapter places the dock strike and the charges of communist influence that arose in the context of labor's newly risen power to explain the militancy that characterized both sides of the conflict.

Chapter two takes a close look at the hearings held by the House Committee on Un-American Activities in Hawaii. It argues that in its hearings in Hawaii, the committee's strategy, its power and its limitations, became quite visible. On their arrival in the islands, committee members made it clear that they aimed to secure results through arousing public opinion against communists. HUAC entered the territory just as a Supreme Court decision affirmed its right to hold reluctant witnesses in contempt of Congress. HUAC expected and
received substantial public support to politically isolate several named communists.

In the course of the hearings in Hawaii, the committee cited thirty-nine individuals for contempt for refusing to answer its questions. The overturning of these contempt citations in 1951 established the Fifth Amendment as a legitimate protection against HUAC. While much has been written about the House Committee on Un-American Activities, its investigation in Hawaii has rarely received notice. This chapter uses a close reading of the hearings transcript to discern the committee’s strategy in Hawaii. It argues that HUAC’s often-overlooked experience in Hawaii demonstrated the committee’s power and its basis, but it also illuminates the limitations of HUAC’s authority.

Chapter three provides a detailed reading of Big Jim McLain, a 1952 Warner Brothers film produced with substantial cooperation from the House Committee on Un-American Activities. While overlooked by many scholars, Big Jim McLain was written and produced by professional anticommunists, and as such it offers insights into a worldview that should be explored. The film follows HUAC investigators who return to Hawaii in 1952 and bust a secret communist cell planning to sabotage the Korean War effort. It was one of the most successful anticommunist movies of the 1950s, and was an integral part of Hollywood’s and Washington’s anticommunist movement. Much of the battle against domestic communists took place in the public sphere, and this chapter
positions Big Jim McLain at the heart of the anticommunist movement. This film presents the views and the concerns of HUAC after it lost the ability to incarcerate the uncooperative. Far from stopping the committee, this constitutional obstacle only heightened the committee’s need to garner public support for its mission to contain domestic communism.

Chapter four examines the Smith Act trial in Hawaii and argues that postwar anticommunist discourse itself was used to secure a conviction of alleged communist leaders. The focus of most scholarship regarding the Smith Act cases is on constitutional issues of free speech or on the veracity of government witnesses. This thesis asks a previously unanswered question: how were federal prosecutors able to attain convictions on such slight evidence of individual wrongdoing at a time when membership in the Communist Party was not in and of itself a crime? Working primarily from the trial transcript, I argue that the Hawaii Seven were convicted not because of anything they did, but rather through the prosecution’s depiction and definition of communists as professional “revolutionists.” Very little time in the trial was spent establishing that the defendants were party members. Instead, the prosecution chose to focus on exactly what membership meant, presenting a detailed portrait of the communist threat that left the jury no choice but to convict.
To date, few scholars have investigated the history of communism and anticommunism in Hawaii. T. Michael Holmes' book, *The Specter of Communism in Hawaii* (1994) along with H. Brett Melendy's *The Federal Government's Search for Communists in the Territory of Hawaii* (2002), which focuses on the FBI's activities, are the only extensive published works on the subject. This thesis takes a different approach and relies more fully on House and Senate transcripts, trial transcripts, and newspaper articles. Its interest lies less with communists in Hawaii than with those who pursued them. This group included local businessmen opposed to the ILWU, *The Honolulu Advertiser*, a major Hawaii newspaper, ex-communists who published leaflets and testified before congress and the courts, Senators and Congressmen who hoped to prevent Hawaii's admission as a state, the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and John Wayne and Warner Brothers films.

This thesis seeks to explain how American communists came to be feared. It argues that it was largely the efforts of anticommunists that helped reify the threat of communist subversion in the public's mind. The constant public discussion and investigation of communism in Hawaii created a climate of fear against which the Hawaii Seven were ultimately convicted. As their defense attorney Richard Gladstein pointed out, it would be impossible to separate his defendants from the "veil" of fear the prosecutors had produced. Any conviction, Gladstein

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was confident, would come from the "natural emotions . . . and revulsions that [jury members] have when they hear some of this testimony," and not from the merits of the prosecution's case.¹⁵

On May 1, 1949, the International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union began a territory-wide dock strike. For almost six months, Hawaii’s longshoremen did not load or unload cargo for any of the seven largest stevedoring companies: Ahukini Terminals, Castle & Cooke, Hilo Transportation & Terminals, Kahului Transportation, Kauai Terminals, Mahukona Terminals, and McCabe, Hamilton & Renny. Both sides realized the seriousness of an interruption in shipping. Before the strike, the ILWU acknowledged it would have major consequences for the entire territory, not just the disputing parties. The whole community felt the strike in rising food prices, increased unemployment, and in small business failures. Its greatest impact was on the sugar industry. By cutting off shipments to the continental United States, the strike thoroughly crippled sugar, Hawaii’s major industry.

The longshoremen went on strike because Hawaiian stevedores were paid forty-two cents an hour less than dock workers in San Francisco. Making this disparity even more grating was the fact that these men did the same work. They loaded and unloaded the same cargo, on the same ships, for the same companies, and were even

16 Honolulu Advertiser, May 26, 1949, 1. Emphasis original.
represented by the same union. The ILWU reported that in one meeting before the strike, Alex Budge, president of Castle & Cooke, said the pay gap was justified since living in Hawaii was much easier than elsewhere due to “happier circumstances” and “better weather.” ILWU negotiator Lou Goldblatt replied, “This is the first time I have ever heard anyone take God’s gifts and put them on the paycheck.” Recognizing the vast difference between the companies’ view and the union’s, Goldblatt knew it was going to be a long strike.

The dock strike quickly evolved into an ideological struggle. Throughout the 177-day conflict, businesses, local and national newspapers, ex-communists, picketers, and opponents of Hawaiian statehood claimed that the ILWU was communist-dominated, and that the strike was part of a larger plot for the communist takeover of Hawaii. Recalling the strike in 1964, former Governor John Burns said the businesses “called it a political strike. They called it Communist. What else could they do? Their position was completely untenable.”

This chapter takes these charges of communism seriously. It examines the discourse of communist activity developed by the public, the media, and the federal government. It seeks to explain why claims of communist plots to dominate Hawaii, though alarmist and untrue, were found widely credible, and why the issue of communism emerged, persisted, and resonated among both local and national figures. In

18 As quoted in Ibid., 244.
19 As quoted in Holmes, *The Specter of Communism in Hawaii*, 142.
public discourse, the dock strike appeared to demonstrate the power of a small cadre of Soviet-led revolutionists. This view took the pressure off the seven stevedore companies to settle the strike, as acceding to the union’s demands would only further the communist plan. It gave the public a more sinister explanation for the shortages they faced, and another reason to oppose the strikers. It also gave statehood opponents an example of just how powerful Hawaiian communists were. This strike elevated concerns about communist infiltration to new heights and connected Hawaii to the larger United States’ pursuit of domestic communists.

The rise of postwar anticommunism in Hawaii came partially in response to the emerging power of organized labor. In Hawaii, the ILWU embodied that power. The ILWU was a self-proclaimed radical leftist union headquartered in California and led by Harry Bridges, an Australian constantly accused of being a communist. Jack Hall, another publicly identified communist, served as the union’s leader in Hawaii. The structures of the Communist Party and the ILWU paralleled one another. Hawaii locals of the union and the party were offshoots of established groups in San Francisco, and both took direction from headquarters there. The longstanding rumors of communist leadership of the ILWU combined with the fact that both the ILWU and the regional Communist Party were headquartered in San Francisco, underscored claims that the ILWU was communist-dominated.
With these allegations, accusers meant to challenge the new political and economic power of labor in Hawaii. To understand why such vehement opposition to the ILWU arose in 1949, it is important to understand the contemporaneous explosion in union membership and the resulting political and economic power amassed by the ILWU. After being stymied by martial law and a military governor for most of World War II, organized labor activity in the Territory of Hawaii surged as soon as wartime labor restrictions were lifted. Membership in the ILWU took off from just over 900 in 1944 to over 33,000 in 1946 as leaders successfully organized all but two of the sugar plantations, many of the pineapple workers, and the stevedores. The advantages of affiliating with the union were clear, as ILWU contracts negotiated in the early postwar years substantially increased the wages of its members.

The ILWU's ascendance as a force in Hawaiian society stemmed from an unexpected decision made by a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) hearing officer, Arnold Wills. The National Labor Relations Act of 1935, also known as the Wagner Act, had explicitly not extended the right of collective bargaining to agricultural workers. Both the ILWU and the sugar companies expected the NLRB to rule that this exclusion meant that only 15 to 20 percent of plantation workers were eligible to

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21 Charles Larrowe, Harry Bridges: The Rise and Fall of Radical Labor in the United States (New York: Lawrence Hill and Co., 1972), 256. For a more in-depth analysis of this rapid unionization, see Jung, Reworking Race, and Zalburg, A Spark Is Struck!

22 Bell, Last Among Equals, 139.
participate in union elections. Instead, Wills ruled that the Wagner Act applied to every sugar worker except those involved in cultivating and harvesting. This decision meant that an unexpected majority of fifty to sixty percent of sugar workers were covered by the Wagner Act. In the NLRB elections, the sugar workers voted overwhelmingly to join the ILWU.

The ILWU quickly turned its growth into political power. Jack Hall, the newly appointed regional director, founded a Political Action Committee (PAC) in partnership with several other unions. The PAC registered workers to vote, and Hall predicted in early 1944 that labor would make inroads into the sugar industry's control of the territorial legislature. The elections that year demonstrated the extent of labor's newfound strength. Fifteen of the nineteen House candidates backed by the PAC were elected, along with six of the eight PAC-supported Senate candidates. In July 1945, Hall realized his early political goal when, six years after he drafted and submitted the bill to the territorial legislature, the Hawaii Employment Relations Act (HERA) became law. Called the "Little Wagner Act," HERA extended the protections of the Wagner Act to all agricultural workers, securing the union's position in the sugar and pineapple industries.

23 Jung, Reworking Race, 142.
24 As quoted in Zalburg, A Spark is Struck!, 116.
25 Ibid, 118.
26 Jung, Reworking Race, 143.
The economic organization of Hawaii helps to explain the militancy of both capital and labor in Hawaii strikes. Five companies dominated the Hawaiian economy: American Factors, C.Brewer & Co., Alexander & Baldwin, Castle & Cooke, and Theo H. Davies & Co. The so-called “Big Five” companies had power over sugar, the largest industry in Hawaii. By 1933, sugar accounted for 70 percent of the total value of Hawaiian exports and the Big Five controlled over 95 percent of it.\(^{27}\) They also had a substantial interest in Matson, the company that transported Hawaii’s entire sugar crop to the United States. The sugar monopoly gave Matson an advantage over competing shipping companies. With sugar comprising the bulk of Hawaii’s exports, competitors’ ships had to sail back to the continental United States essentially empty.\(^{28}\)

The close relationship between the Big Five companies guaranteed cooperation and enhanced their power. These companies were tied together through marriage and common corporate officers and directors. Through formal business organizations like the Hawaii Sugar Planters’ Association (HSPA), they collectively resisted labor trouble on the plantations. In a 1909 strike by Japanese sugar workers, every HSPA plantation, including those not struck, helped pay the costs. Employers in Hawaii formed a “class of actors,” to use the words of historian Howard Kimeldorf, a group that faced common problems with common

\(^{27}\) Ibid., 12, 16.
\(^{28}\) Ibid., 43-4.
action and one that appeared to labor to represent the organized, oppressive forces of capitalism.29.

In the late 1940s, labor unrest in Hawaii resembled organized, territory-wide class conflict as the ILWU challenged the Big Five across the islands in every important industry. The ILWU unionized workers in sugar, pineapple, and stevedoring, all of which were more or less controlled by the Big Five in Hawaii. The employers' organizations fought the union on every island. Kimeldorf noted that this kind of broad resistance from capitalists could legitimate class conflict in the eyes of the workers and strengthen a radicalized labor culture.30 Harry Bridges' Senate testimony demonstrated this connection. When asked if he believed in class struggle, Bridges replied, "It is not a question of whether I believe in it or not. I am injected into it everyday."31

In 1945, after a little over a year of renewed activity, labor had demonstrated its ability to elect legislators and get favorable laws passed, but the ILWU had yet to face a major economic showdown with the Big Five. This confrontation came with the sugar strike in 1946, a seventy-nine day strike which marked the first major ILWU victory in Hawaii, and labor's first victory ever in the sugar industry. The ILWU was confident going into its first territory-wide, industry-wide strike. By June 1946,

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30 Ibid., 17.
the union had more than 20,000 sugar workers as members, and thus felt confident enough to ask for major concessions. At issue in the strike were labor's demands for a forty-hour workweek, a union shop, and a 40 percent wage increase – from 46½ cents-an-hour to 65.32

The wage demand was not unreasonable. Most of the proposed increase was to come from the union's request for the financial value of "perquisites," the wages the plantations paid in kind.33 For decades the sugar industry had used perquisites, which included housing, fuel, and medical care, the cash value of which was unknown, to inflate the wages they paid their employees and recorded on government reports. In 1939 when the federal government ruled that the 25 cent-an-hour minimum wage applied to the sugar mills, the plantations were paying 19 cents-an-hour. Management claimed that the perquisites cost them 6 cents-an-hour, thus meeting the federal minimum. During World War II, the plantations appraised the same perquisites at 15-cents-an-hour, again to guarantee that they met federal wage guidelines.34 The workers wanted the perquisite system ended, an 18½ cent raise to allow them to afford their own housing and medical care, a forty-hour week, and a union shop. The employers claimed that Hawaiian sugar workers were already the highest paid in the world, and that the industry was not profitable enough to raise wages that significantly.

33 Larrowe, Harry Bridges, 270.
34 Ibid., 271.
As both sides prepared for a showdown, it became clear that the 1946 sugar strike would not follow the same script as previous strikes, where eviction served as one of the plantations’ most powerful tools. In 1946, management did not evict, or even threaten to evict, striking workers from plantation housing. Two weeks before the strike deadline, the manager of the Ewa plantation had agreed to provide the strikers with two acres of land, a tractor, and a plow so the striking workers could grow crops. He also agreed to let the strikers use the plantation swimming pool. The union agreed to allow its members to continue working on the plantation utilities during the strike, provided the men would be paid their regular wages which would in turn be given to the strike committee. Dwight Steele, a representative of the sugar industry, called this “the damndest strike.” As he complained, “we supply the housing, the utilities and the jobs for some workers to make money to feed the rest.”

Visiting ILWU leaders called the strike the best-prepared they had ever seen, one they could not lose. Before the strike began, the union made arrangements with landowners to hunt wild pigs; with fishermen, to buy fish at wholesale prices for the strikers; and with plantation owners, to grow food crops on their land. During the strike, the ILWU also managed to interrupt the plantations’ importation of strikebreakers.

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35 Frank Thompson, as quoted in Ibid.
36 As quoted in Zalburg, A Spark is Struck!, 140.
37 Ibid., 143.
from the Philippines. Several ILWU longshoremen shipped out with the plantation recruiters and, with the help of Filipino ship stewards, they managed to sign up most of the 6,000 imported workers for the ILWU before the ships landed in Hawaii.\textsuperscript{38}

In the end, the union scored both an economic and a symbolic victory, winning its wage demand and an end to the perquisite system. Though they did not win a forty-hour work week or a union shop, both the Big Five and the ILWU saw the sugar strike of 1946 as a major victory for labor. Although the individual demands were important, the strike's true resonance was in its symbolic value. Research director for the Hawaii Employer's Council, Philip Brooks noted that the strike frightened employers and left the workers with an "awe" of the union's power. Brooks said "for the first time in Hawaiian history the employers had been soundly and definitely thwarted. The psychological value of this display of defiance. . . . could not fail to add immensely to union power."\textsuperscript{39}

In the time between the sugar and dock strikes, the issue of communism in the ILWU made its first major appearance in Hawaii, with Ichiro Izuka's pamphlet, \textit{The Truth About Communism in Hawaii}, published in 1947, shortly after Governor Ingram Stainback declared a "war against communism" in the territory.\textsuperscript{40} Izuka had spent years

\textsuperscript{38} Larrowe, \textit{Harry Bridges}, 271-2.
\textsuperscript{39} As quoted in Zalburg, \textit{A Spark is Struck!}, 155.
\textsuperscript{40} Holmes, \textit{The Specter of Communism in Hawaii}, 43.
acting as either the president or vice-president of ILWU local 1-35 on Kauai. He was a self-confessed ex-communist, who in the preface to his pamphlet stated that he aired his charges because “I see the [Communist] Party now as it really is, a conspiratorial party, working against the welfare of the people of my native Islands... You must know what is among you before it is too late.”

Though privately published, *The Truth About Communism in Hawaii* found wide distribution and its claims resounded for years, through the 1950 HUAC hearings and the 1952 Smith Act trial. Izuka was a key witness in both. His pamphlet briefly traced his family history before focusing on how the party drew him into its fold. At the resolution of a Kauai dock strike in 1937, Jack Hall and George Goto visited the island to help negotiate a contract. Izuka claimed that they were both members of the Communist Party, and he accused them of secretly distributing communist literature, which Izuka “devoured.” Reading this literature, Izuka thought that he “had discovered a party that really had something to offer the workers.” Because of this, he joined the party.

*The Truth About Communism in Hawaii* made some serious accusations. Izuka presented the ILWU as an organization dominated by

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42 29,000 copies were printed in English and several thousand more in Ilocano for distribution among Filipino plantation workers. See Zalburg, *A Spark is Struck!*, 208.
44 Ibid.
a small, secret cadre of disciplined subversives. He claimed that from 1938 until 1940, communists successfully kept the union following the Communist Party line by cleverly hijacking the union’s parliamentary procedure.45 Izuka’s pamphlet detailed the postwar reactivation of the party, and exposed the close links between the Communist Party, the ILWU in Hawaii, and their parent organizations in California. The Truth About Communism in Hawaii painted a portrait of the ILWU as a communist-controlled group subject to strict party discipline. He concluded his discussion of the relationship by sealing the ties between the union, the party, and the Soviet Union:

We might say that the union feeds the Party and in return the Party controls the union in the interests of Party policies and objectives. These policies and objectives, of course, are geared toward the policies and objectives of the Soviet Union. If one changes, the other changes.46

The Truth About Communism in Hawaii gave credence and weight to Governor Stainback’s claims of “Red plots” and communist infiltration. In his pamphlet, Izuka identified more than forty people in Hawaii as communists, most of them linked to the ILWU. The perceived threat of Hawaiian communism continued to revolve around the ILWU for the next several years, through both the 1949 dock strike and the HUAC hearings in 1950.

46 Ibid., 22.
In early 1949, the ILWU sought to renegotiate wages for longshoremen in Hawaii due to a growing disparity in pay with their West Coast counterparts. Before World War II, longshoremen in Hawaii made 10 cents-an-hour less than workers in California. By 1949, that differential had risen to 42 cents. Longshoremen on the West Coast made 30 percent more than workers in the Territory of Hawaii for loading and unloading the same cargo, on the same ships, for the same companies. The ILWU contract did not expire until March 1950, but it included a clause for wage renegotiation in 1949. The issue of wages was the only one the contract allowed the union to negotiate. Other terms of the contract could not be renegotiated until it expired a year later. Because of the tremendous pay gap, Jack Hall invoked the wage-reopening clause in February 1949. The union asked for either a 32 cent raise to approach parity with West Coast longshoremen, or for the wage dispute to be arbitrated. The employers offered 8 cents based on changes to the cost of living and steadfastly refused arbitration. Because California longshoremen had won a 15 cent raise in 1948, anything less than a 16 cent increase fell short of closing the gap and would prove unacceptable to the workers in Hawaii. The longshoremen began the strike on May 1 and did not return to work until October 23.

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Almost immediately after the strike commenced, opponents leveled charges of communist infiltration at the ILWU. The *Honolulu Advertiser*, a longtime sugar ally and critic of the ILWU, made some of the most fantastic allegations about the strike. On May 4, just three days into the 177-day strike, the first in a long series of anonymous, front-page editorials by Lorrin P. Thurston, one of the paper’s owners, appeared. These took the form of “Dear Joe” letters – addressed to Stalin and presented in the voice of ILWU leaders – which set the tone for much of the public discourse surrounding the dock strike. A confrontational attitude was evident in the very first article, headlined, “What Are Your Next Orders, Joe? We Are Ready!” It concluded “Come on, Joe Stalin. We’ve got Hawaii all set up for you. It’s a pushover.”

Over the next few days, Thurston expanded his accusations. His letters alleged that political action had not been taken to halt the strike because of the voting power of the ILWU; that the ILWU was on strike to cause economic misery because “People Were Getting Too Happy and Satisfied”; and that religious members of the ILWU were “undermining their own churches.” The “Dear Joe” letters worked to tie the strike in Hawaii to global communist concerns. In one article, Thurston signed off with “See you in China,” and on May 9, two days before the blockade of Berlin was lifted, he had already drawn analogies to the “blockade” of Hawaii: “Berlin. Hawaii. Same thing, Joe! Blockade ‘em! Starve ‘em out.

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50 *Honolulu Advertiser*, May 4, 1949, 1.
51 Ibid., May 6, 1949, 1; May 12, 1949, 1.
Bust 'em! Don't let them get the things they got to have.\textsuperscript{52} By the end of the month, these front-page features had accused union leaders of everything from following Stalin's blueprint for revolution and aiming to crush small businesses, to driving up food prices and perpetuating labor grievances.\textsuperscript{53} Thurston claimed that the union leaders' "real purpose is to prevent ANY KIND OF LABOR PEACE for more than a few months," and he even inferred that the communists supposedly running the union planned "to take over every plantation, every business, every organization, kick out every church, [and] stop free speech."\textsuperscript{54} If the communist-dominated ILWU was allowed to bring its plans to fruition, Hawaii would be "the first bit of land under the U.S. flag to come under the control of you and your boys Joe. New Russia! In a much better climate!"\textsuperscript{55}

Opponents of statehood seized on the issue of communism and used the dock strike to illustrate their point. In late June, Hugh Butler, a Republican Senator from Nebraska, released a report to the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs titled \textit{Statehood For Hawaii: Communist Penetration of the Hawaiian Islands}. Butler had long been an opponent of Hawaiian statehood. Although he had finished his investigation in 1948, the report was not released until June 1949, when the dock strike provided a perfect example of what Butler called the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{52} Ibid., May 5, 1949, 1; May 9, 1949, 1.
\item \textsuperscript{53} Ibid., May 10, 1949, 1; May 6, 1949,1; May 20, 1949, 1.
\item \textsuperscript{54} Ibid., May 24, 1949, 1, emphasis original; May 19, 1949, 1.
\item \textsuperscript{55} Ibid., May 26, 1949, 1, emphasis original.
\end{itemize}
“familiar pattern of Communist ‘softening up’ by economic attrition before the big push for the final coup d’etat.”\textsuperscript{56} Communism haunted the debate over Hawaiian statehood throughout the 1950s.

One reason why the charge of communist domination worked so well against the both the ILWU and statehood was the American fear of communist concentration – the notion that a few revolutionaries would be able to gain influence far beyond their numbers. This theme was addressed in Izuka’s story of the party’s control of the ILWU, where he claimed that only a few communists could control the votes of hundreds of honest union men.\textsuperscript{57} The “Dear Joe” letters extended this argument further, arguing that the ILWU functioned as a tool of the communists. Through the union, communists multiplied their power; as Thurston pointed out, “Just think, only 2,000 of us stevedores, out of 540,000 people in Hawaii, with just a few guys at the top calling all the moves the way we want to see them (but making ‘em legal of course), are going to be able to raise hell with every person, job and company in Hawaii, before we get pau [finished].”\textsuperscript{58}

Senator Butler relied on the same argument, though he saw communist influence penetrating “every aspect of life in the Territory – business, labor, transportation, agriculture, education, publishing, radio, entertainment, and, in lesser degree, even the religious life of the

\textsuperscript{56} Butler Report, 11.
\textsuperscript{57} Izuka, The Truth About Communism In Hawaii, 8.
\textsuperscript{58} Honolulu Advertiser, May 7, 1949, 1.
community." According to Butler, the Communist Party's true programs were secret. They accomplished their goals "not by honest appeal to the voters, but by a conspiratorial campaign to gain positions of influence in established organizations." The recent expansion of communist control in Europe reinforced the perceived power of a small group of communists. Butler emphasized that the small number of card-carrying party members in Hawaii should be considered a threat since communists had been able to take over Russia, Poland, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Rumania despite the fact that party membership had never risen above 9 percent in any of these countries. The newly evident economic and political power of the ILWU seemed to demonstrate the true extent of communist power in Hawaii, and the Butler Report detailed its secret and undemocratic nature.

This theme of communist concentration appealed to enemies of statehood because it confirmed their fears of disproportionate representation. Opponents objected to admitting Hawaii as a state because its small population would be represented by two senators. According to New York Senator Frederic Coudert's math, each Hawaiian Senator would represent roughly 35,000 citizens. In contrast, Coudert represented over 2,500,000 constituents. Statehood for Hawaii would also grant full voting rights to the predominantly nonwhite citizens of the

59 Butler Report, 2.
60 Ibid., 9.
61 Ibid., 13.
62 Bell, Last Among Equals, 136.
territory which provoked considerable opposition from social and political conservatives in the American South. Their opposition arose because, as Mississippi Senator James Eastland said, statehood for Hawaii would mean “two votes against the South on all social matters.” Hawaiian statehood would enfranchise the large Japanese population in Hawaii, which many believed would give undue power to an ethnic minority. In the words of Georgia Representative Prince Preston Jr., “When you give these people the same rights we have today, you will have two Senators speaking for these 180,000 Japanese.”

If the claims made by Thurston, Butler, Izuka, and others were taken seriously, then the strike did not involve real economic issues but rather formed part of a communist-inspired plot. Acceptance of this claim significantly changed the stakes of the conflict. Settling the dispute or agreeing to arbitration would simply further a communist plot led by Harry Bridges, the president of the ILWU.

The seven stevedoring companies involved in the strike bought a full-page ad in the July 3 Honolulu Advertiser to publicize Bridges’ alleged scheme. This ad credited Bridges with saying during various negotiations that his goal was to break businesses so that all industry could be nationalized. The ad claimed Bridges wanted the government to take over “everything but the corner grocery and barber shop.” A crucial step in his plot was forcing the companies to submit labor disputes to

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63 As quoted in Ibid., 134.
64 As quoted in Ibid.
binding arbitration, which required both sides to agree to accept the arbitration board's decision before it began its inquiry. The companies viewed this as a significant erosion of employer rights. Arbitrators would take control of labor contracts away from the companies. The advertisement contended that the best way for the ILWU to strip an employer of his rights was "to make it impossible for him to say how much of a wage he will pay his employees." The companies argued that, ultimately, arbitration meant letting a third party fix their prices, fix their profits, and put them out of business. 65

Equating the strike to a communist plot also undermined the validity of the stevedores' wage demand. Senator Butler wrote "it must be borne in mind that the maritime workers in Hawaii do not themselves call these strikes. The strikes are ordered from the Communist-controlled ILWU headquarters in San Francisco."66 The idea that grievances were being manufactured by outsiders justified management's opposition to the strike and placed the onus for settling it on union leaders rather than the companies or the rank-and-file. Again, the Izuka pamphlet and "Dear Joe" letters had an important place in explaining the communists' control of the union. Izuka detailed how the communist leadership dominated meetings and policies within the ILWU, and Thurston, laying out the "Low Down on Sugar Strike Balloting," alleged

65 Honolulu Advertiser, July 3, 1949, 10. Nine days later, Bridges denied making these statements in his testimony before the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare.
66 Butler Report, 10.
that union leaders used three separate techniques of vote fraud and voter intimidation to get the result they wanted.67

By the time the union took a vote on an employer offer of a fourteen cent raise in June, doubt had been cast on the validity of ILWU votes. The stevedores’ overwhelming rejection of the proposal did not impress upon the media the honesty of their position. The Advertiser alleged voter intimidation and questioned the vote figures. It noted that only 1,615 ballots were cast though at least 2,000 dock workers were eligible to vote. The editorial claimed that “it is reasonable to conclude that a considerable number of them do not want to continue the strike.”68 It did not note that the union’s rejection of the fourteen cent offer was so overwhelming that even if every one of those workers had voted to go back to work, the strike would have continued.

Support for the strike did not extend much beyond the ILWU, as all citizens of Hawaii felt its economic impact. With most of the arable land tied up in producing sugar and pineapple, the territory of Hawaii depended on imports for many of its necessities.69 Local newspapers chronicled the rising costs of food, increasing unemployment, and small business failures in front-page articles throughout the conflict. In its second week, the Advertiser declared that the longshore strike was a strike “against Hawaii’s people.” Shipping strikes were “strikes against

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68 Honolulu Advertiser, July 2, 1949, 2; July 3, Editorial page.

69 Jung, Reworking Race, 42.
the housewife. They empty her shopping bag. They cut down her supply of bread and rice. They deprive her children of milk. They deny eggs to her invalid sister." 70

In what became one of the most salient symbols of resistance to the strike, more than 300 Honolulu housewives organized and began picketing the ILWU headquarters on May 31. The women marched with brooms bearing signs urging union employees to go back to work. Hundreds of women in the so-called "Broom Brigade" continued to picket the ILWU through early August. 71 While some joked that the Broom Brigade "was the only time most of the people in this community ever saw these haole [white] women with a broom in their hands," the marching women took the project seriously. 72 Latching on to symbols of motherhood, and often picketing with their children. They used their brooms effectively, and Brigade founder Mona Holmes said the idea behind it was to "sweep the ILWU into the harbor." 73 The protests publicized the impact of the strike on the larger community. The Broom Brigade's posterboard-strapped brooms read "Fight Communist Cancer" and "This War is against Communism." 74 Such words demonstrated how parties used rhetoric and symbols to gain the moral high ground and with it the power to win the conflict.

70 Honolulu Advertiser, May 9, 1949, Editorial page.
71 Zalburg, A Spark is Struck!, 250.
72 As quoted in Ibid., 251.
73 As quoted in Ibid.
74 Honolulu Advertiser, July 3, 1949, 3.
Several “Dear Joe” letters addressed the anger of women over the strike. “How Do You Handle Wahines [women] – Joe?” one letter asked: “We can’t sock ‘em in the jaw – shoot ‘em or just get rid of ‘em with no questions asked over here. . . . Going home to a wild wahine ain’t fun – even in Hawaii.”

Editorials in the Advertiser were unwaveringly supportive of these female counter-picketers. One, titled “Womanhood Aroused,” claimed that the ILWU faced “the fury of womanhood at outlanders who have invaded their homes, denied their children nourishing food, [and] demand that they beg permission before they can bring into Hawaii the necessities of life.”

The strike ultimately resulted in intervention by both the territorial and the federal governments. Governor Stainback, beset by correspondence demanding he intervene in the strike eventually did get involved in the conflict. On June 15, Stainback announced he had formed a fact-finding board to conduct an inquiry into the strike’s causes. Given just one week to investigate, the board recommended a fourteen cent raise for the strikers. While the stevedoring companies agreed to this, the longshoremen firmly rejected the proposal, which did not begin to close the widening pay gap with their West Coast brethren.

On July 7, the U.S. Senate introduced a bill authorizing the president to appoint boards with the power to make binding

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75 Ibid., May 10, 1949, 1.
76 Ibid., June 9, 1949, Editorial page.
recommendations to resolve the dock strike. The Senate conducted a hearing on the bill, with Harry Bridges representing the ILWU and James Blaisdell appearing on behalf of the stevedoring companies. Both sides of the Hawaii strike opposed the bill, Blaisdell because it so closely resembled arbitration and Bridges because he did not believe the union needed any help. Bridges asked the federal government to "just leave us alone. We will take the people on and whip them baldheaded before we get through." Blaisdell's testimony helped to explain why the employers so adamantly opposed arbitration of labor disputes, especially this one. "This is not a question of wages in an ordinary sense," he argued, but rather "a question of submitting to arbitration one philosophy of wages as against another." Blaisdell maintained that wage rates had to be based on local conditions – the "real" wages of the workers, patterns of wage increases in their community, and the going rate for similarly skilled work in other industries. By these standards, he said, the stevedores were doing quite well. In fact, on this scale they were the highest paid workers in Hawaii performing this type of labor. Blaisdell explained that the employers could not accept parity as a valid wage determinant because "once we adopted the premise . . . of parity there

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79 Ibid., 106.
80 Ibid., 59.
81 See Ibid., 27.
would never be any more bargaining in the Hawaiian Islands. Our bargains would be made on the West Coast or East Coast."

Bridges' testimony sharply contrasted with that of Blaisdell. He compared the economic conditions of longshoremen in Hawaii and elsewhere, concluding that "Hawaiian longshoremen are the lowest paid and the hardest working longshoremen in the United States." He noted that stevedores working in Alaska were paid more than even those in San Francisco, owing to a 15 percent higher cost of living. Bridges argued that a thirty-two cent raise was warranted since the cost of living in Hawaii, as in Alaska, was higher than in the United States, "but in Hawaii, the men receive less instead of more." In 1949, the ILWU was working toward wage parity, but it never demanded absolute equality. The union's goal was simply to narrow the gap between members working on the West Coast and in Hawaii. Bridges pointed out that throughout the strike, union men unloaded cargo for a number of small, independent shippers for $1.72 an hour - ten cents less than longshoremen received in California.

Most investigations into the strike by the territorial and federal governments dismissed the relevance of communism in the dispute. Stainback's fact-finding board focused on the wage issue and ruled that the question of communism was not properly before it. In testimony

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82 Ibid., 59.
83 Ibid., 102.
84 The Butler Report was the most notable exception.
before the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, Senator Wayne Morse
gave Bridges an opportunity to deny allegations of communism. He
asked “Mr. Bridges, do you deny the allegation that the motivation of the
union and your leadership of the union is to communize the economic
life of the islands?” Bridges replied “Oh, absolutely. . . . Of course that is
ridiculous. We are after a wage increase, nothing more and nothing
less.”85

As July came to a close with no strike bills before Congress and no
sign that President Truman would act, it appeared that the federal
government would not intervene in the conflict. Seeking to reopen the
docks through the territorial government, Governor Stainback called the
territorial legislature into special session on July 26, asking for the
authority to seize and operate the docks. On August 6, the legislature
passed and the governor approved a dock seizure bill and began
operating the docks on August 15.86 During his Senate testimony,
Bridges had mentioned the possibility of territorial seizure of the docks,
promising that ships loaded by strikebreakers would not be unloaded.
He made it clear that “the position of this union will be to reach those
ships in any port in the world that they can and tie them up with the use
of the longshoremen.”87

85 Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, Hearing on S. 2216. 81 Cong, 1 sess.
July 12, 1949, 132.
86 Ibid., 254.
87 Ibid., 114.
Bridges stayed true to his word. Though every ship in the Honolulu harbor had been unloaded by the end of August, the Matson fleet was idled, and other companies had little luck shipping goods out of Hawaii. Matson was the major shipping agent in Hawaii, with a monopoly on transporting Hawaiian sugar. Four of the Big Five had 40 percent ownership of the company, which was losing $800,000 a month throughout the strike. By the end of September, over 500,000 tons of sugar, worth over $61 million, was waiting to be shipped out of Hawaii.\textsuperscript{88} As long as Matson remained idle, sugar could not be exported and the union remained confident in victory.\textsuperscript{89} To prevent Hawaiian ships from being unloaded on the San Francisco docks, the ILWU flew two picketers to San Francisco. Members of the San Francisco ILWU local refused to cross this two-man picket line to unload ships from Hawaii.\textsuperscript{90} Following a restraining order preventing the Hawaiian longshoremen from picketing, one of them headed up to The Dalles, Oregon, to picket a ship carrying 'hot' pineapple from Hawaii. The picket lines in Oregon erupted in violence shortly thereafter, but the ship did not get unloaded.\textsuperscript{91}

The strike continued for two months after the territory seized control of the docks. Negotiations in New York, Hawaii, and San Francisco all failed to make any progress until October. On October 4, the companies were considering granting a twenty-one cent raise to take

\textsuperscript{88} Zalburg, \textit{A Spark is Struck!}, 283.
\textsuperscript{89} See Holmes, \textit{The Specter of Communism in Hawaii}, 149.
\textsuperscript{90} Paul F. Brissenden, “The Great Hawaiian Dock Strike,” 266.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 267-8.
effect in two steps. They would offer a fourteen cent raise immediately with another seven cent raise in March 1950. On October 6, Harry Bridges accepted this offer, and awaited word that the employers had likewise agreed. Bridges was at the airport before his flight back to California and, although he had not heard from the employers, he assumed they had accepted the deal. Before boarding his plane, Bridges announced that the strike had been settled. The employers, however, were still meeting to consider the terms of the settlement. Within minutes of Bridges’ announcement, a reporter asked them to comment. Though some hesitated at the thought of this large raise, they considered the losses the sugar companies suffered and accepted the settlement.92

On October 23, 177 days after they went out on strike, the stevedores returned to work. Both sides claimed victory. The employers maintained that they had settled for the fourteen cent raise recommended by the governor’s fact-finding committee without having to submit to arbitration. The ILWU claimed victory, arguing that the total settlement was twenty-one cents, enough to start closing the gap between Hawaiian longshoremen and those on the West Coast.

The 1949 dock strike was connected both to the nationwide postwar strike wave and to the postwar red scare. Following the broader national pattern, workers in Hawaii quickly organized after the war and demanded increased wages. The ILWU represented a broad swath of

workers in the territory, and they defeated the Big Five in political, legislative, and economic showdowns. "Enemies of the ILWU seized on the issue of communism to cast suspicion on unions and workers, and the dock strike of 1949 came to represent the threat that domestic communists posed. The constant charges of Soviet influence led the territorial bar association to call for the House Committee on Un-American Activities to investigate in Hawaii in May 1949. The Chamber of Commerce also requested investigations, and the territorial legislature called for HUAC to visit on October 7, just one day after the strike was resolved and over two weeks before the longshoremen returned to work.\textsuperscript{93}

The dock strike gave every citizen in Hawaii a reason to fear the economic power of the ILWU and by extension the Communist Party. By the end of the strike, unemployment in the territory exceeded 17 percent, and many of those who were still employed faced pay cuts. Food prices had climbed more than 6 percent, and it was estimated that the strike cost the territory $100,000,000.\textsuperscript{94} The fears that arose during the strike received national attention and resurfaced with force in the HUAC hearings in Hawaii, in screenings of \textit{Big Jim McLain}, and in the conviction of the "Hawaii Seven."


\textsuperscript{94} Zalburg, \textit{A Spark is Struck!}, 288.
Chapter 2

“The Inevitable Day of Reckoning for the Reds”: The Success and Failure of the Policy of Exposure in the Hawaii HUAC Hearings

The dock strike of 1949 aroused the suspicions of anticommunists nationally, and in the wake of the strike, the House Committee on Un-American Activities accepted invitations to investigate the territory. Calling the “Red situation” in Hawaii “critical,” HUAC committed to a public visit in January 1950. The hearings were held in April, and hundreds of spectators packed daily into Iolani Palace, the seat of the territorial government, eager to hear what would be revealed.

They were not disappointed, as over the course of nine days a string of sixty-six witnesses appeared before the committee. Most of them refused to answer at least one of the committee’s questions. Some of the uncooperative were held on the stand for over an hour. Others were almost immediately dismissed. The twenty-seven friendly witnesses related stories of communist meetings in the back rooms of bookstores, of buried and burned stashes of Marxist literature, of clandestine recruitment and planned political infiltration, of power within labor unions, and of Soviet control.

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95 Representative Francis Walter’s opening statement before the House, Committee on Un-American Activities. HUAC Transcript, 1354.
96 Honolulu Star-Bulletin, January 17, 1950, 1
Prior to the hearings in Hawaii, the committee had been fairly successful in prosecuting those who refused to testify. This success ended in the Hawaii hearings with the dismissal of every contempt citation issued. By the end of 1951, judicial decisions had essentially removed HUAC's power to cite with contempt any witness who refused to testify. The committee's admitted goal of exposing the communist threat could still be reached through careful questioning of the uncooperative, but HUAC lost its ability to incarcerate alleged communists. Without the threat of contempt, the committee's ability to contain domestic communism relied largely on community reaction to its disclosures. The Hollywood blacklist remained the quintessential example of this, but the removal of two members of the state constitutional convention identified as communists during the Hawaii hearings demonstrated another way this power manifested itself. In these hearings on the communist penetration of Hawaii, HUAC evinced both its power and the limitations on its power.

HUAC subcommittee chairman, Pennsylvania Representative Francis Walter, clearly stated the aims of the hearing in his opening remarks. Calling Hawaii the "Gibraltar of the Pacific," Walter declared his intent to "alert Hawaii and the entire American Nation to the dangers of a Red Pearl Harbor."97 He was confident the committee would be effective because:

97 HUAC Transcript, 1354.
There is no greater power than the power of public opinion, and if, as a result of these hearings, there be a public disclosure of Communist activities in the Territory of Hawaii, this committee believes that the integrity, character, and loyalty of the people of these islands, of all races and creeds, are such that communism will find no haven here, and that it will be promptly eradicated by an informed public opinion.98

Representative Walter saw HUAC as an entity whose power and success relied on community reaction to its disclosures. This position was supported by Robert Stripling who, in 1949 having recently retired after ten years as the lead investigator for HUAC, wrote that domestic communists were "a resourceful enemy who can endure any counter-attack except exposure."99

HUAC hearings generally did not produce new information. Their primary function was to reveal information the government had already gathered so that others in the community could contain the communist threat. Hearings before the House Committee on Un-American Activities were held to expose communists publicly, not to gather facts for legislation or to compile extensive lists of subversives. Historian Victor Navasky judges HUAC’s real purpose as symbolic. He argues that the hearings were degradation ceremonies designed to stigmatize. These ceremonies changed the community perception of those accused by publicly and repeatedly announcing their deviance. As in a homicide trial, a man who killed his neighbor publicly becomes a murderer, before

98 Ibid., 1353-4.
HUAC those who were named or who refused to testify publicly became communists.\textsuperscript{100}

While these hearings constituted degradation ceremonies, they also provided an opportunity for the government to expose and publicize the threat that communists posed. If degradation were the sole purpose, then the extended interviews of certain uncooperative witnesses cannot be explained. HUAC hearings were a forum to expose the nature and the extent of the communist menace. This was accomplished not only through the testimony of cooperative witnesses, but also through the careful questioning of the uncooperative.

Hearings in Honolulu began on April 10, 1950, the day the Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal of the contempt citations of Dalton Trumbo and John Howard Lawson, who had both refused to testify before HUAC for First Amendment reasons.\textsuperscript{101} Both men began their one-year prison terms in June.\textsuperscript{102} This decision was reported in the \textit{Honolulu Star Bulletin}, headlined “Supreme Court Upholds UnAmerican Committee: Witnesses Must Answer Red Queries.”\textsuperscript{103} The article took this decision to mean that congressional committees had the power to inquire into Communist Party membership. In reality, the court’s decision meant that the First Amendment did not grant immunity

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., 318-20.
\textsuperscript{101} \textit{Honolulu Star-Bulletin}, April 10, 1950, 1.
\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Honolulu Star-Bulletin}, April 10, 1950, 1.
from questions about political beliefs. This left the Fifth Amendment as the only option open to those who did not wish to testify, though that right had not yet been clearly upheld in the courts.

By the end of the Hawaii hearings, it had been. Of the sixty-six witnesses who appeared before HUAC in Hawaii, thirty-nine asserted their Fifth Amendment rights and refused to testify for fear of self-incrimination. All were held in contempt of Congress, and every citation was subsequently dismissed. Of the so-called "Reluctant Thirty Nine," twenty-six were members of the ILWU, many of them highly placed. Among those refusing to testify were Jack Hall, the union's regional director; Ernest Arena, president of local 150; and Robert McElrath, director of public relations.104 Four of those who invoked their Fifth Amendment rights were arrested one year later for violating the Smith Act.

In 1950, statehood for Hawaii was being actively pursued on a federal and a territorial level, and the legislature's resolution requesting a visit from HUAC stated that the hearing was expected to clear the last hurdle to statehood.105 In 1950, President Truman pressured Congress to grant statehood for Alaska and Hawaii, and the Hawaii bill passed the House by an astounding margin of 262-110.106 With only Senate approval standing in the way of statehood, the territorial legislature

104 Holmes, The Specter of Communism in Hawaii, 159.
105 Ibid., 150.
established a convention to draft a state constitution. It was hoped that the constitutional convention would put enough pressure on the Senate to get a favorable vote. The convention was also designed to demonstrate the patriotism and Americanism of Hawaii's citizens and to blunt the damage done by the Butler Report. The HUAC hearings, which began while the convention was still in session, quickly derailed that plan.

The first witness testifying in Hawaii demonstrated how effectively the policy of exposure could contain communists when the public was aroused. Richard Kageyama, an elected member of the Honolulu board of supervisors and constitutional convention delegate, testified that he had been a member of the Communist Party for most of 1947. Kageyama's admission "exploded like a bombshell in official and political circles." That day, the Democratic Party of Hawaii announced plans to expel Kageyama. By the next day, it was clear that his seat on the constitutional convention was in jeopardy. At the convention only six days earlier, he had taken an oath swearing he had not been a member of the Communist Party during the past five years. The pressure he felt given the revelation of his perjury and, more importantly, his former party membership, led Kageyama to resign from the constitutional convention.

107 Ibid.
108 Honolulu Advertiser, April 10, 1950, 1.
110 Kageyama explained that he took those oaths after he had been approached and interviewed by HUAC investigator William Wheeler, who counseled him not to disclose the fact that he would testify. Because he never thought of himself as a communist,
The policy of exposure could function just as well when the alleged communist was uncooperative, as was the case with another member of the constitutional convention, Frank Silva. Silva was named as a communist in testimony by Ichiro Izuka, and he was subpoenaed to appear before HUAC. Though he later publicly denied membership in the Communist Party, Silva refused to answer the committee’s questions for fear that a jury would believe Izuka’s claim and convict him of perjury. He was understandably hesitant to testify, given Alger Hiss’s recent conviction for perjury.111 Unlike Kageyama, Silva refused to resign from the constitutional convention. He was expelled by a vote of fifty-three to seven on grounds of “contumacious conduct” before HUAC.112 Even when witnesses were uncooperative, exposure could remove them from positions of power and influence.

HUAC’s activities were not limited to the public identification of individual communists. Much of the testimony dealt with the threat of the party itself, how it functioned, how it recruited, and how it was able to infiltrate extant organizations to gain power and influence. Kageyama laid the groundwork for these claims with his discussion of party discipline. As he claimed, “the keynote of the Communist Party would be the word ‘discipline,’ and to define discipline it means the carrying out of

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Kageyama kept his party membership secret. See HUAC Transcript, 1369 and Holmes, The Specter of Communism in Hawaii, 155-7.
111 Ibid., 158.
112 Bell, Last Among Equals, 183.
Izuka had also emphasized the idea of discipline in both his pamphlet, *The Truth About Communism in Hawaii*, and in his testimony before HUAC, where it became a constant theme. An emphasis on the party’s control over its members made exposing communists easier. Once the communists’ devotion to the party line was established, the actions and beliefs of the most visible and radical communists were attributed to every alleged communist. The idea that communists were a disciplined army erased the difference between the Communist Party and its members. The absolute discipline attributed to communists made them in essence extensions of the party’s will.

Ichiro Izuka proved to be one of the most interesting and most verbose witnesses to appear in the hearings in Hawaii, and his testimony consumed sixty-seven pages of the transcript. Izuka testified that the CPUSA was in reality controlled by the Kremlin in Moscow. He traced the organization of the CPUSA by laying out a chain of command: the local cells in Hawaii took direction from the district leaders in San Francisco, who received their instructions from the national board of the CPUSA in New York City, whose orders ultimately came from Moscow.

Izuka testified that Soviet control of the CPUSA was most evident during World War II, when the CPUSA “followed nearly all the party line

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113 *HUAC Transcript*, 1368.
116 *HUAC Transcript*, 1434-5.
which the Pravda announced in the press, for instance, like the Munich sell-out with Czechoslovakia, the Soviet-German nonaggression pact, the intervention of Spain, and all those things.”117 As evidence of the American party’s ties to international communism, Izuka invoked his experience in 1939, when he was attending a six-week course at a communist labor school in San Francisco that was cut short after only ten days. The school was broken up and the students sent home as the CPUSA prepared to go underground due to the tensions expected with the German invasion of Poland and public revelation of the Soviet-German nonaggression pact:118

The position of the CPUSA changed in June 1941 with the German invasion of Russia. Prior to that, the party held that World War II was a “phony war.” One of its slogans was “The Yanks are not coming.” After news of the German invasion reached the United States, the Communist Party became one of the most ardent supporters of American involvement in the war.119 When asked “Are you of the opinion that that change in party line was dictated by Soviet Russia?” Izuka replied that he was “definitely sure” that it was.120

During the course of the hearings, the communist threat to labor was likewise made abundantly clear. The HUAC hearings gave Izuka a

117 Ibid.
118 Ibid., 1378.
119 Ibid., 1384-5. Harry Bridges’ own beliefs followed the party line at this time, providing his accusers with further evidence that he was a communist. See Larrowe, *Harry Bridges*, 251.
120 *HUAC Transcript*, 1435.
chance to elaborate on his 1947 pamphlet's claim that “the [ILWU] feeds the Party and in return the Party controls the union in the interests of Party policies and objectives.” He testified that there were 130 communists in Hawaii, 90 percent of whom were also members of the ILWU. Communists were able to control the union because they recruited those already in positions of power, and before any bona fide union meeting takes place the Communist Party members get together . . . and they decide what should be taken up in the executive board of the particular union. . . . [T]hey are the brains behind these ILWU unions in the Territory. . . . For instance, Jack Hall, he might be regional director, but in fact he is Communist Party first.

The questioning of uncooperative witnesses further aided HUAC in presenting its anticommunist world view. Frank Tavenner, HUAC council, used his questioning of hostile witnesses to reinforce the idea that communists had concentrated themselves in high-ranking union positions. The testimony of Hideo Okada, trustee and secretary of the ILWU; Julián Napuunoa, member of the ILWU executive board; Douglas Inouye, ILWU business agent; and Levi Kealoha, member of the ILWU Honolulu Longshore board of directors, followed the same general outline. Tavenner questioned each man about his employment and union position, establishing that they were high-ranking ILWU officials before moving on to questions regarding Communist Party meetings and membership. These witnesses each answered the innocuous questions

121 Izuka, The Truth About Communism in Hawaii, 22.
122 HUAC Transcript, 1412-1416.
about their employment and refused to answer any questions pertaining to communism.\textsuperscript{123} This created a strong impression that the ILWU was infiltrated at the highest levels throughout the territory by dedicated communists who would defy their nation to keep their secrets.

The Communist Party's secrecy also made it appear more threatening. Though this threat was more fully articulated later in the Smith Act trial, the secret nature of communist meetings was addressed in much of the testimony from cooperative witnesses. Emil Muller, Easter Doyle, Harry Kuhia, Jr., and others testified that new recruits were lured to communist meetings to further their education. They were not told the nature of the meetings they attended and most remained ignorant until they received their Communist Party card.\textsuperscript{124} Emil Muller was asked how to distinguish a communist meeting from a union meeting. In his mind, the collection of dues and sale of communist literature were all that distinguished the two.\textsuperscript{125} That communist meetings were essentially identical to labor meetings could mean that both were innocuous, and that the CPUSA was interested primarily in the welfare of the working class. Instead, this congruence was taken as an indication of the subversive goals and methods of the ILWU.

The uncertainty as to what was in fact a communist meeting led to false accusations, as in the case of Frank Chow. Appearing before the

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 2012-20.
\textsuperscript{124} See Ibid., 1458, 1493-4, 1521.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 1466.
committee to clear his name, Chow said he was “shocked” when he read his name in the paper as an identified communist. He testified that he had attended several meetings, “which they usually call it a council meeting, and we talk nothing else but union activities.” Chow did not know he had been at communist meetings until he was asked to join the party after attending four or five. Pressed as to whether others who attended the meetings were communists, Chow did not know. He reiterated that he had been at those meetings “only as council meetings pertaining to the union activities,” and that he had not seen any Communist Party cards or literature.126

Every witness who refused to testify was cited for contempt, but their treatment at the hearing varied considerably. Some were immediately dismissed, while others were grilled for some time. The first witness refusing to testify was Ralph Tokunaga, former vice-president of ILWU local 150. Asked whether he knew William Wheeler, the committee’s investigator, Tokunaga declined to answer on the ground that it might tend to incriminate him. Chairman Francis Walter asked Tokunaga, “Why do you think it would incriminate you to admit that you knew Mr. Wheeler, one of the investigators of the committee?”

The truth was that Tokunaga had been interviewed by Wheeler in November 1949. He had cooperated fully, admitting he had been a communist, naming other party members and listing the literature he

126 Ibid., 1582-3.
bought. Since then, Tokunaga had had a change of heart, and in 1950 he did not want to cooperate with the committee. Walter asked him whether he intended to invoke the Fifth Amendment to answer every question the committee would pose, none of which could be "any more unimportant, irrelevant and unimportant, than some of the questions already asked." Unable to provide an answer, Tokunaga was dismissed.

The committee then called its chief investigator William Wheeler to the stand. Wheeler played a recording of his 1949 interview with Tokunaga. In this interview, Tokunaga freely answered all of Wheeler's questions: when he joined the Communist Party, who asked him to join, who else was a member of the party, where they held their meetings, and so on. After several minutes, committee council Tavenner interrupted the playback, asking Wheeler to read the last segment of the interview "which shows the name and the spelling of the name" of the witness. In this passage, Tokunaga mentioned a previous interview with the FBI and agreed to continue to cooperate with HUAC before spelling his middle name. Tokunaga's first and last names were already in the record both from his testimony before the committee and from the playback of his interview with Wheeler, and middle initials sufficed for most other witnesses. Tavenner's real purpose was to expose Tokunaga's previous

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127 Ibid., 1475.
cooperation with the FBI and his promise of further cooperation with HUAC.  

In this interview it became clear that the committee had prior knowledge of the information its witnesses would disclose. Tokunaga had been interviewed by both the FBI and Wheeler in late 1949.  

By the time of his appearance before the committee, the government had had full knowledge of Tokunaga's communist involvement for over six months. These hearings were not held to produce or clarify information, but rather to provide publicity for the charges of communist infiltration. In this case and others, HUAC managed to expose much about the party through its use of uncooperative witnesses.

The committee anticipated witnesses' refusal to answer and used their silence to establish their disloyalty. A witness' silence allowed the committee to present its own image of what communism meant. Charles Fujimoto, who in 1948 publicly announced his position as chairman of the Communist Party in Hawaii, was on the stand for over an hour despite his refusal to answer almost every question asked. Even though Fujimoto held a press conference in 1948 to announce his position in the party, he did not answer any questions about it. He even refused to identify a picture of himself published in the *Daily People's World*, a communist newspaper.  

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128 Ibid., 1491.
129 Ibid.
130 Ibid., 1561.
series of questions with similarly obvious answers that Fujimoto refused to answer were meant to establish that when he cited the Fifth Amendment, he really meant "yes." Tavenner went on to ask Fujimoto whether he agreed with William Z. Foster, head of the CPUSA, that a communist government backed by the Red Army was inevitable in the United States and that to be a communist one must be an atheist. Fujimoto, unable to discuss his political beliefs, refused to answer.

In the questioning of James Freeman, an alleged party organizer, Tavenner had Freeman identify his signature on eleven different items before presenting him with money orders he had signed for sent from the Communist Party headquarters in San Francisco. Freeman refused to answer any questions regarding the orders, leading chairman Walter to ask, "You served your country well during the shooting stage of the war, Jim, why don't you answer those questions?" Walter had similar questions for Frank Silva, recalled to testify on April 17. In the face of Silva's continued refusal to testify, Walter said "Mr. Silva, I understand that you have an outstanding war record, and, being a veteran of both wars myself, I am disturbed at the position you take." The implication was that when the United States' policies were in line with those of Soviet Russia, communists would cooperate even if it meant risking life and

131 Ibid., 1571-2.
132 Ibid., 1620.
133 Ibid., 1955.
limb. In 1950, this was not the case and, even though the personal stakes were lower, communists refused to answer their nation’s call.

Of all those who took the Fifth Amendment, Stephen Murin explained his reasoning most completely to HUAC in Hawaii. He declined to answer whether he was a member of the Hawaii Civil Liberties Committee, which was on the U.S. Attorney General’s list of subversive organizations. Asked to explain, Murin replied:

We are living in a very unusual time. . . . I considered very seriously what I might do [before HUAC] and I don’t believe that I would be serving the American people and the labor movement or myself in justice. . . . if I were to answer questions, which because of the peculiar atmosphere of the era we live in could be used against these larger groups of people.134

Murin saw the hearings as an assault not on communists but on the left-wing labor movement.

More people were cited for contempt in Hawaii than in any other hearings before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. The Hawaii hearings resulted in thirty-nine of the fifty-six contempt citations issued by HUAC in 1950, the year its contempt citations peaked.135 In 1951, Hawaii district judge John Metzger dismissed all thirty-nine citations issued in Hawaii, handing down the first decision upholding the right to refuse to testify before HUAC for Fifth Amendment reasons. Metzger ruled that a congressional investigation and a grand jury

134 Ibid., 1668.
inquiry were “all and the same thing.”¹³⁶ This meant that witnesses had the same rights before the committee as they did before a grand jury, including protection from self-incrimination. That year, nine judges rendered decisions on the fifty-six contempt citations issued by HUAC in 1950. All but three were dismissed.¹³⁷

These decisions left the community reaction to exposure of communists as the only tool HUAC had to contain domestic communists. While the cases of Richard Kageyama and Frank Silva demonstrated the success that policy could bring, other witnesses in the Hawaii hearings illustrated the limitations of relying on community support of the committee.

Jack Kawano’s story offered an alternative outcome, demonstrating how a community opposed to the investigations could prevent the testimony of a witness who would have otherwise cooperated. In Kawano’s first appearance before the committee, he stated that he was not a member of the Communist Party, but he refused to elaborate.¹³⁸ More than a year later, in July 1951, Kawano flew to Washington, D.C. to testify before an executive session of the House Committee on Un-American Activities. In his testimony, he explained that he had refused to answer questions in Hawaii due to threats from Jack Hall and others that he would be regarded as a union breaker and a rat if he testified.

¹³⁷ Beck, Contempt of Congress, 85.
¹³⁸ HUAC Transcript, 2056-7.
before HUAC.\textsuperscript{139} Kawano wanted to fight communists in the ILWU, but he feared that if he testified, he would lose respect and influence within the union.\textsuperscript{140}

By 1951, Kawano was ready to face the repercussions of an appearance before HUAC. He volunteered to testify, flew to Washington D.C., and spent a full day recounting his experience in the Communist Party since 1937. Kawano told the committee that he joined the party because it was willing to help him organize the Waterfront Union. At that time, staunch employer opposition prevented any drive to unionize, and Kawano did not see any harm in accepting communist aid because he believed “that the basic existence of the Communist Party was primarily to promote the best interests of the workingman.”\textsuperscript{141}

Another reason Kawano accepted the communists’ help was that enlisting support to organize workers in Hawaii was difficult. He testified that neither Jack Hall nor Harry Bridges was interested in unionizing workers on the sugar plantations until after Kawano had successfully organized them and signed up thousands of workers for a local union initially unaffiliated with the International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union. It was only after the scope of his success became clear, Kawano said, that Bridges accepted the sugar workers into the ILWU. By the time Jack Hall became involved in organizing

\begin{footnotes}
\item 139 Ibid., 4.
\item 140 Holmes, \textit{The Specter of Communism in Hawaii}, 182.
\item 141 \textit{HUAC Transcript}, 5.
\end{footnotes}
plantations, 60 or 70 percent of the workers were already union members.\textsuperscript{142}

Kawano testified that he left the party in 1949 because he came to believe that “the primary existence of the Communist Party was not for the best interests of the workingman but to dupe the members of the union, to control the union, and to use the union for purposes other than strictly trade-union matters.”\textsuperscript{143} With the nation currently in the midst of the Korean war, he felt the need to testify against the “enemies of our country.”\textsuperscript{144}

Kawano found evidence of communists’ duplicity in their attempts to infiltrate the Democratic Party in 1948. He testified that the Communist Party viewed the Democratic Party as weak and easily penetrated. Because of this, the communists hoped to force the selection of Democratic Party convention candidates who were communists, communist sympathizers, or at the very least pro-labor.\textsuperscript{145} According to Kawano, the Democratic Party in 1951 was still heavily infested, and if it were not for the efforts of a handful of anticommunists, it would be totally dominated by communists.\textsuperscript{146}

Communists’ involvement in the ILWU is what led Kawano to resign from the party. The last meeting that he attended was in June

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 24-5.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 3.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 35.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 37.
1949, during the dock strike. Kawano testified that at that meeting Charles Fujimoto tried to convince him that since the Big Five were in a bad financial state due to the stevedore strike, the time was ripe for a strike in sugar as well. Kawano believed this plan was "haywire" and would break the union in sugar and on the docks. He testified that there was a "heated argument" among those present and a vote was taken. Kawano claims he was the only one who voted against instigating a confrontation on the plantations. He left the Communist Party and agitated against a sugar strike, which never occurred.\(^{147}\)

Kawano's testimony provided excellent insights into how the party functioned and challenged the meme of totalitarian discipline within the CPUSA. The picture that emerged from his testimony was one of internal dissent, which caught at least one member of the committee off guard. Congressman Harold Velde of Illinois asked Kawano about the so-called Duclos letter, in which French communist Jacques Duclos criticized Earl Browder, then president of the CPUSA. This criticism led to a reorganization of the party and a change in national leadership. Velde expected unanimity of opinion among communists in Hawaii, and when Kawano described a debate within the party, he needed clarification:

Mr. Velde. What is puzzling me, some members at this meeting must have known they were to follow the Duclos party line?

Mr. Kawano. No; they did not.

\(^{147}\) Ibid., 46:
Mr. Velde. Then it seems to me they would naturally follow the Browder line.

Mr. Kawano. No. At that time there were people who thought that the Duclos letter was the correct party line, and some thought Browder's position was the correct party line.\textsuperscript{148}

Several of Kawano's other stories demonstrated dissent within the Communist Party, and the failure of party goals.\textsuperscript{149}

Kawano's testimony ended with his estimate of the party's strength. Though he had not recently been a member and thus had gained no first-hand information for more than two years, Kawano claimed that the Communist Party in Hawaii was stronger than it had been in 1950 because "its influence was growing." Like Izuka, Kawano claimed that communists "practically run the ILWU, not directly, but they run it."\textsuperscript{150} Kawano credited a recent split within the Democratic Party in Hawaii to communists. He noted that "the Communists don't have strength enough to run the Democratic Party, but they have strength enough to put a snag in [its] activities."\textsuperscript{151} He claimed that the power of the party was also enhanced by the growing influence and reputations of the lawyers who represented the ILWU and the Reluctant Thirty-Nine, Harriet Bouslog and Myer Symonds, though neither of them was ever identified as a communist.

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., 46.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid., 51.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., 50.
Pressure from within the ILWU prevented Kawano from publicly testifying in front of the spectators that packed Iolani Palace during the hearings in April 1950. Instead, his testimony was taken over a year later, in an executive session in Washington, D.C. Representative Walter noted: "It is unfortunate that you did not feel you were able to make the statement you have made today in Hawaii, because I believe others would have been encouraged to come forward, because I believe yours is the best testimony we could have gotten."\textsuperscript{152} The committee's true power rested in the community, and when a powerful segment of the community, in this case the ILWU, opposed HUAC, the committee found it had no means of coercing testimony.

The hearings regarding the territory of Hawaii revealed the limited reach of the House Committee on Un-American Activities. The power of HUAC's policy of exposure can be seen in the Hawaii hearings, which resulted in the ousting of several identified communists from political positions. The committee's limits were also evident in these hearings, which resulted in the greatest number of contempt citations ever issued by the committee at a single investigation, all of which came to naught. The district court's decision to dismiss the charges against the Reluctant Thirty Nine was the first in a series of rulings that upheld and clarified the protections the Fifth Amendment offered witnesses called before.

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 52.
Congress. Concurring opinions later that year essentially removed the threat of fines or jail time for refusing the committee’s call.

By the time Kawano traveled to Washington, D.C. to testify before the committee, HUAC had lost its power to incarcerate uncooperative witnesses and its main source of influence rested within an increasingly unpredictable community reaction to its disclosures. This would prove extremely frustrating for the committee and its investigators.
Chapter 3

“The Incidents in This Motion Picture Are Based on the Files of the Committee on Un-American Activities”:

*Big Jim McLain* and Hollywood’s vision of HUAC in Hawaii

The House Committee on Un-American Activities’ frustration in the fight against communists in Hawaii came to the big screen in 1952 with *Big Jim McLain*. This film follows HUAC investigators Jim McLain (John Wayne) and Mal Baxter (James Arness) through “Operation Pineapple,” an investigation of communism in the Territory of Hawaii. It was written in collaboration with HUAC investigator William Wheeler, and was “based on Wheeler’s HUAC experiences in Hawaii.”

A broad group of anticommunists produced *Big Jim McLain*. It was released by Warner Brothers, a company with a long history of cooperating with the government and a company which had publicly committed to the fight against communism. Though Warner Brothers came under scrutiny in the 1947 HUAC hearings for producing *Mission to Moscow* (1943), studio head Jack Warner had amply demonstrated his studio’s Americanism in the course of 1947. In April, Warner had called for “An All Out Fight on Commies” and, in his October testimony, he volunteered the names of twelve “communists” he had ousted from his studio.

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154 Navasky, *Naming Names*, 42.
company. 156 This group included Howard Koch, the screenwriter for Orson Wells' radio play of *The War of the Worlds* (1938), *Casablanca* (1942), and *Mission to Moscow*. Though he was never in the Communist Party, Koch was blacklisted anyway, largely due to Warner's testimony. 157

John Wayne produced and starred in *Big Jim McLain* while he was 'president of the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals. This Hollywood group dedicated itself to eliminating communist influence from American films and was rumored to have offered HUAC founder Martin Dies a $50,000 salary to leave Congress and head the organization. 158 The Alliance was partially responsible for bringing HUAC to Hollywood. In 1944, Alliance leaders invited the committee to investigate the movie industry. Their devotion to anticommunism ran much deeper than their loyalty to the film industry. 159 When Wayne was inaugurated the organization's president in 1949, Robert Stripling, recently retired after ten years as HUAC's lead investigator, was on hand to give a speech. 160

*Big Jim McLain* emerged from the center of Hollywood and congressional anticommunism and in the midst of an international and domestic battle against communists. By August 1952, when the film

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159 Ibid., 211.
was released, HUAC had already held its hearings in Hawaii and had returned to Hollywood. In 1951, the Supreme Court upheld the conviction of communist leaders in New York for violating the Smith Act and, by 1952, the next wave of Smith Act trials, which included Hawaii, was under way. Soviet infiltration and espionage were still in the news. Alger Hiss had been convicted and was serving his five-year prison sentence, and Ethel and Julius Rosenberg had been sentenced to death in 1952 for atomic spying.

At the time of this film's release, the Korean War was in its third year. Several years before that China had "fallen" to the communists, and the Soviet Union had detonated its first atomic bomb. The threat of atomic annihilation made the communist's advances in Eastern Europe and Asia even more harrowing. The convictions of Alger Hiss and the Rosenbergs, along with Klaus Fuchs' recent confession of atomic espionage all linked domestic communists to the international battle against communism.

As demonstrated in the context of Hawaii, the House Committee on Un-American Activities was an entity whose power rested on public opinion and community action. Given the power anticommunists invested in film as a propaganda tool, it is not surprising that the committee turned to film to garner more support. *Big Jim McLain* was produced with substantial collaboration from HUAC and presented an
anticommunist vision that worked to reify the communist threat as the committee perceived it.

The federal government recognized film as one of the major means available to shape public opinion. Former HUAC investigator Robert Stripling explained the reach and importance of film in 1949: “About 75,000,000 Americans attend movies each week. Most of the patrons believe what they see.” Stripling also acknowledged that communists saw great possibilities in the movie industry, as he quoted Lenin: “Communism must always consider of all the arts the motion picture is the most important.”

This concern for the content of film extended to the judicial branch as well. Chief Justice of the Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, Bennett Clark wrote in his decision upholding the convictions of the Hollywood Ten, that it was “beyond dispute that the motion picture industry plays a critically important role in the molding of public opinion and that motion pictures are, or are capable of being, a potent medium of propaganda dissemination.”

In HUAC’s 1947 questioning of Jack Warner, Representative Richard Nixon asked him whether any anticommunist films were in production. At the time there were none, but in the next seven years more than fifty anticommunist movies saw release. Most were low

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161 Stripling, *The Red Plot against America*, 70.
budget, featured no celebrities, and did not make a profit.\textsuperscript{163} \textit{Big Jim McLain} broke from this trend. John Wayne noted that though it was “not a great movie, Warners made a thirty percent profit,” making \textit{Big Jim McLain} one of the highest-grossing anticommunist movies of the 1950s.\textsuperscript{164}

The film’s setting was the present day in the territory of Hawaii, which had long been a site of frustration for HUAC. Former committee investigator Robert Stripling traced the committee’s failures in the territory back to the attack on Pearl Harbor:

Before Pearl Harbor the committee, through the industry of its investigators, was ready to release a 287-page report showing that Japanese had detailed information concerning all the naval craft of the U.S. We were prepared to show that Japanese knew our fleet positions at Pearl Harbor, were using Japanese naval officers on their radio-equipped fishing boats, and had set up action committees in Hawaii and on our West Coast.\textsuperscript{165}

He implied that the bombardment might have been prevented, except that “the Committee was forbidden to reveal, six months before the attack on Pearl Harbor, the scope of Japanese subversion in Hawaii and on the Pacific Coast.”\textsuperscript{166} HUAC’s frustration in Hawaii continued through the committee’s 1950 hearings, which saw more than half of the witnesses called before the committee refuse to testify without facing a conviction for contempt of Congress.

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\textsuperscript{163} Nora Sayre, \textit{Running Time: Films of the Cold War} (New York: Dial Press, 1982), 80.
\textsuperscript{164} As quoted in Zolotow, \textit{Shooting Star}, 268.
\textsuperscript{165} Stripling, \textit{The Red Plot Against America}, 26.
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid., 157.
Representative Francis Walter was upset about the decision, which he claimed Hawaii District Judge Delbert Metzger “leaned backwards to reach,” and which he believed was erroneous “in many cases.” Walter saw “no justification” for the dismissal of many of the citations.\textsuperscript{167} The decision on the Hawaii contempt citations marked the end of HUAC’s ability to incarcerate unfriendly witnesses. In the next two years, more than half of the 300 witnesses called before HUAC refused to testify. Only three were issued citations for contempt.\textsuperscript{168}

*Big Jim McLain* shows these frustrations as it follows HUAC investigators Jim McLain and Mal Baxter as they investigate communism in the territory of Hawaii. As the film opens, a voiceover tells the audience that American citizens owe HUAC members “a great debt” because they have been “undaunted by the vicious campaign of slander launched against them” and have “staunchly continued their investigation, pursuing their stated belief that anyone who continued to be a communist after 1945 is guilty of high treason.”

Reflecting the committee’s recent experience, *Big Jim McLain* presents HUAC as an agency essentially handcuffed by the Fifth Amendment. These limitations are evident in the opening scene, where a college professor, Dr. Carter, is being questioned in front of the committee: “Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?” He refuses to answer, pleading the Fifth

\textsuperscript{167} *HUAC Transcript*, 51.
\textsuperscript{168} Beck, *Contempt of Congress*, 92.
Amendment. Another HUAC member follows up with a question: "In the event of armed hostilities between this government and that of Soviet Russia, would you if called upon willingly bear arms on behalf of the government of the United States?" Carter, after conferring with his lawyer, replies "Same question, same answer." Unable to continue, the committee lets the doctor go.

This first look at American communists revealed that they themselves took membership in the Communist Party to be synonymous with treason. The common use of the Fifth Amendment implied that those accused knew their communist activities were criminal, as did the investigating committee, which was powerless after the Bill of Rights was invoked.

In a voiceover, McLain explains that he and Baxter "rang doorbells and shuffled through a million feet of dull documents to prove to any intelligent person that these people were communists, agents of the Kremlin." In spite of their efforts, Carter was released and went "right back to his well-paid chair as a full professor of economics at the university to contaminate more kids." Even with piles of evidence to prove someone was a communist, HUAC lacked the tools to eliminate the threat. The audience's introduction to Baxter explains what kind of threat Carter posed, as Baxter exclaims "Political beliefs are sacred," he says. He delivered 1,600 microfilms from the laboratory to a comintern courier. Is that political belief?" In a voiceover, McLain explains why
Baxter hates communists: "They had shot at him in Korea." From its opening scene, *Big Jim McLain* treats domestic communists as members of a foreign army at war with the United States.

Bemoaning their failure, McLain and Baxter board a flight from Washington D.C. to Hawaii. After getting settled, they meet with Honolulu Police Chief Dan Liu, a “tough, hard, competent copper” who promises his cooperation. Furnished with a list of the names that HUAC had already turned up, McLain and Baxter begin serving subpoenas to “mostly unimportant members of the party,” with McLain catching one woman leaving a movie theater; while Baxter serves papers to a man climbing out of a swimming pool. Why bother with these small time reds? McLain explains that “You never can tell when one of them will talk and point his finger at someone higher up.” McLain continues his hunt by investigating doctors, evidently alphabetically. As he narrates, “when I got to the G’s,” psychiatrist Dr. Gelster, “I got lucky in more ways than one.” He discovers a communist and at the same time arranges a date with the doctor’s lovely assistant, Nancy Vallon (Nancy Olson), who McLain courts throughout the film.

In the next scene, accompanied by ominous music, a tall man in a grey suit arrives at Gelster’s home speaking code. It is Mr. Sturack, a Communist Party official sent from San Francisco to find out “what is wrong with the Party in Hawaii,” and why HUAC has launched another investigation. Sturack expresses his concern over Willie Namaka, a local
party member and one of Geister’s patients, who was suffering a nervous breakdown. Geister assures him that Namaka is “not dangerous; I’m treating him. I have his psychic dependency, I can control him.” This assurance of mind control is inadequate for Sturack, who commands Geister to “Get rid of him. Have him confined to an asylum, give him an overdose of something, don’t bother me with the details but get rid of him.”

If Dr. Carter represents the threat of communist infiltration in the educational system as a means of corrupting the young, Dr. Geister represents the threat of a communist intrusion into the fields of medicine and psychiatry to further party ends. Though both doctors were threats themselves, their real danger involved their ability to control and manipulate others.

This suggests another facet of HUAC’s anticommunism: its focus on hypothetical rather than actual harm. Discussing HUAC’s pursuit of communists in Hollywood, Stripling noted that the quantity of propaganda communists had actually inserted into films was not “especially essential in the Committee’s mind.” Much more crucial was “the potential influence they could bring to bear.”169 J. Edgar Hoover, in testimony before HUAC in 1947, agreed that the most important metric of the communists’ threat was their potential reach. As he claimed, “Rather than the size of the Communist Party the way to weigh its true

importance is by testing its influence, its ability to infiltrate.\textsuperscript{170} Exposure was seen as an effective tool because once communists were publicly identified, they would no longer be able to infiltrate organizations and would therefore lose their power to influence the wider American society, nullifying their hypothetical threat.

As the film progresses, McLain and Vallon take a trip to the Pali lookout where Vallon offers insight into why Gelster would join the Communist Party:

I've been trying to analyze him. I think he has a frustration. He's a good boss but you never have the feeling you'd like to do something for him outside of the line of duty. . . . If he asked me to do a favor, the only reason I'd do it is because I don't want to lose my job. He doesn't attract people. In fact he doesn't even have the quality of repelling people. That at least is an active emotion between individuals. He is just a neuter of a personality. I think he had to try and search for a cult of some kind.

Her explanation is that party members were socially, sexually, and emotionally void. Unable to interact emotionally with other people, positively or negatively, they were a dispassionate group alienated from the broader American public. They were skilled, educated people who were unable to attract followers honestly. It was only through physical, economic, or mental coercion that they could motivate others to help them, hence the reliance on violence, mind control, and infiltration, and the special threat that teachers and doctors posed.

McLain, however, brushes off any explanation as ultimately useless:

Look baby, I don’t know the why. I’ve heard all the jive, this one’s a commie because momma won’t tuck him in at night, that one because girls wouldn’t welcome him with open arms. I don’t know the ‘why.’ The ‘what’ I do know, like when I was wearing the uniform I shot at the guy on the other side of the perimeter because he was the enemy. Hey, we better get out of here or I’ll start talking politics.

In McLain’s view, theories explaining communist proclivities are irrelevant, whether involving a man’s inability to handle female rejection, from his mother or from his romantic partners. What is relevant is the communist’s status as an enemy, since McLain still sees himself as a soldier at war. His job as a HUAC investigator was the same as it was when he was fighting on the front line. He needed no reason to fight communists beyond the fact that they are the enemy. Moving his analysis beyond that would mean talking about politics, something inappropriate for a soldier on the front lines of the domestic cold war.

McLain and Baxter next meet with local labor unions, all of which pledge their support of the investigation. After the meeting, the investigators speak with Max Benaby, a union leader who had been in the Communist Party for ten years. In this film, the sincerity of ex-communists is cemented by their actions upon leaving the party. Benaby’s credibility is established by his crooked nose, which was broken when he decided to fight back. It is Benaby who first points the investigators to Willie Namaka; a party member he believes is about to
crack. Benaby knows this because he had been through it. He explains that "after a while you get it through your skull that the party line is just a con." Namaka had been seen drinking "in all the grog shops down on River Street." Drinking was against party rules, and breaking one rule was evidence that the communists' hold on Namaka was slipping and that he might cooperate with their investigation.

McLain and Baxter are also introduced to up and coming labor leader Ed White, who Benaby hopes will take over his position when he retires. Benaby wants "to make sure I leave this outfit to guys who are on our team." White demonstrates his patriotism by refusing dock work to a communist just as the three approach him to talk.

Acting on Benaby's tip, McLain heads to Namaka's boarding house, only to find that Geister has just cleaned out most of his possessions. In the film's retelling of Ichiro Izuka, Alice Hyun, and Jack Kimoto's Koko Head arrest, two men arrive to collect Namaka's last trunk and McLain has them pulled over and detained. While Chief Liu questions them, the HUAC investigators search and photograph the contents of Namaka's trunk, turning up suspicious insurance policies that indicate the existence of a secret communist cell with ten members in Honolulu. When Liu is finished with the men, they are released and followed. They lead the police to a previously unknown communist hideout which is placed under surveillance.
At Namaka's boarding house, the landlady tells McLain that Namaka had recently spoken to his ex-wife; a nurse at the leper colony on Molokai. McLain flies to Molokai to meet with Mrs. Namaka. Lacking any physical scars from her separation from the party, Mrs. Namaka's credibility as an ex-communist is instead established by her actions after she left the party. She explains that she “wrote a full account of my past activities and association to the FBI and came here. I thought, I suppose, that I might atone for the injury I had done humanity by helping these unfortunates.” In order to redeem herself after eleven years as a member of the Communist Party, which she learned was a “vast conspiracy to enslave the common man,” Mrs. Namaka sequestered herself at Kalaupapa.

She further demonstrates her change of heart through her refusal to help her ex-husband:

Like any other who commits a crime against humanity he will have to find his own way back to the community of men. I would not lift a hand to help any conspirator any more than I would extend a helping hand to a – I was going to say leper, but that of course is ridiculous.

Not only was party membership a crime against humanity, but helping lepers, who intimidate even McLain, was preferable to aiding a communist, even one on the way out of the party.

Mrs. Namaka was not able to shed every trace of her communist identity, however. She interrupts her conversation with McLain to hold up a newborn baby girl so that the infant’s parents can see her through
the viewing room window. On her return; she explains in short, declarative bursts that

they are taken from their mothers immediately on delivery and brought here... At least they may see them. It's much worse later. At six months of age the babies are removed to the mainland. It may seem hard to the parents, but it's really much better for the babies.

Though Mrs. Namaka had left the party, the emotional detachment Dr. Geister established as a characteristic of communists followed her to Molokai. Without pause or remorse, she defends the decision to take every baby from its mother at birth and to relocate the children permanently thousands of miles away. The way she justifies her decision is calculating and unapologetic. She does not grant that it is hard on the parents, only that it may “seem” so to them.

While McLain flew to Molokai to interview Mrs. Namaka, Baxter remained on Oahu, checking mental hospitals for her ex-husband. With cooperation from the local police, Baxter is able to find Willie Namaka. Unfortunately, his “comrades” had already reached him, and Namaka is straight-jacketed, sweaty, drugged, and incoherent. McLain’s voiceover explains that “between nervous breakdown and the injections his comrades had given him, Namaka was of no use to us.”

It comes as something of a surprise when the investigators are contacted by elderly retirees, the Lexiters, who identify Ed White as their son, and a communist. Mr. Lexiter explains that as a teenager, their son had won an essay contest. The prize was a trip to Russia where he was
radicalized. Mr. Lexiter is a Polish immigrant, and he explains what happened after he learned his son was a communist:

I didn’t argue with him, I showed him the door. Mr. McLain, I was raised in the land of the pogrom and I know how useless it is to try to reason with those heartless men, men who had turned their back on God.

The Lexiters disowned their son when it became clear that he was involved in communist plots and sabotage. They had not seen him since 1940, and in that time he had changed his name to Edwin White and infiltrated the labor movement. Tailing White, McLain turns up seven of the ten communist operatives in Hawaii.

Meanwhile, Baxter, following an anonymous tip, is ambushed and killed. His death is made to look like an accident, and McLain’s investigation turns up no leads for three weeks until police surveillance of a communist hideout reveals that Gelster had accidentally killed Baxter with an overdose of sodium pentothal. Rather than arrest Gelster immediately, McLain and the police tail the communists to a secret meeting at a secluded house by the ocean.

The climax of the film occurs at the communist meeting at this beach house. There, Sturack explains that the compromised secret cell will try to distract the investigators by having Dr. Gelster confess and inform on several other members. The communists in this film do not seem concerned with being named before HUAC. Sturack explains: “No legal action can be taken against you. As to these other members
against whom you inform, they will simply plead their constitutional
rights."

Sturack orders this betrayal to preserve the “unexpendable”
members of the cell, who will work to “create a paralysis of island
shipping and communications” when word comes that the party is ready
to make its next move, “either in the near or the far east.” This
disruption is intended to hamper the military’s ability to fight
communism overseas, as “thirty-five thousand tons of critical materials
clear the islands every day for the East.” Sturack claims that “every day
we can stop that flow of materials is as effective as if our people were to
put another division in the field.” American communists are, as
represented in the film, essentially acting as a foreign army ready to
sabotage the United States’ military, and waiting for word from Moscow.

*Big Jim McLain* intensified the danger posed by domestic
communists by linking their actions directly to the war in Korea. The
perceived communist threat had broadened from economic sabotage in
the dock strike, and political infiltration in the HUAC hearings, to a
conspiracy to undermine the war effort in Asia in *Big Jim McLain*.

Sturack explains that the plot only needs three key communists to
succeed:

These three unexpendable members are Wayland and White who
must cause enough dissention to create a labor stoppage. One is a
negotiator for the employers, the other among the negotiators for
the unions... Dr. Mortimer and his rodents must also be
protected from exposure. The creation of an epidemic in the
harbor area is a must. The fear of infection will provide our people
with a talking point during negotiations. Wages and hours are no longer adequate for that purpose.

Being a party member compromised all other obligations. Ed White would sell out his union by creating and prolonging a strike, Wayland would work to prolong the strike regardless of the consequences for the employers, and Mortimer would intentionally start a rat-borne epidemic at the waterfront to exacerbate the tensions. This underscores the fear of communist concentration – that a few motivated party members in positions of power or authority would be able to direct much broader events, manipulating the largely innocent public into furthering their plans. Economic and biological sabotage by three communists in Hawaii could effectively equal the strength of another division of enemy troops on the battlefield in Asia. The inclusion of an epidemic in the plan suggests that communist saboteurs would not hesitate to inflict civilian casualties to further the party's global aims.

As for the other members of the secret cell, Sturack instructs Gelster to inform on them. "They will of course be replaced, and meanwhile the authorities will be happily deluded into thinking we have been rendered impotent." Sturack explains that there is nothing for the party members to fear, as they "will simply plead their constitutional rights."

McLain enters the meeting and serves subpoenas to everyone to appear before HUAC. After a brawl breaks out, the police arrive. Sturack
demands that Liu arrest McLain who attacked them "without provocation." As the police arrest every communist present, Liu explains, "We all have sufficient provocation to attack you. All Americans." Three of those present, including Gelster, are indicted and convicted of Baxter's murder, but the important communists, Sturack and White, are not charged with any crime. They both refuse to testify before the committee and are dismissed without consequence, leading McLain to return to his opening lament: "So they walked out free again. Build a case to prove to any intelligent person that these people are communists, enemy agents, and they walk out free." This frustration persists despite the fact that those who committed crimes were convicted for them. McLain is upset because convicting criminals was not his goal. Despite all of his hard work and Baxter's sacrifice, the communists refused to testify before the committee and, while publicly exposed, remained free and avoided punishment.

McLain's frustration focused explicitly around communists' ability to twist American values to suit their ends. As he explained to Liu after the hearing, "There are a lot of wonderful things written into our constitution that were meant for honest, decent citizens. I resent the fact that it can be used and abused by those who want to destroy it." This echoed Stripling's claim that one of the great threats of the communist conspiracy was that it operates absolutely within the texture of our Constitution and the resilient borders of our native tolerance. . . . It has capitalized on
the inherent decency of our people and their respect for the rights of minorities. Even Presidents of the United States inadvertently have served its purposes. 171

Stripling believed that communists, through various front organizations, were able to enlist the unknowing support of figures as diverse as Eleanor Roosevelt, James Cagney and Shirley Temple. 172

HUAC’s inability to press beyond the Fifth Amendment created a gap in justice. Though the communist plot in Big Jim McLain was exposed, the conspirators were not punished. Sturack’s actions demonstrate that anticommunists and party members shared a common concern over the party’s reach and the potential harm it could inflict. Sturack seems almost eager to dispose of extraneous party members. His only goal is keeping the three key members of the secret cell concealed so that they would be able to sabotage the American war effort. Other party members were turned over to law enforcement or drugged into incoherence to protect the communists’ ability to sabotage shipping should the need arise.

Though Big Jim McLain opens and closes with a lament over the constitutional limitations placed on HUAC and over the frustrations entailed in its policy of exposure, McLain seems extremely effective. He successfully exposed the entire secret cell and its plans to cripple the islands, and he helped secure the conviction of several of its members.

171 Stripling, The Red Plot Against America, 13.
172 Ibid, 29.
Likewise the HUAC hearings in Honolulu had exposed several party members who had been elected to the territory's constitutional convention in 1950.

Throughout its time in Hawaii, committee was unable to incarcerate a single subversive. This is the failure that McLain resents in the film. During the year of its release, a trial of seven alleged communist leaders was underway in the territory. As in the HUAC hearings and the dock strike, the success of the anticommunists trying the case depended on their ability to sell to the wider American public their view of domestic communists as members of an international Soviet conspiracy.
On August 28 1951, FBI agents staged simultaneous raids to arrest seven alleged communist leaders in Honolulu. Editorials in the Honolulu Advertiser declared that “the red scent has been picked up here,” and that the FBI arrested “persons suspected of leadership in the Communist plot to overthrow America by force and violence. . . . what amounts to a charge of treason.”174 The “Hawaii Seven” — Jack Hall, regional director of the ILWU; Koji Arioshi, editor of the Honolulu Record a local left-leaning, pro-labor weekly; Jack Kimoto, reporter for the Honolulu Record; John Reinecke, former teacher, Jim Freeman; mechanic; Charles Fujimoto, who had publicly announced his position as chairman of the Communist Party; and his wife, Eileen Fujimoto, secretary for the ILWU—faced trial and conviction for “conspiring unlawfully, wilfully, and knowingly to advocate and teach the duty and necessity of overthrowing the Government of the United States by force and violence.”175

The trial of the Hawaii Seven was the fifth in a series of sixteen trials of American communists under the Smith Act. Every trial relied on substantially similar testimony, and the prosecutors were tremendously successful. Only ten of the 126 communists indicted after June 1951

173 Smith Act Transcript, 14702.
174 Honolulu Advertiser, August 30, 1951, 6. ; Ibid., August 29, 1951, 4.
175 Ibid., August 30, 1951, 9.
were acquitted. Of the 105 people tried under charges of violating the Smith Act, almost 89 percent were convicted.176

Trials under the Smith Act differed substantially from previous anticommunist cases. Prior to 1948, communists had been indicted through a variety of state laws against criminal syndicalism, anarchy, and sedition. These laws only applied within a single state, so they did not pose a significant threat to a national organization like the Communist Party of the United States of America.177 The Smith Act trials were the first communist trials involving a federal statute. This law overcame the limitations of its state predecessors by providing the FBI with a nationally applicable anticommunist law under which over one hundred communist leaders were convicted nationwide.

The Smith Act “prohibited knowingly or willfully advocating, advising, abetting, or teaching the duty, necessity, desirability, or propriety of overthrowing any level of government within the United States by force or violence.”178 Additionally, it criminalized knowingly organizing or belonging to a group with those goals, and included a conspiracy provision. The maximum penalty for conspiracy to violate the Smith Act was five years in prison and a $10,000 fine.

Anticommunist trials formed the front lines of the domestic cold war. It was in these trials that communists (and through them

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177 Ibid., 15.
178 Ibid., 25.
communism itself) were confronted face-to-face by, as prosecutor John Walsh put it, "common sense and sound reasoning. . . [and] the searching acid of truth." These trials brought domestic communism out into the open and, by convicting the leaders of the CPUSA, provided a visible American victory over communists in the midst of the Korean War. Historian Ellen Schrecker argues that "more than any other element of the anticommunist crusade, political trials transformed the vague and largely ideological threat of Communism into something much more concrete: real people taking real actions that seemed to be part of a Moscow-led conspiracy." Though the United States may have lost China and a monopoly on the atomic bomb, these trials proved that victory could still be attained domestically.

Key to the success of these prosecutions was the charge of conspiracy. None of the indicted communists were charged with openly teaching or advocating the violent overthrow of the United States government. Instead they faced charges of being members of a conspiracy with that end in mind. The conspiracy was called the CPUSA. This chapter is not primarily concerned with the constitutionality of the Smith Act, the accuracy of the charges against the defendants, the truthfulness of witnesses, or the effects of these trials on the CPUSA. Its goal is to examine how prosecutors defined membership in the

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179 Smith Act Transcript, 14677.
180 Ellen Schrecker, Many are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1998), 120.
Communist Party, and how this definition functioned to establish guilt in federal court. By examining the successful prosecution of American communists, scholars can determine how the discourse of anticommunism that developed in postwar America was formulated to convince the public of the threat posed by domestic communists. The Smith Act trials gave the government time to present a lengthy portrait of American communists—who they were, where they were, how they acted, what they wanted, how they would pursue their goals, and why the jury (and the wider American public) should be worried.

The communist trials provided the government with a public forum to discuss the details and dangers of domestic communism. The trials, according to Schrecker, “had an educational as well as a legal function,” since, as she points out, “much of the evidence produced in them bore little relation to the alleged offense. Instead, prosecutors presented specific scenarios that gave credibility to the notion that the party threatened America’s security.” The prosecution aimed to present a picture of American communists such that the jury had no choice but to convict. In this sense the trials were theatrical performances for public consumption—literally, show trials.


182 Schrecker, Many are the Crimes, 120.
The overt acts allegedly taken in furtherance of the conspiracy do not in themselves establish guilt. They ranged from positions held in the CPUSA and communist meetings attended, to Koji Arioshi’s publishing of an issue of the Honolulu Record, and Jack Hall’s 1949 visit to San Francisco. The prosecution’s job was to explain how these legal activities combined and connected to illegally advocating a violent revolution. The link between the overt acts and the conspiracy came through the charge that the Hawaii Seven conspired “to organize as the Communist Party of the United States of America a society, group and assembly of persons who teach and advocate the overthrow and destruction of the Government of the United States by force and violence.” The prosecution never maintained that membership in the CPUSA alone proved the guilt of the defendants. Indeed, prosecutors emphatically insisted to the jurors “that we have never tried to make you believe that the Communist Party is the conspiracy charged in this case.” Walsh was adamant that “the people, not any organization, have been the conspirators.” He explained that

there is no magic in the words “The Communist Party of the United States of America.” If they wanted to that group of co-conspirators in New York could well have called it instead of the Communist Party of the United States, “Little Lenin’s pets.”183 Or they could have called them, “Stalin’s Angels.” Or they could have called the the [sic] “International do-gooders.” The name in and of itself means nothing. It is the conspiracy that counts.184

183 The prosecutor was referring to the first eleven people convicted under the Smith Act in 1948 in New York City. They were named as co-conspirators in subsequent trials.  
184 Smith Act Transcript, 14702.
Membership in the Communist Party could not be considered a crime in and of itself.\textsuperscript{185} Prosecution under the Smith Act was only possible because the indictments alleged something more than membership in the CPUSA. The prosecution explained, "what is this additional something? It is knowledge, intent," specifically knowledge of the criminal goals of the CPUSA, and the intent to achieve those ends.\textsuperscript{186} This is where the prosecutors consistently shined. They showed the jury a CPUSA that was a foreign-controlled organization with illegal goals, with the plans, drive, and potential to stage a violent revolution. Knowledge of those goals immediately made one party to the conspiracy. If the jury believed that the Hawaii Seven were communists "in the know," they had no choice but to convict. The only caveat was that jury members could not convict unless they found that "it is an object of the Communist Party to overthrow the Government of the United States by force and violence." To convict, the jury had to find that the defendants were "one of a group of initiates, insiders, who each have knowledge of such an objective of the Communist Party and also have each adopted such objective as their own."\textsuperscript{187}

To date, little attention has been given to the way that the prosecution established guilt in the Smith Act trials. What is interesting about the prosecution's strategy is that its primary goal was to convince

\textsuperscript{185} The Internal Security Act of 1950 settled any question by explicitly stating in Section 4(f) that membership in any political party is not in itself a crime.
\textsuperscript{186} Smith Act Transcript, 14742.
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid., 14945.
the jury of the diabolical character of the CPUSA. Only after this was established could the relationship between the defendants and the party be criminal. The overt acts discussed in the trial established little more than the defendants' membership and positions in the Communist Party.

In the trial of the Hawaii Seven, the prosecution admitted in its closing argument that relatively little time was dedicated to establishing the commission of any overt acts. In his closing argument, Walsh stated that the prosecution only devoted "about half an hour... of the four months that we have been taking testimony here" to proving that the Hawaii Seven were members of the CPUSA. The rest of the time he explained, "was taken up with evidence of what these defendants did and said as members and officers of the Communist Party, and with what the nature and objectives of the Communist Party were."188

This revealed the prosecution's strategy. Much of the seemingly endless trial was devoted to reading passages of communist literature and establishing through professional witnesses both that the books were used in the training of new recruits and the CPUSA's interpretation of the writing. The prosecution established relatively quickly that the defendants were indeed members of the Communist Party during the period of the indictment. Most of their time at trial was spent explaining to the jury exactly what that meant.

188 Ibid., 14751.
The charge of conspiracy also gave prosecutors substantial leeway in the evidence they presented. Conspiracy is by its nature a crime of intent, a communal, secretive crime, and its proof entailed testimony regarding many co-conspirators, named and unnamed. Charles Fujimoto, on trial for publicly declaring his position in the CPUSA; later explained how a conspiracy charge loosens the standards of evidence: "The type of evidence to prove a conspiracy would be what someone else said you said, or planned, or thought." When applied to the Smith Act, Fujimoto argued that the charge of conspiracy became even more tenuous. He concluded that "The Smith Act makes it a crime to teach and advocate... this is a thought control law."190

It did not matter whether those charged committed acts in direct violation of the law, but it did matter whether they acted, legally or illegally, to further an illegal end. To prove a charge of conspiracy, the prosecution had to demonstrate three points to the jury: an explicit or implicit agreement between conspirators, at least one overt act in furtherance of the conspiracy, and a defendant's willful participation "in the unlawful plan with specific intent to further the common purpose or design."191 That is, those charged with conspiracy must have been working toward a common end, where either that end, or the means

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189 The addition of unnamed conspirators to the indictment allowed the prosecution to enter into evidence almost any testimony relating to any member of the CPUSA. Defense objections to the relevance of the quite outrageous testimony were dismissed with the promise that it would eventually be tied to the defendants.


191 Smith Act Transcript, 14941.
planned to achieve it, was illegal; they must have taken at least one step towards that goal; and they must have had that goal in mind when they acted. If one unwittingly or unknowingly acted in furtherance of a conspiracy, one was not legally part of the plot. It was not necessary for the prosecution to prove an overt agreement, nor did the prosecution “have the legal burden of proving to [the jury] that these defendants ever met anywhere even once, never said to each other in words or in writing that they were members of the criminal conspiracy.” This was because “the conspiracy involved in this case like all other conspiracies is secret, is hidden and is underground.”

Those convicted were found to have been initiates in the Communist Party who had internalized the revolutionary goals of communist literature. In the prosecution’s case, these communist insiders were no longer patriots. Thoughts of their country were completely overwhelmed by the goals and desires of the Communist Party:

Charles Fujimoto was asked... “Charlie, if the United States was involved in war with some other country, which country would the Communist Party fight for?” And Charles Fujimoto answered, “The country that showed progressive [sic] toward the working class, then that was the country the Communist party would fight for.” . Therefore you may infer that he must have known in 1941 the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism and the ultimate aims of the Communist Party.  

\[192\] Ibid., 14697.  
\[193\] Ibid., 14897.
Charles Fujimoto never took the stand. The lenient rules of evidence in a conspiracy case allowed others, in this case Ichiro Izuka, to testify to what he had said.

Fujimoto’s priorities in this conversation were strange. The nation that would be supported in a war was the nation that acted most progressively with respect to the working class, not the nation where one held citizenship. Class interests trumped nationalism, highlighting the subversive effects of a communist conversion. Fujimoto was not asked which country he would support, but rather which the Communist Party would. One of the first means of identifying members of the Communist Party was the conflation of communist goals with their own. The jury was expected to assume that Fujimoto’s answer applied to the CPUSA, himself and all communists. This piece of the trial demonstrated just how far the prosecution stretched its inferences. From knowledge of the communists’ interest in the welfare of the working class, Walsh concluded that Fujimoto must have known and shared the revolutionary aims of the CPUSA.

For its part, the defense largely failed to grasp the prosecution’s conflation of the goals of the Communist Party with the goals of party members. “I had thought that the question involved was, what these defendants taught and advocated, quite apart from what the Communist Party taught or advocated.”194 In this objection, defense attorney

194 Ibid., 106.
Richard Gladstein, who had defended the first eleven communists indicted under the Smith Act in 1948, showed his misunderstanding of the prosecution's strategy. Prosecutors were not concerned with the individual acts of the defendants, except in terms of how they established their communist identity. In fact, Holmes wrote that "The Hawaii Seven were not necessarily considered the seven most dangerous communists in Hawaii." Holmes believed that they were prosecuted simply because they were active in the Communist Party during the time of the alleged conspiracy.¹⁹⁵

This explained the prosecutorial disregard of the defendants' specific thoughts and advocacy. The prosecution's strategy simply involved showing first that the Hawaii Seven were communist initiates, and second, what it meant to be a knowing communist. From those two facts, the jury was meant to infer malicious intent. Jurors had to answer the question: as communists, what must the defendants have been planning to do?

To this question, the prosecution declared that "There is only one logical conclusion to draw. . . They are only concerned in concentrating their membership in basic, key industries, so that when the time is ripe, they can paralyze them." Walsh believed that the party was "not trying to gain control of this government by votes, they are trying to get power

over the government through one way only and that is by force and violence.”

In order to prove the defendants' intent, the prosecution had first to prove that the CPUSA did not act as a political party but as an instrument for advocating the violent overthrow of the United States. The trial of the Hawaii Seven was therefore primarily a battle over meaning: what did it mean to be an initiate of the CPUSA?

An inability to bring current communists to the stand to refute the prosecution's testimony handicapped the defense. The fear of being forced to identify other communists, and of being responsible for the personal and professional repercussions of that identification, or of being found in contempt for refusing, or the possibility of facing a perjury charge, made it all but impossible for the defendants to take the stand or for the defense to call its own expert witnesses to rebut prosecution testimony.

During the later 1954 Philadelphia Smith Act trial, the defense team broke with this trend and called Dr. John Somerville to testify as to the nature of the Communist Party. His job entailed pointing out that "those [communist] writings take a certain position on violent overthrow of the government. That position turns out to be essentially the same as the one taken by the founding fathers in the Declaration of

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196 Smith Act Transcript, 14739.
Independence.”197 His testimony only got as far as “For purposes of clarification by comparison, consider our own American Declaration of Independence” before the prosecution objected and had it stricken from the record. Even where defense teams tried to present a counter-interpretation of Leninist literature, they were handcuffed by the necessity of maintaining a sharp distinction between the American Revolution and a communist uprising.

One notable feature of the CPUSA, according to federal prosecutors, was its size and omnipresence. Jurors were informed that “The Communist Party is a very large organization operating all over the Nation and in all States and in this Territory and in many cities and perhaps with certain other ramifications abroad.”198 In order to tie the defendants to the wider communist conspiracy, the CPUSA had to be presented as a disciplined, unified, centrally-organized, international party. The analogy used was that of an army, split into squads, platoons, battalions and so on. Walsh explained that “the basic unit of the Communist Party all over the mainland and on these Islands is the club or cell.”199 Above that level, the party was organized into groups of cells; the Territorial Committee, which the Hawaii Seven were accused of leading; the district organization, with Hawaii in the Thirteenth district;

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198 *Smith Act Transcript*, 4.
199 Ibid., 15.
and finally the National Committee of the CPUSA.\textsuperscript{200} Much like an army, orders were passed from the top down — it could be inferred that those at the bottom were completely obedient to their superiors.

This view was underscored by one of the prosecution's early moves to define communism through the notion of democratic centralism:

‘Democratic Centralism’, which simply means that each Communist Party member is subject to strict Party discipline, and that all decisions of higher bodies in the Communist Organization are binding on the lower bodies, and every member of the Communist Party. That is ‘Democratic Centralism’ and it is synonymous [sic] with strict discipline.\textsuperscript{201}

From the very beginning of the trial, the jury heard that totalitarian discipline was the communist norm.

This was not the kind of discipline one would expect from a political party, but communists were hardly normal party members. Indeed, the CPUSA was not depicted as an organization rooted in the United States at all, but rather as one that took its orders from overseas. An oft-cited example of this was the Duclos letter of 1945.\textsuperscript{202} The prosecution addressed this letter in its opening statement, saying that in 1944 the CPUSA had changed its name to “The Communist Political Association,” at the urging of its president Earl Browder. Prosecutors explained that the name change also reflected a change from a policy of

\textsuperscript{200} The thirteenth district also included Nevada, Arizona, and California, and was headquartered in San Francisco.

\textsuperscript{201} Smith Act Transcript, 6.

\textsuperscript{202} "HUAC was so interested in the Duclos letter that the index to the first fifteen years of the committee's hearings contains more references to the French Communist leader than to the American party's own general secretary Eugene Dennis." Schrecker, Many are the Crimes, 132.
class struggle to "a policy of class collaboration." In May 1945, Jacques Duclos, the head of the French Communist Party published an article condemning Browder, "Duclos charged that by urging peace between capital and labor in the United States Earl Browder, who was then the head of the Communist Party, was guilty of revisionism." The prosecution explained that "after this article appeared in the paper, almost to a man the American Communist leaders who had all supported Browder in 1944 turned on him." 203

The CPUSA had a brief period when it had dropped calls for a violent confrontation between labor and capital. This brand of peaceful, accommodationist communism was widely accepted until a foreign radical disagreed. Several elements of this incident are significant. First was the discipline and obedience to turn away from a leader en masse—the fact that the entire party leadership was influenced enough to abandon peaceful goals and in a matter of months create a party with a strictly revolutionary purpose. Second is that this happened at the behest of a foreign radical. The power of European communists was such that they could push party members in America to fall in line with their desires merely by publishing an article in The Daily Worker. If the revolutionary goal of the CPUSA was set overseas, it would not be hard to believe that the revolution would be directed from abroad. This

203 Smith Act Transcript, 17-8.
essentially turned domestic communists into members of a revolutionary army awaiting foreign activation.

An interesting possibility, not raised until later, was that the Duclos letter was a "diplomatic document." Historian Joseph Starobin wrote that the article may have been published at the behest of the Soviet Union in order to raise pressure on Washington with an increasingly militant CPUSA.204 If true, this would make the CPUSA another weapon in the Soviet Union’s cold war arsenal. It would also support the prosecution’s assertion of foreign control and demonstrate how American communists were manipulated by foreign forces.

In its treatment of the Duclos letter, the prosecution emphasized the unanimity of party beliefs:

Gentlemen, the 1945 Convention of the Communist Party of the United States of America was the time and the place where the original conspirators entered upon the agreement charged in this indictment . . . . These defendants were also concerned about the Duclos letter. In 1945 they read it. They discussed it. And these defendants came to agree with it.205

To the prosecution, the Hawaii Seven were no different in their beliefs, their actions, or their potential for harm from the dozens of other communists already convicted. Schrecker explains that "central to the stereotype was the assumption that all Communists were the same.

They presumably subscribed to the same beliefs, mouthed the same

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205 Smith Act Transcript, 14700-1.
slogans, and followed the same orders.” She concluded that this “made it possible to treat each suspected Communist as the embodiment of every sinister practice in the Kremlin’s repertory.”

The reaction of American communists to the Duclos letter was not as immediate or as unanimous as presented by either the CPUSA or anticommunist groups. It in fact created a great deal of controversy and uncertainty within the party, with many initially supporting Browder’s leadership. Browder defended his move toward an accommodationist stance, maintaining that “an American program cannot be a reflection of the Communist movement in Europe.” He was in the minority, however. In order to maintain the appearance of party unity, the majority opinion was presented as the universal belief of American communists and all doubt and dissent were kept private. The reaction of the CPUSA was far from immediate and far from universal, but to maintain the myth of communist discipline, this divisiveness was hidden.

The international ties of the CPUSA were further highlighted in the testimony of the first witness for the prosecution, Paul Crouch. Crouch spoke of his membership and activities in the Communist Party, starting in the late 1920s. This drew a strenuous objection from defense attorney Richard Gladstein, whose clients Mr. and Mrs. Fujimoto were ten and seven years of age during the events recalled in Crouch’s testimony. Still, the prosecution was allowed to present this evidence, after assuring

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206 Schrecker, Many are the Crimes, 131.
207 As cited in Starobin, American Communism in Crisis, 86.
the court that it was acting in good faith.\footnote{Smith Act Transcript, 20 (Unfortunately there are errors in the pagination of early portions of the transcript).} Crouch explained that his training came directly from Moscow. Shortly after he joined the Communist Party in 1927, he took a trip to the Soviet Union. There he took part in meetings of the Executive Committees of the Communist and Young Communist Internationals, and the World Congress of the Red International of Trade Unions. This testimony showed the jury that Soviet Russia had long had an active hand in international communism and trade unionism. The Soviets’ invitation to a newly recruited American party member also demonstrated that they were eager to expand their operations in the United States.

Crouch also claimed he met with members of the general staff of the Red Army, and even said he received a commission as an honorary commander in the Red Army. This demonstrated the military links between domestic communism and Soviet Russia, and the militarism of American communists. Simply joining the American Communist Party was enough to guarantee unquestioned obedience to the Red Army. Crouch was trusted enough to become an honorary officer. He also claims to have had tremendous access to powerful communists, meeting with figures as diverse as V.M. Molotov; Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin’s widow; and Sen Katayama who co-founded the Japan Communist Party.\footnote{Ibid., 49.} It seemed amazing that an American recently converted to
communism should have this kind of access to people, information, and training in Soviet Russia. Crouch's testimony cemented the place of the CPUSA within the worldwide communist network, which seemingly reached every corner of the globe.

Crouch's discussion of his meetings in Russia emphasized Soviet aggression. Under cross-examination, he described meeting with Mrs. Nassov, "the wife of a leading official of Russia, of the Russian Communist Party." They discussed both political and military topics, with the military discussion focused on psychological war and propaganda to force the "disintegration" of the American military. During this conversation, Crouch claimed he was privy to parts of the Soviet Union's plans for a future war with America. For his part, though Crouch had no classified information to share, he assured the jury that "If I had, I would certainly have given it to them."²¹⁰

The case of Paul Crouch also demonstrated how damaging even a single communist in America could be. Crouch's testimony also illuminated another communist stereotype, as Schrecker explained "the legendary devotion of its members to the party was no myth. As both their enemies and supporters admitted, Communists 'work like hell' at their political tasks."²¹¹ Paul Crouch, a self-described professional "revolutionist" was an extremely active communist. He held positions and taught classes in Illinois, Louisiana, Utah, Alabama, California,

²¹⁰ Smith Act Transcript, 742-3.
²¹¹ Schrecker, Many are the Crimes, 142.
Tennessee, and both Carolinas. Some of the materials he taught included “the world objectives of the Communist Movement” and the means the party would use to meet those objectives. This included how to operate “under the most illegal conditions,” and “the methods for defeating the United States during war and bringing about victory to the Soviet Union.”

This was an important anticommunist claim, that even a small group of domestic communists posed a tremendous threat to the nation. This fear was based on communists' previous success. Schrecker wrote that “history corroborated this concern,” and anticommunists like Senator Butler pointed out that many communist revolutions happened with only a handful of supporters. Crouch’s testimony would have shown the jury the kind of revolutionary expertise they could expect communist initiates to have, their zeal for spreading their subversive skills, the amount of territory even a single communist could cover, and the communists' widespread success in doing so. It also reinforced a feeling of vulnerability — Soviet-trained revolutionists were loose in America spreading not only the ideal of revolution but also the practical skills to achieve it.

How was such a complete transformation possible? Schrecker argued that communists “also reflected the fifties' obsession with

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212 Smith Act Transcript, 36.
213 Ibid., 115-6.
214 Schrecker, Many are the Crimes, 143.
"brainwashing," which was demonstrated in the false confessions elicited in the Moscow show trials and the "‘thought reform’ that occurred during the Chinese Revolution and the Korean War when prisoners of war and other detainees underwent intensive interrogations and apparently absorbed the political values of their captors."²¹⁵

Interestingly, if Crouch was to be believed, this image of the depth of conversion had to exist on both sides of the Cold War.²¹⁶ Crouch had been in possession of his membership card for around three months at the time of his trip to Russia. For him to spend time with communist leaders from around the globe and be privy to classified information about Russian plans for war with the United States, for him to take part in meetings on international communism, for him to be trusted with directives from the Red Army, there cannot have been any doubt regarding the depth, sincerity, or permanence of his devotion to the cause.

Making the communist threat even more harrowing was the success that they seemed to have in recruiting. Defendant James Freeman’s achievements were discussed in Jack Kawano’s testimony. Kawano reported that Freeman was able to sign up twenty-five to thirty new recruits with a single meeting.²¹⁷ Kawano testified that party

²¹⁵ Schrecker, Many are the Crimes, 134-5.
²¹⁶ In subsequent trials Crouch proved to be an unreliable witness, providing contradictory testimony. His claims should be viewed with caution both for their outrageous nature, and because of his subsequent contradictions.
²¹⁷ Smith Act Transcript, 6555.
membership was booming all over the Islands, as the Communist Party had increased from forty members in late 1945 to between 180 and 200 by 1948.  

A four or five fold increase in membership in two years was impressive for such a secretive and subversive group. One of the explanations Kawano presented concerned the way that communists targeted their recruits. He told the jury that Jack Hall ordered potential recruits split into two categories: the approachable group, men who would “consent to join the Communist Party, or at least... keep his mouth shut;” and the “unapproachables,” who they thought would be good union leaders and good communist leaders, but they were not certain they would keep their meeting a secret.  

“Unapproachables,” Kawano explained, would first be sent a pamphlet to “educate” them on communism. Kawano testified that after this, a party member would be sent out to see how the potential recruit reacted to the communist literature. If they had a positive reaction, a party organizer would be dispatched to talk with them individually.  

From the very beginning of their contact with communists, potential recruits were fed propaganda in increasing doses. As the prosecution explained, “These beginners or neophytes in the Communist Party are not scared away immediately by being told in their Marxist-
Leninist classes that there is to be a violent revolution. Rather, this is inculcated and drummed into their thinking, into the thinking of these new members, very slowly and gradually. The jury was informed that the process of Communist "indoctrination or teachings" was one of "innuendo or suggestion" to a precisely targeted audience. They identified those who would be vulnerable to Marxist teachings (or indoctrination) and began a slow, anonymous attempt to convert.

Another explanation for the growth of the party in Hawaii was that residents were simply a vulnerable group. Daisy Van Dorn, a sixty-eight year old grandmother of eleven who joined the CPUSA at the request of the FBI, testified about one of her conversations with Eileen Fujimoto: "I asked her if it was hard to recruit members over there [in Hawaii], and she spoke up and she said 'No, the working class of people and the longshoremen are very, very—I supplied the word 'gullible'... and she said, 'receptive.'" The words used by Communists were assumed to have a double-meaning. Eileen Fujimoto may have said "receptive," but Daisy Van Dorn, an FBI plant in the CPUSA, was there to translate it for the jury: "gullible."

The prosecution claimed that even the language used by members of the CPUSA was part of their cover-up. One major tool of group differentiation is lingual, and prosecutors took immediate steps to set up

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221 Ibid., 22-3.
222 Van Dorn joined the CPUSA in San Francisco. She worked in the same building as the CP headquarters, and would stay late to work the elevators for their meetings. This was one of her elevator conversations. *Smith Act Transcript*, 3274-5.
a linguistic differentiation between the jury and the defendants. In his opening statement prosecutor John Walsh warned the jury that they “are going to hear a lot of words and phrases that you probably have never heard before or even knew existed.” He proceeded to define several terms that would come up in the course of the trial, telling the jury, “I don’t expect you to remember these. It took me long enough just to learn them.” The implication is clear—the language barrier between loyal Americans and communists was difficult to overcome, even for an educated, professional anticommunist. As Schrecker argued, “communism supposedly exercised such absolute control over its members’ minds that it even dictated the very words they used.” Communists’ secret language would have further cemented their difference from normal Americans.

The linguistic differences went beyond vocabulary. John Lautner, an ex-communist turned government witness, testified to the ways that communists spoke. In his testimony, Lautner claimed that communists spoke using “Aesopian language,” which “is a protective language to enable the Party to function under any condition. . . . commonly it is [called] double-talk.” This meant that nothing a communist said could be taken at face value. Lautner testified that this

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223 Ibid., 4.
224 Ibid., 5.
225 Schrecker, Many Are The Crimes, 134.
227 Smith Act Transcript, 3087.
language was ever-present in the communist world, from the way they spoke, to their political and organizational documents, including hidden contradictions in the constitution of the CPUSA. He explained that this document claimed the Communist Party was based on the principals of Marxism-Leninism, but also that it defended the U.S. Constitution. Lautner testified that "It is contradictory... You cannot be for Marxism-Leninism and at the same time uphold the United States Constitution."228

This testimony served several purposes. First, it placed Marxism-Leninism in direct opposition to the United States Constitution. A group could uphold one or the other, but not both. It also added to the image of communists' dishonesty and secrecy — they lie and they conceal their goals, even in their foundational documents. If the jury accepted that communists spoke in Aesopian language, they could read malevolent hidden meanings into any statement by any Communist Party member.

Another threatening, salient feature of the Communist Party was its secrecy. From the beginning of the trial, prosecutor John Walsh focused on the secret nature of the CPUSA, which encouraged lenient rules of evidence and underscored the threat that communists posed: "Furthermore the Communist Party does not operate in the open or openly. How it operates can be established only by piecing together evidence from one place and another until every piece of this picture is in

228 Ibid., 3090-1.
its proper place."  

In his closing, Walsh employed the metaphor of the octopus as a means of understanding not only the structure and reach of the CPUSA, but also its reliance on secrecy and confusion:

That creature, that monstrosity has eight long tentacles with power to enfold, to paralyze and to smother its victims. . . . If attacked, it retreates [sic]. It has, however, what we might call an ink bag. And to protect itself when it is attacked, it retreats. And to further protect itself when it is attacked, it lets out a dark, black fluid from this bag on the surface of the water, thus making the water surrounding it almost black and by this means it tries to escape in the darkness of its own making. . . . Gentlemen; magnify that octopus ten times, a hundred times, and there you have the Communist Party. Imagine that these seven defendants are these seven tentacles. . . and that the eighth tentacle reaches over to San Francisco to District 13 [and the national Communist Party].

Communists were shown as an insidious enemy, one whose true skill lay in the deception and evasion of those it opposed. An octopus “has no real teeth like a barracuda,” it is a soft, vulnerable creature but for its ability to move undetected and its paralyzing, enfolding tentacles. The ink bag image allowed the prosecution to discredit any questions or objections raised by the defense lawyers as another facet of communist identity that the jury had to guard against. Questions about the credibility or the motivation of prosecution witnesses would now be suspect. The jury had to be on guard to ensure that the CPUSA was unable to escape into a darkness of its own making.

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229 Ibid., 4.
230 Ibid., 14676-7.
231 Ibid.
On a more pragmatic level, communists were alleged to have used several methods to ensure secrecy and anonymity. Kawano testified about the steps taken to keep the Hawaii chapter of the party underground. He discussed the precautions suggested by defendant James Freeman, which included limiting knowledge of upcoming meetings to one or two members of the party leadership who would then “inform the rest of the members of the executive board where to gather, not where to meet.” From there they would move in the fewest cars possible to their actual meeting place.232 Other changes Freeman made included limiting the use of the telephone to cases of absolute necessity, and eliminating note-taking at executive board meetings.233

One aspect of the prosecution’s case that would have been especially resonant with the jury was its treatment of the so-called “concentration policy.” Lautner testified that “the objective of the Communist Party was to gain control over these basic industries through its tactical policies.” This was so that in the event of a national crisis, “the Party would be in a position to paralyze the Nation’s economy.”235

This testimony was damning, especially for Jack Hall who, given his position in the ILWU, seemingly personified the concentration policy. The memory of the dock strike was still fresh, and it gave weight to

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233 This last provision was likely in response to Ichiro Izuka’s recent publication of The Truth About Communism in Hawaii, a small yet influential pamphlet in 1947. Kawano testified that Jack Hall recalled Izuka’s scrupulous note-taking at Communist Party meetings.
234 Smith Act Transcript, 12.
235 Smith Act Transcript, 4042-7.
warnings of communist infiltration. The strike had lasted 177 days, and had cost the Hawaiian economy an estimated $100 million.\textsuperscript{236} The already strong image of a communist-controlled ILWU was reinforced by the HUAC hearings in 1950, when the “Reluctant Thirty Nine” refused to testify to their membership in the Communist Party. Twenty-six were officers or members of the ILWU.\textsuperscript{237} The communists’ ultimate plot in \textit{Big Jim McLain} was to instigate a shipping strike to halt transshipment of military goods to Asia.

In his closing, Prosecutor John Walsh revisited the evidence of Hall’s loyalty to the CPUSA,

\begin{quote}
In January of 1949 the defendant Jack Hall made a trip to San Francisco for the purpose of reconciling such conflicts that might arise between the orders from the ILW [sic] International and the Communist Party here locally... after Hall’s return to Honolulu, he told Kawano that a satisfactory solution had been worked out to the effect that the ILW International [sic] and the Communist Party Headquarters in San Francisco would attempt to reconcile such a conflict and if they were not successful... the National Committee would have the final say.\textsuperscript{238}
\end{quote}

Kawano testified that Hall was completely beholden to the National Committee. In any conflict he had between the union and the CPUSA, the party won, Walsh asked, “what better evidence could there be of his acceptance of Marxism-Leninism principles, and I only refer to one now,

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\textsuperscript{236} Holmes, \textit{The Specter of Communism in Hawaii}, 141.
\textsuperscript{237} Ibid., 159.
\textsuperscript{238} Smith Act Transcript, 14908.
\end{flushright}
Democratic Centralism, and his willingness to abide by the decisions of the Party. 239

It is evident that the Smith Act trials wove together many, mutually reinforcing aspects of the communist stereotype. Given the dearth of rebuttal witnesses for the defense, the jury was left with an impression of communists as a disciplined, dedicated group of well-trained revolutionists “who are selected because of their aggressiveness and their ability to lead.” 240 They were a danger in spite of their small numbers because of their tireless dedication, their ability to recruit and indoctrinate, and their drive to strengthen the party. The language communists spoke was impenetrable, full of Marxist jargon as well as Aesopian double-talk. The prosecution’s portrait of the domestic communist was one of absolute discipline and foreign allegiance.

The Hawaii Seven and more than one hundred others were convicted not of any overt act of sedition but of being initiates in the CPUSA. The Internal Security Act of 1950 was sidestepped by the prosecution’s claim that it was not their membership in the CPUSA that was criminal, but rather their knowledge of and participation in the conspiracy to spread Marxist-Leninist revolutionary teachings.

The Hawaii Seven remained out on bail, appealing their case until 1957, when the Supreme Court decided an appeal by those convicted of violating the Smith Act in California. In Yates v. U.S., the court

239 Ibid.
240 Ibid., 24.
overturned the convictions of five of the defendants and ordered a new trial for the other nine.\textsuperscript{241} The \textit{Yates} decision marked the end of the Smith Act as an anticommunist tool.

These trials highlighted the ability of the government to convict those with opposing ideologies. The prosecution spent a tremendous amount of time laying out damning evidence of what communists in general said and did. This testimony was linked to the Hawaii Seven only by their positions in the CPUSA. By naming the CPUSA as the vehicle of the conspiracy, the prosecution was able to introduce evidence with no ties to the defendants' alleged participation in the conspiracy. Testimony dealing with centralization was so damaging that the defense moved for a mistrial. In this motion, Richard Gladstein provided an excellent summary of the emotional effects of the prosecution's strategy:

\begin{quote}
I am satisfied that if there is a conviction in this case, the jury will not be convicting my clients but the Communist Party. They will be convicting out of fear and perhaps excusable apprehension based on what they are hearing here. . . . I just don't know how I can break through that kind of a veil, shroud, and get to the minds of the jurors and separate them from the natural emotions and reactions that they have, and revulsions that they have when they hear some of this testimony.\textsuperscript{242}
\end{quote}

Tensions were running high in Hawaii after the dock strike, which had demonstrated the power, the discipline, and the dedication of the allegedly communist-led ILWU, and the HUAC hearings in Hawaii had revealed seemingly more threatening plots. By reinforcing commonly-\textsuperscript{241} See \textit{Yates et al. v. United States}, 354 U.S. 298 (1957). \textsuperscript{242} \textit{Smith Act Transcript}, 4048-9.
held stereotypes about communists and by amplifying the violent, foreign, un-American, seditious, and all-consuming aspects of a communist identity, the prosecution secured its conviction.
Conclusion

"The conspiracy operates absolutely within the texture of our Constitution and the resilient borders of our native tolerance":

The Necessity of Public Action

The containment of domestic communists was not something that could be done by the government alone. It was stressed again and again that communists were clever enemies who were able to manipulate front organizations to multiply their strength while remaining within the bounds of the law. The "Dear Joe" letters during the dock strike stressed how, through the ILWU, only 2,000 stevedores were able to leverage their positions to "raise hell" throughout Hawaii. Thurston claimed that acting through the union also allowed communists to ensure that their direction of events was technically legal.

The House Committee on Un-American Activities entered Hawaii on a high note, with the Supreme Court refusing to review Dalton Trumbo and John Howard Lawson's contempt of Congress convictions. This decision confirmed that the First Amendment did not limit the committee's power to compel testimony. Less than a year later, in January 1951, a judge from the District Court of Hawaii ruled that witnesses facing a congressional hearing had the same rights as those facing a grand jury, including the Fifth Amendment, and overturned the

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243 Stripling, The Red Plot Against America, 13.
244 Honolulu Advertiser, May 7, 1949, 1.
thirty-nine contempt citations issued in Hawaii. This ruling helped establish that the Fifth Amendment protected those testifying before HUAC, and effectively ended the committee’s ability to incarcerate the uncooperative. The hearings in Hawaii also revealed the uncertainty of relying on community action to contain communists. The ILWU saw itself as the target of HUAC’s probe and vigorously opposed its inquiries. It was able to limit the committee’s power and effects by providing lawyers for subpoenaed union members and by pressuring witnesses not to testify.

The obstacles that HUAC faced in Hawaii were reprised in *Big Jim McLain*, where committee investigators, despite their tireless efforts, proved unable to jail communists planning sabotage and biological war. In this film, the police were able to convict those who killed HUAC investigator Mal Baxter, but communist leaders, the true threat, walked out free. In Hawaii, McLain found a top-notch police force, cooperative residents, and unions devoted to driving out communist influence. Despite this active community, and a case built “to prove to any intelligent person that these people are communists, enemy agents,” the communists were released without charges. The impression left to viewers after watching *Big Jim McLain* was that HUAC was able to identify and expose communists, but that the committee had no hope of permanently disrupting communist plots unless its powers were expanded.
Anticommunists' failure to incarcerate subversives in Hawaii continued through the Smith Act trial. Though the Hawaii Seven were convicted and sentenced to prison, Jack Hall never saw a jail cell, and the other six were released on bail after only a week. They remained free appealing their case until the Supreme Court's Yates decision in 1957 led to the dismissal of charges against the Hawaii Seven.

Anticommunism in Hawaii was tied to broader events, and the threat that communists were seen to pose evolved with the cold war. Economic sabotage was seen as the communists' goal in the dock strike. The Soviet blockade of Berlin provided an analogy illustrating how the dock strike was in line with communist strategy. By April 1950, when HUAC visited Hawaii to investigate claims that the Communist Party had infiltrated island unions and politics, Alger Hiss had been convicted of perjury, and the contempt citations of the Hollywood Ten had been upheld. The war in Korea provided the communists with their ultimate objective in Big Jim McLain and magnified the importance of Hawaii to the nation's security. By August 1951, when the Hawaii Seven were arrested, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg had been convicted of atomic espionage and sentenced to death. The communist plot alleged in the Smith Act trial had grown from economic sabotage and political infiltration to preparing to stage a violent revolution.

245 Holmes, The Specter of Communism in Hawaii, 211.
During the course of these events, the territory of Hawaii was actively pushing for statehood. Communism emerged as a convenient reason to publicly oppose admitting Hawaii. While it is clear that most of those named in the course of these events had been members of the Communist Party, it is equally clear that their activities were much more limited and unimportant than they were publicly portrayed. This did not stop Senator Hugh Butler and others from charging that Hawaii had "become one of the central operations bases and a strategic clearinghouse for the Communist campaign against the United States of America." Claims like this were made by foes of statehood even though the basis of their opposition was typically race related, whether it was due to outright racism or the desire to block civil rights legislation. The issue of communism was used by conservative Republicans and southern Democrats to explain their opposition to statehood without having to explicitly address the contentious issues of race and civil rights.

This thesis argues that in order to explain why domestic communists were feared, it is necessary to understand the tools anticommunists used in their pursuit of subversives. The containment of domestic communists was not something the government could do on its own. The pursuit of communists in America was most successful where anticommunists rallied public support to their cause. To ensure

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246 Butler Report, 1.
247 See Bell, Last Among Equals, 175-9.
that support, anticommunists concentrated much of their energy on publicly detailing the threat that communists posed.

Anticommunists' greatest success in Hawaii came in Richard Kageyama and Frank Silva's public exposure as communists and their subsequent expulsion from the constitutional convention. Their quick ousting came because one of the convention's primary goals was to emphasize the loyalty and Americanism of Hawaii residents. Because of this, the community was extremely sensitive to charges of communist infiltration and acted decisively. Indeed, when the public did not act to ostracize alleged communists, anticommunists proved unable to remove them from positions of power and influence.

The sources examined in this thesis all attempted to shift public opinion in favor of anticommunists. These discursive texts provided an understanding of the threat communists were seen to pose, and revealed the ultimate consequences of being labeled a communist, which included political ousting and criminal convictions. They also gave insights into the limitations on anticommunism. HUAC investigator Robert Stripling believed that the Constitution as well as the "native tolerance" of Americans provided room for the communist conspiracy to operate.\textsuperscript{248} This proved true for HUAC, as the committee was constantly frustrated by the Fifth Amendment after 1950. Its power mainly involved

\textsuperscript{248} Stripling, \textit{The Red Plot Against America}, 13.
community reaction to its disclosures and, as Hawaii demonstrated, public opposition could thwart HUAC's plans.

To inflate the threat of individual communists, each case examined here emphasized the strength of communist discipline. Allegiance to the Communist Party allegedly trumped every other obligation. Anticommunists claimed that union leaders would sell out the rank-and-file, politicians would use their office to advance the Soviet agenda, and veterans would betray their country. Overstating communists' dedication to their cause made the actual goals and actions of individual communists largely irrelevant. By asserting that extreme party discipline, or "democratic centralism," was the norm, anticommunists identified the most radical goals of the Communist Party as the goals of every communist.

Anticommunists also played off of the public's pre-existing fears. Before World War II, it was feared that Japanese migrants were disloyal. After the war, the fear of an enemy within Hawaii remained, but with the loyalty of Japanese-Americans now beyond question, that enemy became the Communist Party. It was feared that labor unions would be able to use their political and economic leverage to dominate island life, and communism represented a similar threat of undemocratic rule. The fear of a minority wielding disproportionate power also resonated with anti-Japanese sentiment, as it was alleged that the Japanese population would be able to dominate island politics through "block voting."
anticommunist discourse, such as in *Big Jim McLain*, even as few as three dedicated communists would be able to sabotage the war effort overseas.

Regardless of the actual extent of communist activity in the territory of Hawaii, the issue of communism came to dominate public discourse and government action in Hawaii. Local and national politicians, businessmen, newspaper publishers, and citizens' groups publicly battled what they viewed as a group of foreign-controlled subversives in the islands. Their success or failure ultimately rested on the public's reaction to their disclosures, whether union members would continue to support their allegedly communist leadership, whether Communist Party members named before HUAC would be ostracized from the business or political community, whether jurors would believe that the Communist Party was an instrument of revolution and vote to convict its local leadership. Success convicting Hawaii communists was rare and short-lived. This made the drive for public action more important as it left, in HUAC Chairman Francis Walter's words, "the integrity, character, and loyalty of the people of these islands" as the only force able to thwart the communists' plans.\(^{249}\)

\(^{249}\) *HUAC Transcript*, 1353.
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