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## **Inventory of the California Un-American Activities Committees Records**

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## Inventory of the California Un-American Activities Committees Records

**Collection number: 93-04-12; 93-04-16**

California State Archives  
Office of the Secretary of State  
Sacramento, California

Processed by:

Archives Staff

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Encoded by:

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### Descriptive Summary

**Title:** California Un-American Activities Committees Records

**Dates:** 1935-1971

**Collection number:** 93-04-12; 93-04-16

**Creator:** Senate Fact-Finding Subcommittee on Un-American Activities, 1961-1971; Senate Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities, 1947-1960; Joint Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities in California, 1941-1947; Assembly Relief Investigating Committee on Subversive Activities, 1940-1941

**Collection Size:** 48 cubic feet and 13 boxes

**Repository:** California State Archives

Sacramento, California

**Abstract:** The California Un-American Activities Committees (CUAC) files (identification numbers 93-04-12 and 93-04-16) span the period 1935-1971 and consist of eighty cubic feet. The files document legislative investigations of labor unions, universities and colleges, public employees, liberal churches, and the Hollywood film industry. Later the committee shifted focus and concentrated on investigating communist influences in America, racial unrest, street violence, anti-war rallies, and campus protests.

**Physical location:** California State Archives

**Languages:** Languages represented in the collection: English

### Access

While the majority of the records are open for research, any access restrictions are noted in the record series descriptions.

### Publication Rights

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### Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], California Un-American Activities Committee, [ID number], California State Archives, Office of the Secretary of State, Sacramento, California.

### Acquisition and Custodial History

These records were transferred to the California State Archives from the Senate Rules Committee in 1971.

### Committee History

The growth of international communism in the 1930s had an enormous impact on American politics. Coupled with the rise of Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Imperial Japan, the threat of communism during the period leading up to World War II was very real and pervasive. In response to allegations that communists had infiltrated the State Relief Administration, the California Legislature created in 1940 what was to become a thirty-one year investigation into un-American activities in California.

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The first investigating committee, chaired by Los Angeles Assemblyman Sam Yorty, was called the Assembly Relief Investigating Committee on Subversive Activities. A report of the Committee's work was issued in late 1940 (HR9, HR29, and HR133, 1st Ex Session). This short-lived body devoted its attention solely to the State Relief Administration.

A second committee was created by Assembly Concurrent Resolution 58 in 1943 as a joint body of the State Senate and Assembly and was named the Joint Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities in California. This committee consisted of three senators and four assembly members. Assembly member Jack Tenney of Los Angeles chaired the committee. This Joint Committee received widespread, wartime support from the public. It divided its investigations between the activities and organization of pro-Axis and communist groups.

In 1947, the Assembly withdrew from the Committee. The Senate took control and renamed it the Senate Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities (Senate Resolution 75). Tenney, now a Senator, remained as chair. The Senate Committee focused its attention largely on identifying and exposing communists, and held many hearings on this subject. In particular, the Committee investigated labor unions, universities and colleges, public employees, liberal churches, and the Hollywood film industry. In 1949, Senator Tenney, under pressure from fellow legislators, resigned as chair and was replaced by Senator Hugh Burns of Fresno.

The name of the Committee changed once again in 1961, this time to the Fact-Finding Subcommittee on Un-American Activities. Senator Burns remained as chair. During the 1960s, the Committee shifted its emphasis to investigating communist influence in racial unrest, street violence, anti-war rallies, and campus protests. Instead of hearings and staff field investigations, the Committee based the reports more on information gathered from newspapers and police files. Senator James Mills of San Diego became chair in 1970. Senator Mills abolished the committee in 1971 and the Senate transferred the records to the State Archives.

### **Scope and Content**

The California Un-American Activities Committees (CUAC) files (identification numbers 93-04-12 and 93-04-16) span the period 1935-1971 and consist of eighty cubic feet. Over this period, the Committees produced or received thousands of documents, including fifteen published reports; unpublished reports and studies; newspaper clippings; photographs; hearing transcripts; correspondence; publications (books, magazines, and pamphlets); depositions; audio tapes; approximately 125,000 index cards, tracking an estimated 20,000 individuals and organizations.

The CUAC files represent one of the most significant collections for a study of modern California history and politics. Indeed, given the scope and breadth of the materials, the collection has importance for American and international history. It is interesting to note that California's attention to un-American activities predates McCarthyism by a decade. As the files reveal, however, there was a close and ongoing relationship between state and federal efforts.

As with most historical collections, the files are especially rich in certain subjects. Topics include labor and labor unions; public schools and education; Hollywood and the motion picture industry; civil rights; universities and colleges (in particular, the University of California-Berkeley, the University of California-Los Angeles, and San Francisco State University); political parties (including the California Democratic Party, the American Communist Party, the Los Angeles County Communist Party, and the Black Panther Party); the Soviet Union and Soviet-American relations; communism in China and Vietnam; fascist and Nazi movements in America; and, the anti-war and peace movements. The Committees paid attention to specific events as well. These events include the Alger Hiss trial; the Watts riots; the King, Ramsey, and Connor cases; and, the Sleepy Lagoon event. Great attention was devoted to a number of ethnic and occupational groups in society, including students, teachers, scientists, women, African-Americans, lawyers, clergy, musicians, writers, actors, Jews, Hispanics, Japanese, reporters, union activists, and public employees. Throughout the files, well-known names appear, including Cesar Chavez, Henry Wallace, Harry Bridges, Paul Robeson, Richard Nixon, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Earl Browder.

Additionally, special note should be given to records that relate to the development of the American labor movement and its activity in party politics; the role of the motion picture industry in shaping public perceptions; the growth of militant activities in universities during the 1960s (in particular, as related to the protest against the Vietnam War); the development of the farm labor movement in California; life in the Soviet Union in the 1950s and Soviet-American relationships during the Cold War; the emergence of civil rights politics as a response to the investigations; and, the evolution of anti-Semitic thought and practice and its relationship to public perceptions of Jewish life and culture.

Unfortunately, little is known about the structure of the Committees and how they operated. In addition to Senators Tenney and Burns, two other figures were dominated the work of the committees. Richard E. Combs, chief counsel, who directed the investigations and conducted most of the questioning during depositions and public and executive hearings and Thomas L. Cavett, chief investigator, who acted as the "eyes and ears" of the body, and gathered information from a wide network of local operatives (mostly unnamed).

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Researchers will benefit by first turning to the fifteen published reports (known as the "red books"), which have long been available at a number of repositories. The collection contains several sets. The reports combine a wealth of data from Committee files and, in many ways, summarize its work.

The records are divided into six principal series, several of which may be subdivided into smaller sections. The "F number" (a designation created by the Committee) series consists of twenty-eight boxes. These materials are predominantly from the 1940s and 1950s and, unquestionably, are the most important part of the collection. It is within this series that the researcher will find nearly all the topics noted above.

The hearing transcripts provide documentation of formal public hearings conducted by the Committees. In response to a court order, the majority of transcripts were released to the public in November 1999. There are two boxes of duplicate transcripts.

The index cards are crucial to understanding and using the collection. This portion of the collection is divided into three separate parts. The largest division consists of 24 boxes and provides indexing to the F number series. The other two divisions total eight boxes and principally cover Committee work during the 1960s, particularly, the Bay Area reports.

Bay Area reports represent a major effort by the Committee in the 1960s to investigate suspected subversive activities in the greater San Francisco Bay region. The incomplete and unpublished manuscripts include reports numbered three through seven with supporting information, and some general office files from the period. Reports number one and two, though reflected in the index and background files, are missing from the collection.

The records contain a wide variety of publications. Although newspapers, newspaper clippings, pamphlets, books, and other published forms may be found throughout the collection, a significant grouping can be found in Series 5. The publications span the entire period of the Committees' activities.

The office files contain various materials, principally correspondence and reports that were never cataloged into the Committees' filing system. Most are from the 1960s and early 1970s.

**Accruals**

No further accruals are expected.

**Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

California. Legislature. Joint Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities in California

Communism

Labor unions

Civil rights

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93-04-12, Boxes  
1-28

Series 1 **F Number Files 1935-1971**

**Physical Description:** 28 cubic feet

**Arrangement**

Arranged numerically by F number.

**Scope and Content Note**

This series contains files on alleged communist, fascist, and other suspected subversive organizations and individuals under CUAC investigation. Materials include correspondence, reports, clippings, testimony, exhibit items relating to hearings, photographs, and supporting background information. Although no guide to the CUAC filing system is available, the following pattern emerges from a careful evaluation of the records:

F1 (boxes 1-2): Communist Party organizations and leaders

F2 (boxes 2-12): Suspected communist front organizations

F3 (boxes 12-15): Communist publications and documents about communism

F4 (boxes 15-16): Suspected communists

F5 (boxes 16-21): Suspected fellow travelers, both organizations and individuals

F6 (boxes 21-24): Miscellaneous topics, principally from the 1950s

F7 (boxes 25-26): Communist Party election petitions

F10 (box 27): Subversive non-communist organizations

F11 (box 27): Subversive publications

F12 (box 27): Suspected subversive individuals

F13 (box 27): Other investigated individuals

F20 (box 28): Miscellaneous information on subversive organizations

F21 (box 28): Miscellaneous information on subversive organizations, individuals, and unnumbered files on schools

Access to the F Number Files is also provided by the 5" x 8" index cards through Index Cards, Series 3, Sub-series a, which is arranged alphabetically by last name.

For an inventory of Boxes 1-28, see Appendix A in Additional Series Information.

**Additional Series Information**

[Appendix A: Boxes 1-28](#)

93-04-12, Boxes  
29-34

Series 2 **Public Hearing Transcripts 1941-1958**

**Physical Description:** 6 cubic feet

**Arrangement**

Arranged chronologically by date of hearing.

**Scope and Content Note**

These are transcripts of public hearings conducted by the Committees at various locations throughout the state. As noted above, the transcripts of public hearings were opened in November 1999.

Many of the transcripts reference an F number file that contains exhibits or other supporting documentation relating to that hearing. In addition, each transcript includes a list of witnesses that are included in each volume.

For an itemized listing of hearings, see Appendix B in Additional Series Information.

**Additional Series Information**

[Appendix B: Boxes 29-34](#)

93-04-12, boxes  
35-66

Series 3 **Index Cards 1939-1968**

**Physical Description:** 32 cubic feet

**Arrangement**

Arranged into three sub-series: (a) 5" X 8" Cards, (b) 3" X 5" Cards, (c) Miscellaneous Cards.

**Scope and Content Note**

The content of the index cards varies from one index to the next. Some of the cards are quite extensive in the information provided about an organization or individual, extending through several cards. Others contain only the name of the organization or individual and a brief reference to records in the collection.

The first set of index cards (Sub-series "a") focuses entirely on California. The second and third sets of index cards (Sub-series "b" and "c") are national in scope and contain many examples of information reproduced from membership lists of suspected subversive organizations or subscription lists of subversive publications. In addition, these cards rely heavily on newspaper and television reports about individuals participating in or attending various anti-war, civil rights, nuclear disarmament, or peace rallies.

For a more detailed listing of indices, see Appendix C in Additional Series Information.

**Additional Series Information**

[Appendix C: Boxes 35-66](#)

93-04-12, boxes  
35-58

Subseries A **5" X 8" cards 1939-1960**

**Physical Description:** 24 cubic feet

**Arrangement**

Arranged alphabetically by last name.

**Scope and Content Note**

This large, alphabetized set of cards provides access to the F number file where additional information may be found and relevant dates. A reference may also be provided to the hearing transcripts when appropriate.

93-04-12, boxes  
59-64

Subseries B **3" X 5" cards 1954-1968**

**Physical Description:** 6 cubic feet

**Arrangement**

Arranged by color (white, blue, green, salmon).

**Scope and Content Note**

White cards are used for Tocsin, pre-1964, Delano and post-1968 references; blue cards refer to the first Bay Area report; green cards refer to the third Bay Area report; and salmon cards represent the Delano preliminary report.

93-04-12, boxes  
65-66

Subseries C **Miscellaneous Cards 1964-1967**

**Physical Description:** 2 cubic feet

**Arrangement**

Arranged by index type, as described below.

**Scope and Content Note**

Miscellaneous cards, principally relating to the Bay Area or other Committee reports, 1960s, boxes 65-66. Box 65 contains five separate indices: the first relates to the Peace and Freedom Party and Clubs; the second to the 1967 report; the third to San Francisco State University; the fourth and fifth to the Bay Area reports. Box 66 contains an index to the Bay Area reports, nos. 2-4, and the Bay Area index, 1964-1965. Some of the indices are arranged alphabetically; others have no apparent organization.

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93-04-12, boxes  
67-71

Series 4 **Bay Area Reports 1962-1971**

**Physical Description:** 6 cubic feet

**Arrangement**

There is no logical arrangement to this series and no rearrangement has been imposed.

**Scope and Content Note**

In addition to manuscripts covering the third through the seventh Bay Area reports, this series contains a wide variety of information, including correspondence, newspaper clippings, reports, publications, and supporting documentation. To a great extent, the files relate to the San Francisco Bay region. Information found within the files relates to the Delano grape strike and boycott, Martin Luther King, Jr., the Watts riots, and unrest at the University of California-Berkeley, as well as other subjects.

For a box list, see Appendix D in Additional Series Information.

**Additional Series Information**

[Appendix D: Boxes 67-71](#)

93-04-12, boxes  
72-76, 93-04-16,  
box 29

Series 5 **Publications 1940-1960**

**Physical Description:** 6 cubic feet

**Arrangement**

There is no logical arrangement to this series and no rearrangement has been imposed.

**Scope and Content Note**

This is the working library of the Committees and contains a wide variety of publications, including books, booklets, pamphlets, newspapers, audio tapes, and brochures received or acquired during the course of the investigations. In addition, a number of copies of the Committees' own reports are included.

Prominent subjects include communism, the Soviet Union and its leaders, the federal House on Un-American Activities, labor, civil rights, the Vietnam War, student unrest, the Black Power movement, Marxism, and Communist China. Of particular note is the nearly complete set of the "Little Lenin Library", which consists of writings of Lenin, Stalin, Marx, and Engels.

For a box list, see Appendix E in Additional Series Information.

**Additional Series Information**

[Appendix E: Boxes 29, 72-76](#)

93-04-12, boxes  
77-78, 93-04-16,  
box 30

Series 6 **Office Files 1940-1971**

**Physical Description:** 3 cubic feet

**Arrangement**

There is no logical arrangement to this series and no rearrangement has been imposed.

**Scope and Content Note**

This series contains a broad assortment of uncataloged materials, including books, bulletins, posters, Dictaphone disks, correspondence, reports, transcripts, newspaper clippings, photographs, and supporting documentation. Although the files cover four decades, the items are predominantly from the 1960s, and reflect the principal topics of the Committee work at the time, including anti-war protests, the student peace movement, and the growth of ethnic power groups.

A second group of files dates from the 1940s and 1950s and includes reports of the Senate Investigating Committee on Education and various publications of the period.

For a box list, see Appendix F in Additional Series Information.

**Additional Series Information**

[Appendix F: Boxes 30, 77-78](#)