
Finding Aid to the Holland Roberts California Labor School Collection larc.ms.0243

Finding aid prepared by Carol Cuénod.
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Title: Holland Roberts California Labor School collection
Creator: Roberts, Holland D. (Holland De Witte), 1895-1976

Date (inclusive): 1944-1957

Collection number: larc.ms.0243

Accession number: 1987/088

Extent: 0.75 cubic ft. (2 boxes)

Repository: Labor Archives and Research Center

J. Paul Leonard Library, Room 460

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Languages: In English.

Abstract: The bulk of the Holland Roberts California Labor School collection consists of the first draft of Roberts' memoirs, written circa 1971, centering on his time at the California Labor School. The memoirs provide a retrospective view of the School and Dr. Roberts' life, starting with his career as an associate professor at Stanford and through the closing of the School, and concluding with post-California Labor School chapter fragments on academic freedom and the HUAC hearing in San Francisco in 1960. The collection also contains materials on the California Labor School, including correspondence by Dr. Roberts as well as David Jenkins; class outlines on U.S. History and other classes Roberts taught; and a criticism of his outline by a colleague. There is also a folder with class outlines from the Jefferson School of Social Science in New York which Roberts collected.

Location: Materials are stored onsite.

Access

Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Holland Roberts California Labor School Collection, larc.ms.0243, Labor Archives and Research Center, San Francisco State University.

Acquisition

This collection was donated to the Labor Archives and Research Center in 1987 by Fiona St. John, the daughter of Holland Roberts, accession number 1987/088.

Processing Information

This collection was processed by Carol Cuénod in June 1994.

Biography

Holland Roberts' higher education was at the University of Chicago where he received advanced degrees in English (1919) and Education (1925). During his early career, he taught English at various midwest colleges and in New York City at Columbia University. In 1934 he came to Stanford University as an assistant professor of education for English teachers and by 1939, he was an associate professor. Dr. Roberts professional affiliations included the National Council of Teachers of English; he served as president in 1937-38 and again in 1944. He was the author of textbooks, articles and research studies in the field of education. His extra-curricular interests and activities included a lifelong study of the USSR, AFT organizing at Stanford, campaigning for the freedom of Tom Mooney, and promoting a school for trade unionists and the new workers in WWII industries. These activities served to identify Holland Roberts as a left-wing radical and Stanford University responded by refusing to renew his contract in the Spring of 1944. As he was not tenured, the action served as dismissal without recourse.

Following his termination at Stanford, Dr. Roberts began his staff affiliation with the California Labor School by accepting the post of educational director. When Dave Jenkins left as director in 1949, Roberts took that position and remained as the

head until the government closed the School in 1957.

Holland Roberts had been actively involved with the School prior to his employment as educational director. He writes of participating in meetings which led to the establishment in 1942 of what was then known as the Tom Mooney Labor School, and he was listed on the Board of Directors in the 1944 School catalog.

Throughout his life, Holland Roberts was an active leader in the peace movement and worked for friendship and cultural exchange with socialist countries. His service as president of the American Russian Institute for 20 years gained him recognition as an expert on the USSR. On his 80th birthday, he was commended by President Ford for his work improving relations between the US and the USSR. The Supreme Soviet of the USSR also gave him the high honor of the Friendship of the Peoples Award.

Arrangement

The Holland Roberts California Labor School Collection is arranged in four series: Series 1: Memoirs; Series 2: Holland Roberts; Series 3: California Labor School; and Series 4: Jefferson School of Social Science.

Scope and Contents

The bulk of the collection is a first draft of Holland Roberts' memoirs centering on his time at the California Labor School. Most material is handwritten or typed with handwritten revisions. There are 28 folders representing material for approximately 23 chapters. The memoirs start with his career as an associate professor at Stanford and continue to the closing of the School. There are post-California Labor School chapter fragments on academic freedom and the HUAC hearing in San Francisco in 1960. A "Tentative Table of Contents" guided the organization of these folders.

Researchers will gain insight into the thinking and motivation of a radical academic in a period of intense repression. They will find information on Holland Roberts' career at Stanford and the reason for his leaving that institution and becoming a full-time staff member at the California Labor School. His writing is replete with rhetoric of the left-wing movement of this period.

Holland Roberts tells of prominent and interesting teachers, students and supporters the California Labor School attracted. There are pieces on Anton Refrigier (muralist), Bill Freeman (student) and William Crocker (banker). The spirited social and cultural life is described in Chapters titled "The School as a Social Learning Center," "Personalities Around the School," and "1948: The School at its Peak."

An inside view of political oppression is told in "Escaping Subpoena Servers: Dave Goes Through the Skylight." Along with a humorous view of Dave's attempt to avoid a server, Roberts tells of the dangerous implications of receiving a subpoena from a touring investigating committee. Challenging the basic assumptions of government attacks is his chapter, "Were We Dominated by the Communist Party?" Other chapters describe the action which led to the closing of the school.

Series III: "The California Labor School" has similar arrangement as the California Labor School Collection (1988/034) and can be researched as a supplement to that collection. Correspondence contained in several different folders is by Dr. Roberts as well as David Jenkins. Of interest is the folder titled "Veterans Program, Correspondence," which gives insight into the reason for this program being discontinued after barely two years. There are six folders with class outlines on US History and other classes Roberts taught. One folder is a criticism of his outline by a colleague. These outlines provide a classroom view of the instruction which students received. A last folder has class outlines from the Jefferson School of Social Science in New York which Holland Roberts collected.

Subjects and Indexing Terms

California Labor School.

Alternative schools--California--20th century.

Labor movement--Study and teaching.

Labor unions and education--United States.

Progressive education--California--20th century.

Working class--Education--California.

Series 1: **Memoirs, circa 1971**

Extent: 28.0 folders

Box-folder 1/1	"Tentative Table of Contents" circa 1971
Box-folder 1/2	"Notes on My Life" circa 1971
Box-folder 1/3	"The War Years at Stanford and the California Labor School" circa 1971
Box-folder 1/4	"Labor School Days" circa 1971

Box-folder 1/5	"A School of a New Type" circa 1971
Box-folder 1/6	"What Kind of School Does America Need?" circa 1971
Box-folder 1/7	"Filling the Vacuum" circa 1971
Box-folder 1/8	"Bill Crocker" (donor) circa 1971
Box-folder 1/9	"The School as a Social Learning Center" circa 1971
Box-folder 1/10	"Our Teachers Came to Us" circa 1971
Box-folder 1/11	"Personalities Around the School" circa 1971
Box-folder 1/12	"Bill Freeman" (student) circa 1971
Box-folder 1/13	"The GI Bill of Rights" circa 1971
Box-folder 1/14	"The Building Crisis" circa 1971
Box-folder 1/15	"Changing the World: Toward World Peace" circa 1971
Box-folder 1/16	"1948-The School at Its Peak" circa 1971
Box-folder 1/17	"Library Days and Nights" circa 1971
Box-folder 1/18	"Publications, Adaptations, Recordings" circa 1971
Box-folder 1/19	"Escaping Subpoena Servers: Dave Goes Through the Skylight" circa 1971
Box-folder 1/20	"An FBI Episode of Strangulation" circa 1971
Box-folder 1/21	"Conspiracy to Destroy Our School" circa 1971
Box-folder 1/22	Untitled Chapter Fragment (government closing of the School) circa 1971
Box-folder 1/23	"Who Has These Rights?" circa 1971
Box-folder 1/24	"Franklyn, et al" (Dr. Bruce Franklyn, fired from Stanford) circa 1971
Box-folder 1/25	"Were We Dominated by the Communist Party?" circa 1971
Box-folder 1/26	Untitled Chapter Fragment (World Peace Congress, Warsaw, cancellation of passport by U.S. State Department, 1950) circa 1971
Box-folder 1/27	Untitled Chapter Fragment (Hitler's ties to corporate America; world's workers and unions need for labor education) circa 1971
Box-folder 1/28	Untitled Chapter Fragment (Academic freedom, HUAC Hearings, San Francisco 1960) circa 1971

Series 2: **Holland Roberts, 1964, 1976, undated**

Extent: 2.0 folders

Box-folder 2/1	Biography, Obituaries
Box-folder 2/2	"The Indivisibility of International Trade, Jobs and Peace," by Holland Roberts, Worldwide Trade For Peace, Helen Alfred, Editor 1964

Series 3: **California Labor School, 1944-1957**

Extent: 15.0 folders

Box-folder 2/3	Administration: Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws 1944 February
Box-folder 2/4	Administration: Bulk Mail Permits 1951-1954
Box-folder 2/5	Administration: Correspondence, General 1946-1947
Box-folder 2/6	Administration: Faculty Directory 1946
Box-folder 2/7	Administration: Fundraising 1945-1947, 1957
Box-folder 2/8	Administration: Veterans Program under G.I. Bill of Rights 1946-1947
Box-folder 2/9	Attacks: Tenney Committee Hearings, Statements by Dave Jenkins, Holland Roberts and the California Labor School 1946
Box-folder 2/10	Attacks: The Subversive Activities Control Board (U.S. Department of Justice) 1956-1957
Box-folder 2/11	Classes, Schedules and Events 1955-1957
Box-folder 2/12	Classes, Course Outline, "The Negro Question" undated
Box-folder 2/13	Classes, Course Outlines, "American History" 1946-1947
Box-folder 2/14	Classes, Course Outlines, "U.S. History" 1954-1956
Box-folder 2/15	Classes, Course Outline on U.S. History, Criticism undated
Box-folder 2/16	Classes, Course Outline, "Historical Materialism" undated
Box-folder 2/17	Classes, Course Outlines, "Introduction to Dialectics" and "Our Country, Its History and Its People" 1953, 1955

Series 4: **Jefferson School of Social Science, undated**

Extent: 1.0 folder

Box-folder 2/18

Classes: Course Outlines, "History of Europe, 1789-1914," "History of China," "History of the United States: Reconstruction to 1929," "History of the Labor Movement in the U.S., 1917-1948," "History of the American Negro" undated