OKLAHOMA DISLIKES PROTESTS OVER BOOKSTORE SEDITION CASES

Oklahoma reaction to the out-of-state protests against the trials of Robert Wood, proprietor of the Progressive Bookstore of Oklahoma City, and three others (PW July 5, 1942), whose appeals opened this week showed a determination not to let the "East's radical centers" deflect local opinion. As the Oklahoma City TIMES put it, "The work of four Oklahoma juries which convicted as many communists of criminal syndicalism and fixed their punishment at the maximum of ten years in prison and a $5,000 fine will get the fishy eye from a large assortment of representatives of reorganized radical groups."

The case of the Oklahoma booksellers has been supported not merely by radicals but by many heads of publishing houses and others interested in the fight against censorship. As PW pointed out, Sept. 7th, the defense bases its appeal on several grounds: that free expression of opinion is guaranteed by the 14th Amendment to the Constitution and there is thus no basis for the arrest and convictions; the Oklahoma criminal syndicalism statute is defective; evidence illegally seized (this includes hundreds of books) was improperly introduced by the prosecution; no specific offense was charged; and the trials were conducted in a highly illegal and prejudiced manner. The state failed to claim overt illegal action or incitement by any defendants, and the other books and pamphlets, customary merchandise of bookshops in scores of cities and libraries in many universities, were used as the basis for the heavy sentences.

Briefs for the defendants have been filed in the Court of Appeals by the International Labor Defense, which is conducting the appeal and other organizations. Briefs for the prosecution have been filed by the American Legion and the Knights of Pythias.

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