

Addendum to the ACLU file

The "NBC Nightly News" last week finally got around to telling us (Tom Brokaw's words) "just what the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) stands for." But what was said was more of a cover-up than an investigative report.

Legal reporter Carl Stern said that "for generations the ACLU has excited controversy with its defense of individual freedom." And he cited some positions taken by the ACLU, among which were shown, back-to-back, the group's defense of the right of Nazis to march in Illinois 10 years ago and its current defense of the fair trial rights of Lt. Col. Oliver North. Pictures were shown of both Col. North and those Nazis in their respective uniforms. Get it? Of course. And this report showed an ACLU spokesman resenting what Mr. Stern called Vice President George Bush's efforts to portray the ACLU "as somehow un-American."

But there are many more "controversial" things Mr. Stern might have reported about the ACLU, if he were intellectually honest. For example, he might have reported that on Jan. 17, 1931, in a report, the Special House (of Representatives) Committee to Investigate Communist Activities in the United States said this about the ACLU:

"[It] is closely affiliated with the communist movement in the United States, and fully 90 percent of its

efforts are on behalf of communists who have come into conflict with the law. It claims to stand for free speech, free press and free assembly; but it is quite apparent that the main function of the ACLU is to attempt to protect the communists in their advocacy of force and violence to overthrow the Government, replacing the American flag by a red flag and erecting a Soviet Government in place of the republican form of government guaranteed to each State by the Federal Constitution.

"Roger Baldwin, its guiding spirit, makes no attempt to hide his friendship for the communists and their principles. He was formerly a member of the IWW (Wobblies) and served a term in prison as a draft dodger during the war" [World War I].

Indeed, in his college yearbook, Mr. Baldwin, who directed the ACLU for 30 years, declared: "My chief aversion is the system of greed, private profit, privilege and violence which makes up the control of the world today, and which has brought it to the tragic crisis of unprecedented hunger and unemployment. . . . Therefore, I am for Socialism, disarmament and, ultimately, for abolishing the State itself as an instrument of violence and compulsion. I seek the social ownership of property, the abolition of the property class and sole control of those who produce wealth. Communism is the goal."

ruin by any available means, including resort to force and violence. Holding that doctrine, its role as the agency of a hostile foreign power renders its existence a clear, present and continuing danger to the security of the United States."

So, as I say, NBC could have told us a lot more about the ACLU, if it

In 1928, a committee of the New York legislature said this about the ACLU: "[It], in the last analysis, is a supporter of all subversive movements; its propaganda is detrimental to the interests of the State. It attempts not only to protect crime but to encourage attacks upon our institutions in every form."

In 1943, the Legislative Committee investigating un-American activities in California reported this on the ACLU: "[It] may be definitely classed as a Communist front or 'transmission belt' organization." And in 1948, California's Senate Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities said it "reiterates the findings of former legislative committees concerning the Communist character of the American Civil Liberties Union."

Throughout its history, the ACLU has defended Communists as if they were nothing more than members of another legitimate political party, like Republicans or Democrats. But they aren't. As the congressionally passed Communist Control Act of 1954 put it, correctly, under a heading "Findings of Fact:":

"The Communist Party of the United States, although purportedly a political party, is in fact an instrumentality of a conspiracy to overthrow the Government of the United States . . . [and] the policies and programs of the Communist Party are secretly prescribed for it by the foreign leaders of the world Communist movement . . .

"The peril inherent in its [the Communist Party's] operation arises not from its numbers, but from its failure to acknowledge any limitation as to the nature of its activities, and its dedication to the proposition that the present constitutional Government of the United States ultimately must be brought to

had wanted to, because there is a lot more "controversial" about this group than Mr. Stern told us. And when an ACLU spokesman grumps his resentment about implications that his organization is "somehow un-American," he's full of beans and/or ignorant of the history of the ACLU.