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Abstract

The means by which the United States sought to identify radicals and radicalism in the inter-war years has been largely hidden by a scholarship that has, instead, chosen to focus on processes of Americanization. By analysing hitherto hidden and underused archival sources, this essay examines the ways in which the American Legion positioned itself to become the single most important lobbying force in the identification of inter-war radicalism in the USA, used its considerable resources to sustain a vigorous programme to identify radicalism which served its own organizational interests, and, therefore, had a significant and meaningful impact on debates over radicalism and Americanism at local, state and national levels. The Legion reacted to a changing climate which saw radicalism identified first as an external, immigrant-led threat in the early 1920s, and then as an internal, home-grown menace as the 1930s drew on. That saw the organization grapple with questions including the innate intelligence of immigrants, as debates raged over whether radicals were lured unwittingly into that radicalism or chose radicalism because of a fiendish acumen. Throughout the period, the Legion's view of radicalism was deeply subjective, but was disseminated – and all too regularly accepted – with a polished veneer of objectivity that belied the often vituperative national debates that surrounded ideas of radicalism.

In 1919, the United States Bureau of Education's Director of Americanization, Fred Clayton Butler, attempted to navigate through terrain that had been rendered unrecognizable by the First World War and its immediate aftermath. His most pressing concern remained the processes of Americanization that had begun in earnest in the United States at the start of the decade, but which had been

significantly complicated by a number of wartime imperatives relating to immigration. In terms of national identities, for example, Butler acknowledged that his fellow countrymen had fostered a 'righteous hatred of Germany's barbarism' during that wartime moment, but that the Founding Fathers of the United States had 'wisely decreed that the gates of America shall be open to all', or at the least, in the careful codicil that Butler was minded to add, to all those 'who meet certain reasonable requirements', whether wartime foe or not. In so doing, Butler was reflecting contemporary debates over the nature of the United States and its ideology of Americanism, and the extent to which the civic nationalism championed by Theodore Roosevelt had been compromised by the direct experience of the war. For followers of the former President, all Europeans met Butler's 'reasonable requirements' and were therefore capable of Americanization, a view that necessitated a clear distinction to be made between the particular wartime behaviour of Germans, on the one hand, and what was contemporaneously described as the inherent German national character, on the other.

For a growing cadre of racial nationalists who sought to base immigration and naturalization policies on a hierarchy of racial and ethnic groups which included the establishment of difference between Europeans, the issue was no simpler: the Germans who had been the nation's wartime enemy were nonetheless held to be 'superior' to the Catholics, Jews and Eastern Europeans who were increasingly classed as incapable of successful Americanization. In the context of those battles between Roosevelt's civil nationalism and the predominantly nativist-inspired racial nationalism that challenged it, a shared intolerance of political radicalism appeared to provide some welcome unifying ground. Here, too, however, Butler faced increasing concerns as he sought to deal with the challenge presented not by the geographical origin of immigrants themselves, but by many of the social, political and economic forces that had coalesced into the United States' first major Red Scare, which, beginning in 1919, witnessed an increasingly nativist constituency mount a series of counter-attacks against what was perceived to be a hydra of multi-headed radicalism, led by communists, syndicalists, anarchists and radical socialists. Despite Butler's office being ultimately answerable to the Department of the Interior, the national mood increasingly identified threats to Americanization as having their genesis in exterior forces, not least because the majority of those radical groups' adherents were first-generation, foreign-born immigrants.[1]

It was largely as a result of those mounting pressures that Butler produced a series of federal government handbooks that were

specifically designed to aid both state and local programmes in their attempts to 'Americanize' the nation. Butler and his Bureau acknowledged that education technically remained the devolved responsibility of the individual states of the union, but believed nonetheless that the federal government should retain a commitment to helping individual states to Americanize any recent immigrants living within their borders. Such a view has led some historians to characterize the period as one in which the federal government maintained a defence of the nation's external borders, while those individual states protected against a perceived enemy within.[2] Indeed, in Butler's words his purpose was to provide 'some concrete suggestions of ways by which the States may serve effectively in the education and the assimilation into full fellowship and citizenship of our foreign-born people'.[3] Where the historiography has begun to examine the processes by which the First World War complicated ideas and ideals of that citizenship, it has yet to identify the full range of processes by which the United States sought to isolate and identify radicals and radicalism. That process was far more complex than a simple binary sum that posited all those who were denied citizenship as automatic radicals. If, as recent scholarship has ably shown, there were parallel narratives that led different groups, such as Native Americans, pacifists and proponents of women's suffrage, into different levels of citizenship's embrace, so, too, were there divergent pathways to being identified as radical.[4]

The ongoing contemporary debates over immigration, which were fought largely between Rooseveltian civic nationalists and the growing band of nativist-inspired racial nationalists who sought tighter restrictions on immigration policies, found more common ground over the question of political radicalism. To many, the proponents of the 1919 Red Scare were bound by two common features: their ideological and political radicalism, which was often depicted as a disease; and their immigrant status as non-native born aliens, which, in popular discourse, often led to their being depicted as particularly susceptible to that disease of radicalism. A greater point of division came in the question of how to identify those radicals, and what to do with them once that identification had taken place. Where Butler wrote in broad terms of the process of Americanizing 'our foreign-born people', others drew firmer distinctions between future American citizens capable of undergoing Americanization successfully, and carriers of the radical disease who were not and who were, therefore, un-American. For those racial nationalists who sought to differentiate between different peoples on the basis of their physical characteristics, one of the greatest

dangers posed by un-American radicals was their seeming anonymity. This was a metaphysical intellectual disease that they were carrying, not one resplendent with external physical symptoms. As one scholar of totalitarianism has aptly commented, these leftist radicals of the 1920s were particularly dangerous because, unlike the brash visibility of their far-right, fascist counterparts in the 1930s, they remained a largely hidden threat.[5]

Evidence from another of the Bureau of Education's published handbooks, however, suggests that it may in fact have been possible to identify such radicalism after all, for in his work Butler had stumbled – perhaps unwittingly – upon what might be termed the aesthetics of Americanism. The publication included an image of an Armenian immigrant who, after years in the United States, had been effectively Americanized, a process that had bestowed him with a 'confident look of self-reliance, of optimism, of determination, of prosperity, of equality'. Importantly, each of those characteristics had surely also inoculated him against the 'hopeless, hunted look of fear' worn by his parents, whom he was pictured greeting on an East Coast wharf, fresh from their arrival from the Old World (Fig. 1). If Butler and his Bureau had required readers to identify the radicals in the image in 1920, it would surely not have taken long to pinpoint the dishevelled, non-Americanized parents as carriers of the radical disease, so clearly did they reflect so many of the tropes associated with immigrant radicalism by those intent upon prosecuting the Red Scare.[6]

Given that Butler considered the fight against radicalism and for the preservation of Americanism to be the preserve of the federal government, or at the very least one that should be devolved to individual state governments, it is likely that he would not have anticipated that some of the most formidable praise for his pioneering handbook work came from a non-governmental organization, the American Legion. A self-proclaimed 'patriotic organization' that was newly formed in the wake of the First World War, the Legion's foundational intention was to keep 'the spirit' of American patriotism that was fostered among US servicemen in that conflict 'alive' in peacetime. As the Legion began to organize itself in the domestic confusion that followed the return to peacetime, both its size and its original remit started to evolve organically. By the end of 1919, its first year in operation, it boasted over one million members; by the time of its fourth annual conference, held in New Orleans in 1922, it was no longer following the narrow confines of a responsibility to protect those servicemen, their conditions and their rights. Instead, it

Figure 1 Source: Butler, *Community Americanization*, plate 1.

embraced a much fuller, national campaign of Americanization. As it did so, it became clear that the organization's title was to refer as much to ideological Americanization as to mere geographical location. For Legionnaires, that meant the creation and dissemination of an active, aggressive programme of Americanization, but also a concomitant drive against radical un-Americanism.[7] The peculiar circumstances in which it found itself granted the organization a particularly privileged position. As has been argued elsewhere, the post-war period saw the reintroduction of a traditional 'suspicion of state power' among the citizenry after a period of obeisance during the war, when war-duration legislation had given the federal government untypical powers to enforce Americanization under the aegis of promoting loyalty. Once that legislation had expired and those suspicions had returned, however, the federal government was forced to withdraw from a strong, disciplinary Americanization programme. The Legion was perfectly suited to fill that void and to act as an alternative instrument of state power.[8]

The attention to detail and vigour that the Legion brought to bear on its work with veterans' affairs quickly informed its Americanization

work. Indeed, such was the force of Legion campaigning, and so great was the reach of its organizational strength and membership, that it became the single most important lobbying force in inter-war American anti-radicalism. In terms of policy and politics, for example, the Legion had an impact at local, state and national levels, not least because many of those in prominent positions of law enforcement and policy making were themselves Legionnaires. These included Congressman Albert Johnson who helped to enshrine the Legion's policy of restricted immigration by constructing what became the Johnson–Reed Immigration Act of 1924, and Hamilton Fish III, who chaired a congressional anti-radical investigatory committee that bore his name a decade after drafting the Legion's preamble.[9] The weight that the Legion brought to those efforts therefore exposes both a considerable irony and a false dichotomy. In terms of the former, historians have long recognized that the limited yet vocal group of US Congressmen who opposed tighter immigration restrictions in the 1920s often pointed to the loyal service and martial sacrifice rendered by immigrants during the World War as part of their defence of the idea of immigrant loyalty. Here, though, was the largest and, by 1924, most comprehensively developed organization of those veterans lobbying extensively for, and even drafting, exclusionary legislation. In terms of the latter, the extent to which the organization's membership encompassed individuals working at local, state and federal leadership levels shows that arguments which seek to separate the federal oversight of external borders from state oversight of internal subversion neglect the extent to which the Legion bridged what is, in this context, an often artificial divide.[10]

In order to ensure the successful dissemination of such a wide-ranging message, the Legion constructed a framework of considerable reach: attempts at high-brow critiques of immigrant radicalism in the *American Legion Monthly* magazine, which included a four-part series of essays on radicalism, were bathetically combined with the National Americanism Commission's *The Huddle*, a hastily assembled broadsheet that sought to explain most of the Legion's work through tortuously long sporting metaphors, but which nevertheless went out to the organization's 10,000 posts, plus a further 6,400 posts belonging to its Women's Auxiliary.[11] In terms of taking its message to the masses, the Legion organized a Junior Baseball World Series – both because baseball represented a metaphor for Americanism and because it inculcated players with ethics that stood them in good stead against radicalism – and a schools' essay competition, which was routinely based around an anti-radical or anti-subversive annual theme.[12]

Despite the active efforts and capital that the Legion poured into its anti-radical and Americanization campaigns, the extent to which that activity had a material effect on the nation's conceptualization of radicalism in the inter-war period, and its resultant central role in identifying and combating US radicals in the inter-war period, has not received the historical analysis that its impact has deserved. The Legion was, as one study has acknowledged, 'one of the most powerful interest groups' of that period which, though 'rarely studied', nonetheless 'had a dramatic influence' on the twentieth-century United States. Part of the explanation for the difference between the weight of its apparent influence and the paucity of detailed historiographical analyses of its role lies in the available source base, for the organization's archives remain private, some of its materials were purposefully destroyed at the end of the twentieth century, and access to scholars is carefully controlled. There are, however, other less prosaic reasons. The sheer scale of the membership and range of Legion activities, for example, has made it difficult to compress its activities into workable single volumes: the one academic monograph to concentrate on the organization had to limit its focus to one particular period, 1919–1941, but was nonetheless still unable to cover all of its work in depth, and, for example, did not make use of the Americanism Commission's regularly issued newsletter in its analysis.[13] The result is that the Legion inhabits a peculiar space in the existing historiography, as it is often cited as an exemplar of particular forms of behaviour or ideological approach in passing, but is rarely probed in depth. Some scholars, for example, remain content to side-line the organization as one that provided little more than rhetorical bluster and strike-breaking manpower. Elsewhere, while the historiography has in recent years shifted away from the original idea that the anti-radicalism of the First Red Scare was driven by 'fear' to offer an altogether more sophisticated and wide-ranging analysis, texts on the subject of post-war Americanization continue to overlook the Legion's work on radicalism and anti-radicalism, and often fail to move beyond the passage of the Johnson Reed Immigration Act of 1924 to view the inter-war period as a whole.[14]

Where, in contrast, the Legion has been studied, the precise focus of that work remains perplexing, whether in terms of its analytical framework or its chronological span. In terms of the former, for example, a socio-political analysis that concentrates on the Legion's early leadership and its attempt to position the group as one that battled over the idea of class itself, rather than between different classes, does

offer interesting insights into the organization's development more broadly, but they are liminal when compared to analyses of how or why the organization developed or maintained particular strategies, especially in terms of its anti-radical campaigns. The Legion did not, as that analysis would have it, simply 'battle' against 'progressives and radicals' during the inter-war period as a patriotic organization; rather, it was instrumental to national and federal efforts to define those groups. Finally, in terms of chronological approach, existing work that does seek to concentrate on the role of the Legion as an anti-radical force has not taken as its focus the 1920s and 1930s when its programmes were first launched and expounded, but rather the 1940s and 1950s, during which the 'Contact Program' saw explicit links being built between the Legion and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), as the Bureau was forced to rely on a network of conservative groups to 'monitor dissent and ensure internal order'.[15] The collective result has been not just a failure to comprehend the full impact of the Legion's role in the inter-war years, but also, more importantly, a misunderstanding of the overall interplay between American radicalism and anti-radicalism in the 1920s and 1930s.

The Legion brought its many resources to bear in a sustained and vigorous post-war programme of first identifying and then countering what it defined as radicalism. In terms of its vigour, that programme cast it as an inheritor of the Rooseveltian tradition of enforced, disciplinarian Americanization; in terms of its focus on restricting particular immigrant groups, it was squarely within the racial nationalist camp. In a pronounced period of activity, the Legion utilized two separate strategies in two distinct phases. In terms of the first phase, which ran from the end of the War until the end of the 1920s, the Legion drew upon Butler's approach and tied radicalism inextricably to alien-born immigrants, with the result that it endeavoured either to excise the problem altogether by halting immigration at source, or to alter that problem fundamentally by seeking to immerse immigrants immediately into a comprehensive educative programme of Americanization. The Legion's early 1920s attempts to bar immigration were based on core assumptions that were, at first glance, confusing and even paradoxical, for the organization's literature often portrayed racial characteristics as heritable and immutable – which was why the influx of Eastern European immigrants was such a worry, for they were believed to be particularly susceptible to radical ideologies – yet there was also a fundamental faith in the melting pot theory, upon which the educative side of the Legion's programme was premised.

The Legion would not have expended vast swathes of organizational capital on education if it were believed that those who were being educated could never fall into Americanism's protective embrace. Drawing upon the contemporary metaphor of radicalism as a disease, the Legion therefore navigated a pathway that effectively bridged what scholars have traditionally seen as two separate traditions. It held that the inoculating effect of Americanism was sufficiently strong to overcome any heritable disposition towards the diseases of radicalism.

Such was the speed with which the Legion developed its anti-radical mechanisms, and so swift was its accumulation of organizational capital, that, only two years after its inception, National Commander F.W. Galbraith, Jr. argued that its educational programme could effectively crush the threat that the Legion believed was then posed to the United States by radicals, and that as a result 'at the end of twenty years we will have a race of almost one hundred per cent. Americans'. The main threat to that success, he argued, came from the activities of a previous wave of radicalized arrivals, who preyed upon the lack of many immigrants' English, and who lurked at the Port of New York dockside or Pennsylvania Station ready to greet those with whom they shared a mother tongue. Galbraith claimed,

> I can prove to you that within three days from the time of the people coming over from Russia and Poland and some of the countries that are more or less radical, that within three days those people are in a radical hall and are being taught that, 'the thing that you are here for is to make a new government, a free government; that you may take what is yours by right'.[16]

The insinuation from Galbraith was that many immigrants were lured into radicalism through an ignorance of what, ideologically, Americanism represented, and by a radical presence which, in turn, was not wholly American. As an article in the *American Legion Weekly* magazine argued in 1922, even those first-generation immigrants 'who have settled in the country and got the name of being "good Americans" are capable of reverting to their earlier allegiance. At best, they know little of the struggles and ideals of the Republic they have joined.'[17] Wherever it was viewed, the problem of radicalism was an external infection. Garland W. Powell, chairman of the Legion's National Americanism Commission, explained the point in *Service: For God and Country*, a text book that he designed primarily for America's school

children. On breaking into the secret headquarters of any radical, he noted, the opening of closets

> reveals stack on stack of printed propaganda, printed in almost every tongue. A fertile field in which to plant this propaganda is in the mind of the person who cannot read or write our language. He can be taught only in his own language and the revolutionary propagandist knows this, seizes upon it and works it for all it is worth.[18]

The Legion thus set about countering what it identified as that radical propaganda with its own publications, workshops and educative programmes on what can only be described as an industrial scale.

Of course, the Legion recognized that it would be far easier to educate newly arrived immigrants into Americanism's anti-radical embrace if there were, simply, fewer of them. Thus, Legionnaires used their considerable lobbying prowess to push for the passage of restrictive immigration legislation. As the title of a 1919 article on the melting pot's failure that was disseminated to all Legion posts put it, 'What Cannot Be Fused Must Be Refused', followed by a text which specifically endorsed the plans that Legionnaire and Congressman Albert Johnson was already beginning to draw up to stem the radical tide through restrictive immigration legislation. Again, it is a sign of the swiftness with which the Legion was able to expand its organizational capacity that, when legislation was finally signed into law with the passage of two acts specifically designed to decrease the percentage of immigrants arriving from what were perceived to be the radicalized hotbeds of Old World Eastern Europe, the Immigration Restriction Act of 1921 and the Johnson–Reed Act of 1924, the Legion's input into their successful enactment was tangible and meaningful.[19] As a fully paid-up Legionnaire, Johnson had not only been in attendance at the organization's National Convention during which a resolution was passed to 'fully endorse the restrictive features' of his proposed Johnson–Reed Act, but was also there as a member of the convention's Americanism Committee. The convention's Legislative Committee, moreover, had, according to Powell, 'already presented bills to Congress carrying out the spirit of those resolutions'.[20] Johnson was at the heart of federal anti-immigrant policy making in Washington; he was equally positioned within the Legion.[21]

By the end of the first decade of the inter-war period, however, the Legion's view of radicalism had altered subtly yet significantly, signalling its second anti-radical stage. Exemplifying the extent to which

American radicalism must be fully contextualized to be understood, a number of factors combined to undermine the existing conception that the United States was in imminent, life-threatening danger from a disease of radicalism that was borne on the backs of foreign-born immigrant aliens: first, the Red Scare of the immediate post-war period passed without the much mooted collapse of American democratic society; and, secondly, it was clear that the net immigration rate, which had been in slow decline for decades, had stalled significantly on account of both greater legislative restrictions on alien arrivals and fewer economic opportunities in the era of Depression.[22] For some, those changes have been understood within the context of a longer and broader political debate, which pitted 'disciplinarians' against more progressive forces. The former, it has been argued, envisioned a disciplinarian state which would enforce Americanization coercively, but found that a number of their mooted programmes were dissipated or 'blocked' by opposition from progressive forces. As a result, they turned their focus to immigration restriction as an alternative means of reaching many of the same ends.[23] The Legion formed a signal part of those disciplinary forces, but also showed that another route was available. For, when those changing immigration patterns left the Legion's central premise looking structurally implausible, it did not end its anti-radical programme, but rather contributed to a shift in its work against – and perception of – radicalism.

In overall terms, where the Legion had initially viewed American radicalism as the product of an alien, uneducated ignorance, the organization began to acknowledge the role of intelligence in an American-born radicalism. The threat was now from within, and, what is more, was increasingly depicted as being borne not by the unintelligent but rather by those with fiendish acumen: it was that intelligence which allowed them to inculcate their way undetected into the fabric of America's most central institutions, from where they would bore from within. Although it was never articulated as such, changes in immigration and radicalism appeared to have identified an internal flaw in the logic of enforced Americanization and the ideology, as then understood, of Americanism. Even within Roosevelt's embrace of the melting pot theory, he and his supporters had maintained that, in the words of the *American Legion Monthly* article, that which could not be 'fused' into Americanism had to be 'refused', and that a number of immigrant groups simply did not have the heritable intellectual capacity to become full Americans, which, in turn, rendered them a threat to the fabric of society. Here, though, came acknowledgement that radicals

could be Americans by birth, and therefore full US citizens. The Legion was now fundamentally altering the intellectual assumptions that underpinned the process of radicalism's identification. A generational shift had taken place. Where Theodore Roosevelt had long held the superiority of 'Americans' to be inherent, and political radicalism to be an intolerable trait of certain non-American immigrant groups, the greatest threat of radicalism was now seen to come not from external non-Americans but internal un-Americans.

As one member of the Americanism Commission explained to what he referred to as his 'comrades' in the Legion, the issue of denouncing radicalism by the end of the 1920s had become far more difficult than it had been in the relatively simplistic immediate post-war era. 'Now our problem is much more insidious,' he noted, 'because the sponsors of it are not uneducated foreigners from across the sea, but those people among the most educated but distorted minds among our own people.' A jump had been made 'from the ignorant' and the 'uneducated' to 'the best trained minds that our country offers'.[24] What was more, those minds worked 'Guised under the cloak of religion and education', from where they were 'unusually active in our educational institutions and churches. The masses have been misled,' the Legion claimed, 'with their purported facts and figures.'[25] The 'most telling influences' of the 'agitprop' of radical communism were now 'those of which we are unconscious,' the Legion reported, and now that 'the last rebel [in the Soviet Union] had been shot or silenced', Stalin had the time to oversee developments in other countries. For radicals, the most useful and fearsome 'red' was now 'a good fellow who adroitly fans any spark of disaffection and insubordination in others. That is, he is not himself a trouble-maker but encourages others to make trouble.'[26] To return to Butler's image aestheticizing Americanization (Fig. 1), the radical was now far more likely to be the dapper, well-dressed and seemingly affluent gentleman on the left than the two archetypal Eastern European peasants on the right.

The clearest iteration of this new view of American radicalism came in one of the defining documents of the 1930s anti-radical crusade, the American Legion's 207-page *ISM'S*. Finally published by the organization's National Americanism Commission in 1936, after what prior ideological predilections would interpret as either years of painstaking research or hours of cutting and pasting from other existing sources, *ISM'S* became a handbook for this new view of radicalism, and, equally, of how best to combat its many strains. Importantly here, the most threatening of those 'isms' were still perceived to be those of

socialism, syndicalism and communism on the left, for the Legion had a far more benign view of the fascism that began to bind the far left and far right together into a single 'totalitarianism'. The temptation to view the Legion's less antipathetic view of fascism as a reflection of its own militarism should be avoided, however. Since its formation at the end of the First World War, it had resolutely opposed any attempt to bask in what others saw as the heroic glories of martial endeavour. If it were to have viewed the relative threats of fascism and communism in militaristic terms, the Legion would have likened the threat from fascism to that of a frontal assault which, through its obvious visibility, could be combatted appropriately. The threat of communism, in contrast, would have been akin to an unseen ambush from perfect cover. In terms of its overall strategic direction, *ISM'S* made it clear that education was still key, and the Legion remained committed to the idea that its own networks provided a source for the most efficacious way of delivering that anti-radical education. 'It is believed,' wrote *ISM'S* editor and National Americanism Commission Assistant Director, Homer L. Chaillaux,

> that the greatest need at this particular time is the enlightenment of all of our people to the menace of Communism. American citizens must be informed of the many ways in which the Communistic movement bores from within. They must know of the many subsidiary and co-operating organizations and of their activities. That is the purpose of this book.[27]

Importantly, the Legion's view of radicalism was deeply subjective, but was disseminated – and all too regularly accepted – with a polished veneer of objectivity that belied the often vituperative debates that surrounded ideas of radicalism, both within the organization and more broadly. For the former, Legion posts with dissenting views, such as the Corporal Sydney Rosenberg Post in Brooklyn, New York, whose largely Jewish membership decried official Legion pronouncements on immigration restriction and radicalism, were subsumed by the voices of a relatively small band of Legionnaires who regularly took advantage of a paucity of attendance at annual conventions to make their own voices heard. When such dissent was heard, however, it was framed as a microcosm of the national debate between restrictionists, who wished to minimize immigration in line with the racial nationalist agenda and who made up the vast majority of Congress, and the small band of anti-restrictionists who opposed them, not least because those anti-restrictionists – just as the Sydney Rosenberg Post did – drew on

the loyalty and wartime sacrifice of immigrants to make their case for a softer immigration stance.[28] The leading figures of the Legion were not, however, interested in prolonging such debate. The organization's increasing concentration on what it termed 'radical pacifism' sought to downplay the significance, and even deny the presence, of oppositional views. Those veering from the Legion's policy line, such as Columbia University's Dr David Muzzey, who publicly argued for 'America the Beautiful' to replace the overly – and overtly – militaristic 'Star Spangled Banner' as the national anthem, were sidelined as 'un-American leaders of our youth', and tainted with guilt-by-association. 'It will be interesting … to make a further analysis of the past history of the leaders of the radical pacifistic groups', wrote National Americanism Commissioner Russell Cook, for 'An investigation will no doubt bring out that these people have made no contribution whatsoever to America's forward march and, particularly, to the development of a greater love for the nation and for its Flag'.[29] With eyes firmly set upon the civilizing and deterministic influence of citizenship, National Americanism Commission Chairman Paul H. Griffith followed Cook with the assertion that such radical pacifist movements have 'most certainly made no contribution to our government or plan of recovery'.[30]

Indeed, by May 1932, the Legion's *The Huddle* publication was exhorting Legionnaires to 'Preach the Doctrine of Americanism', which included the deployment of 'your every influence to curtail the present spread of propaganda and radical activities so evident in our country today. I am referring to the professional pacifists, radicals and communists', *The Huddle* continued, for 'The national dignity, security and character of this nation is being attacked in every possible angle by these groups'. In a close alliance with the Communists, those 'professional pacifists' were 'using every means possible to tear down the national defense and confidence of this government'. The Legion's logic was simple: the Soviets had stated their avowed purpose to smash and overthrow the capitalistic government of the United States; if armed force was to be used in that offensive, how much easier that objective would prove to be if the United States was suffering from a lack of preparedness. To cap it all, believed the Legion, and further exemplifying its preference for limiting the range of totalitarianism to include only those ideologies that appeared on the far left of the political spectrum, it was simultaneously clear that 'the mother country of their doctrine – Russia – [is] building up a great army and strengthening its national defense system'.[31] By 1934, the Legion's annual convention had mandated support for a raft of measures designed to counter its

own take on subversion, radicalism and the dangers that both were held to threaten: the oath supporting the Constitution that several states already required of their teachers, for example, was to be mandated at the federal level; radical aliens who should be deported, but whose deportation was forestalled or postponed by inadequate legislation, should be held in 'Alien Camps'; and the Legion formally opposed pending legislation in the form of the Crowe Bill which, in its analysis, 'would admit aliens as citizens without obligation to bear arms in defense of our Flag, our Constitution and our Country'.[32]

As with the first stage of the Legion's campaign against inter-war radicalism, so this second stage was as important for the way in which the Legion was able to insinuate its views into the fabric of federal government policy as it was for the particular way in which it chose to define radicalism. Most simply, the Legion managed to establish itself as a founding member of what effectively became a self-reinforcing vortex of information and 'expertise' on radicalism. The Legion's annually updated *Americanism Manuals*, for example, referred to 'information regarding communist activities' which was taken from a government report derived from 'the findings of the special committee to investigate communist activities in the United States'.[33] Perhaps even more to the point, a memo sent to the Legion's National Commander, Stephen Chadwick, noted that the official report of the Special Committee on Un-American Activities, a congressional investigatory committee with the remit of countering 'un-American subversion and propaganda', contained a 'definition of Americanism as used by that Committee, which you [Chadwick] have used in varied forms in your speeches'.[34] That was not surprising, given that Chadwick had provided it. Appearing before Texas Congressman Martin Dies' investigatory committee into un-American subversion only two months previously in a bid to help those congressmen define and identify un-American radicalism, Chadwick had read widely from *ISM'S*, donated a copy to the committee's files, and pledged both his and the Legion's support for the continuation of what was then a temporary committee.[35]

If, as has been argued, that congressional committee represented the clearest example of the 'conservative counterattack' against the civic nationalism of the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration, then the Legion was at its very core. Indeed, throughout the later inter-war period, the definitions of subversive 'un-American' radicalism that those congressional committees formulated drew largely from the 'expertise' of the Legion and, in particular, its National Americanism Committee. As

well as Chadwick's contribution, for example, National Americanism Commission Director Homer L. Chaillaux was invited to appear before Dies' un-Americanism commission on its first day in August 1938, Roy P. Monahan appeared under the aegis of both the Legion and the Disabled Veterans when the Hearings ventured to New York City in September, and Harper L. Knowles and Ray E. Nimmo appeared as chair and counsel respectively of the Legion's 'radical research committee'.[36] Knowles' testimony clearly revealed the chimerical nature of the Legion's professed political bi-partisanship and, simultaneously, the Dies Committee's objectivity. Having already been sued for slander and libel by Democratic candidates running in his native California, even whilst professing to abide by the Legion's political neutrality, Knowles willingly stood under oath before the Dies Committee in the following exchange:

Chairman: The investigation which the American Legion has conducted is absolutely nonpartisan?
Knowles: That is right.
Chairman: The American Legion is not a partisan organization?
Knowles: Not at all.
Chairman: It is composed of members of every political party, except Communists and other radicals?
Knowles: We hope so.
Chairman: … And your purpose is to render some service to the country in exposing un-American activities?
Knowles: That is our intention, sir.
Chairman: So that there has not been any bias or prejudice, from the partisan standpoint, that has entered into the preparation of this material?
Knowles: Not at all.[37]

The lobbying effort to ensure that Legion ideas on, and policies to counter, radicalism were replicated in Washington was strengthened further by direct campaigns to pass legislation that mirrored policies and resolutions adopted by the organization's National Conventions. In that purpose, the Legion was well served by the expansion of its influence into a veritable network of individuals who shared their law-making responsibilities with their membership of the Legion itself. The Legion was particularly well represented in the halls and corridors where immigration policies were discussed and introduced: Senator Richard Russell, the Chairman of the Senate Immigration Committee,

was a Legionnaire, and his fellow Senator – and fellow Legionnaire – North Carolina's Robert Reynolds, introduced a bill in line with the Legion's anti-immigration and anti-radical policies every year from 1936 to 1940. Alabama's US Congressman Joe Starnes treble-dipped, for he was a Legionnaire, a serving member of the Dies Committee, and the sponsor of companion bills to those of Reynolds in the Lower House for each of those same years, every one of which complied with what Chaillaux referred to as 'our National Convention resolutions for immigration restriction'. Reynolds, he noted, 'goes all the way with the Legion on this question'. When a new proposal to increase the quotas of Finnish immigrants and settle them in Alaska was introduced, Reynolds was clear about what he needed to do: 'Please wire me your reaction to such proposals', he besought Chaillaux.[38]

The active impact that Legionnaires had on immigration and anti-radical policy in the last years of the 1930s, in particular, strongly suggests that the post-war FBI Contact Program had long-established roots, and that provisional links between the Legion and the Bureau were tested and inaugurated long before the outbreak of the Second World War. The evidence clearly suggests that Bureau of Investigation reliance on such 'conservative activists' was not, in fact, a discrete product of wartime emergency. There was instead a seamless tradition of close cooperation between the Legion and the Bureau throughout the inter-war period.[39] Alabama's US Congressman Sam Hobs, for example, who was a well-known confidant of J. Edgar Hoover, sought to bring the nation's deportation laws more into line with Legion policy, for as it stood in the 1930s, 'A Red citizen of the United States may not be deported', which had not been an issue when most radicals were thought to be first-generation alien-born immigrants. The change in the status of radicalism throughout the 1930s had led to a subtle shift in the dangers of such a deportation policy. As Fredrick Palmer explained in the *American Legion Monthly*, 'According to the latest Communist statement a large majority of their dues-paying members are [now] American citizens. Not only are most of the leaders of the Socialists and Communists American citizens, but American born.'[40] Hobs therefore proposed a bill to detain 'aliens, communists, Fascists and others', and when he did so he tellingly telegraphed Legion HQ in Indianapolis with urgency, noting that he 'would greatly appreciate' the endorsement of the Legion's National Convention, in the understanding that such a development would give his bill clear impetus. After amendments, Joe Starnes and a colleague from Louisiana agreed to support Hobs' bill, but – crucially – only 'provided the legion [sic] will go along with us'.[41]

Such a view must have informed the desire to involve the Legion with the FBI's networks to combat internal subversion.

Over the course of the inter-war period, then, the loudest and most insistent voice in the discourse surrounding both the identification and the subsequent means to combat American radicalism belonged to the American Legion. Importantly, rather than acknowledging itself to be but a single voice in a wider conversation on the means of protecting Americanism from a variety of radical threats, and, indeed, of identifying the type of radicalism that was most likely to pose those threats, the Legion sought to present its subjective take on the issues as an objective truth. It neither acknowledged dissenting voices within its own ranks, nor listened meaningfully to other organizations and individuals who wished to posit a different view from its own. In part, it was able to follow that line because of the number of Legionnaires who operated both within Legion ranks and within the legislative branch of the federal government, although the sheer scale of the Legion's communications and lobbying structures were also key. The combined result placed the Legion at the forefront of the developing campaign against radical 'isms' in the inter-war period, and brought the organization significant capital through which it was able to have a material effect on the content, nature and tenor of contemporary debates on American radicalism. Primarily through the work of the Legion, a major shift was engendered which saw radicalism being presented first as an external threat borne to the United States on the back of foreign-born immigrants, and then increasingly as an internal, indigenous American threat. If that new wave of radicals was all the more difficult to identify because its members were native born, then the Legion would surely have to be yet more alert, and federal government initiatives yet more controlling, to offer a substantive counter-movement to its dangers and a meaningful bulwark to Americanism's protection.

Notes

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1 Fred Clayton Butler, *State Americanization: The Part of the State in the Education and Assimilation of the Immigrant* [Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education, Bulletin, 1919, No. 77] (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1920), 7.

2 The real focus of *State Americanization*, for example, was clearly outlined in its subtitle: *The Part of the State in the Education and Assimilation of the Immigrant*. For a clear iteration of that view, see M.J. Heale, "Citizens versus Outsiders: Anti-Communism at State and Local Levels, 1921–1946," in Robert Justin Goldstein, *Little 'Red*

Scares': Anti-Communism and Political Repression in the United States, 1921–1946 (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 45–70.

3 Butler, "Foreword," in *State Americanization*, 6.

4 For the most recent example of attempts to map pathways to citizenship in the inter-war era, see Christopher Capozzola, "Legacies for Citizenship: Pinpointing Americans during and after World War I," *Diplomatic History* 38, no. 4 (2014): 713–26.

5 Benjamin L. Alpers, *Dictators, Democracy, and American Public Culture: Envisioning the Totalitarian Enemy, 1920s–1950s* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2003), 134.

6 Fred Clayton Butler, *Community Americanization: A Handbook for Workers* [Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education, Bulletin, 1919, No. 76] (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1920).

7 For the details of that shift, see *A Summary of Proceedings (Revised) Fourth National Convention of the American Legion, New Orleans, Louisiana, October 16–20, 1922* (Compiled by Publicity Division, National Headquarters) in "1920s Annual Convention Reports & Digests," The American Legion Library, American Legion National Headquarters, Indianapolis [hereafter TAL HQ].

8 See in particular Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), esp. 55 and 93.

9 Hamilton Fish, *Memoir of an American Patriot* (Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway, 1991), 37–9.

10 Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 117–18; Heale, "Citizens versus Outsiders," 46 and 68.

11 For that four-part series, see Will Irwin, "How Red Is America?" October 1926; "Revolt of the Blanket Stiffs," November 1926; "The Lively Communists," December 1926; and "The Socialists & The Future!" January 1927, all in *American Legion Magazine*, available at TAL HQ.

12 For both events, the scale is illuminating. By 1930, the Junior World Series had enlisted 300,000 participants; an essay competition on "patriotic" topics drew in 330,000 pupils in 1924, which had grown outlandishly to 6,000,000 students from 4,000 communities by 1934. In terms of numbers for baseball, see *The Huddle* 1, no. 5 (May 1928); *The Huddle* 1, no. 8 (August 1928) and *The Huddle* 1, no. 9 (September 1928); for the essay writing contests, see "2nd National Essay Contest," 25 May 1923; "State Winners in American Legion's National Essay Contest Are Announced," 18 January 1924; "Youth Speaks to America," 4 July 1924; "Puncturing the Windy Bag of Communism," 22 May 1925; Norman L. Marks, "The American Legion Looks at Youth," 29 October 1935, all in *American Legion Magazine*. *The Huddle* is available at TAL HQ.

13 This author, for example, had to wait for over two years before access was granted, having initially been told that the Legion 'would not make an ideal case study' and that relevant materials 'had not been kept'. For the acknowledgement of organizational importance but historiographical lack of coverage, see Alec Campbell, "The Sociopolitical Origins of the American Legion," *Theory and Society* 39, no. 1 (January 2010): 2; for an often excellent analysis that seeks to cover the whole interwar period, see William Pencak, *For God & Country: The American Legion, 1919–1941* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1989).

14 Ironically, those early texts which based anti-radicalism on 'hysteria' touched upon the Legion's work in a way that more recent revisionist accounts have not. See, for example, Robert K. Murray, *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919–1920* [paperback edition] (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964) for a now outdated analysis which touched liminally upon the Legion's role; see Jeffrey E. Mirel, *Patriotic Pluralism: Americanization Education and European Immigrants* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010) for a recent rethinking of Americanization education that ignores the Legion; see Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) for a work which flattens and minimizes the Legion into little more than posturing strike breakers; and see Todd J. Pfannestiel, *Rethinking the Red Scare: The Lusk Committee and New York's Crusade against Radicalism, 1919–1923* [Studies in American Popular History and Culture] (New York: Routledge, 2003)

for an in-depth, single-state study of the Red Scare which mentions the Legion as a supportive presence of New York's "Lusk Laws," but only in passing on pp. 113 and 123.

15 Campbell, "The Sociopolitical Origins of the American Legion," esp. 18; Athan Theoharis, "The FBI and the American Legion Contact Program, 1940–1966," *Political Science Quarterly* 100, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 271–86, esp. 273.

16 National Commander F.W. Galbraith, Jr. [Ohio] quoted in "Americanism Commission, New York, 12 March 1921," Folder "1920 and 1921," Committees – Americanism – Minutes of Meeting Microfilm, TAL HQ.

17 Stephen Graham, "Both Sides of the Closed Door: America's Immigration Problem as It Looks Viewed from Within and Without," *American Legion Magazine*, 17 November 1922, 3.

18 Garland W. Powell, *Service: For God and Country* (Indianapolis: American Legion, c.1925).

19 Charles D. Kelley, "Failure of the Melting Pot: What Cannot Be Fused Must Be Refused," *American Legion Magazine*, 21 November 1919, 38.

20 The Legion wished for one small amendment to the version of the bill that was finally passed, urging Congress 'to amend the Act so as to permit the admission to the United States, in excess of fixed quota, of parents, wives and minor children of veterans'. Garland W. Powell letter to Watson B. Miller, 19 January 1925, Subject Files, "Americanism – Immigration 1935 to Immigration Refugees 1939," Immigration Microfilm, Reel 1, TAL HQ.

21 Even as Eastern European migration slowed in the wake of the 1921 and 1924 acts, the Legion's official pronouncements and publications continued to emphasize the link between the foreign-born and un-American radicalism, just as they continued to emphasize the need to increase educative anti-radical and pro-citizenship initiatives. Indeed, the National American Commission even offered the template of a theatrical 'programme' to all posts that was designed to encourage new immigrants towards an active citizenship and away from radicalism: characters including King George III, a Declaration of Independence-wielding 'colonial patriot', a 'powdered wig statesman of the young republic', a frontiersman, soldiers from the Civil, Spanish-American and World Wars, all assembled to recreate the history of America's republican democracy before 'A character representing the Communist or Bolshevist then comes in with his soap-box and demands that the work of all these people who have gone before be torn down and that his patent ideas and isms be put in its place.' Following the Communist's exposition of his airy ideas, the main speaker of the evening will be introduced. This should be some outstanding citizen of the community who will deliver an address on 'The Future of America to the New Citizens and Their Opportunities and Duties'. That future, needless to say, did not include any form of radicalism. "'New Citizen Initiation' - Idea for Live Post Meeting in March," *The Huddle* 1, no. 2 (February 1928), front page.

22 Even the most recent historiographical take on the Red Scare, which seeks to extend its end date beyond the original 1919–1920 timeframe, see it ending by mid-decade. For the most recent relevant works, see Regin Schmidt, *Red Scare: FBI and the Origins of Anticommunism in the United States* (Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2000); Todd J. Pfannestiel, *Rethinking the Red Scare: The Lusk Committee and New York's Crusade Against Radicalism, 1919–1923* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Kirsten Marie Delegard, *Battling Miss Bolsheviki: The Origins of Female Conservatism in the United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Kim E. Nielsen, *Un-American Womanhood: Antiradicalism, Antifeminism, and the First Red Scare* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2001).

23 Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 95.

24 "THE AMERICANISM COMMISSION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, Indianapolis, Indiana, January 11, 1928," Committees – Americanism – Minutes of Meeting, TAL HQ.

25 "Preach the Doctrine of Americanism," *The Huddle* 5, no. 5 (May 1932): 1.

26 Frederick Palmer, "How Strong Are the Reds?" *American Legion Monthly*, February 1936; Palmer, "The Reds, The Army, The Navy," *American Legion Monthly*, March 1936. Palmer's series

concluded with "The Reds Look to Youth" in April, and "Peace, The Reds, and the Rest of Us" in May.

27 Chaillaux, "Foreword," *ISM'S* (Indianapolis, Indiana: National Americanism Commission of The American Legion, 1936), 5.

28 See, for example, Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 117–18, and Alpers, *Dictators, Democracy, and American Public Culture*, 134.

29 'It will also probably be found that the doctrines advanced by these radical groups are based upon a foundation of shifting sands, which move in whatever direction the voice of so-called intellectuals dictate', concluded Cook. Russell Cook, "Is There a Need for an Intensive Drive for Americanism?" *The Huddle* 7, no. 5 (May 1934): 3.

30 "Legion's Stand Against Radicalism is Reaffirmed," *The Huddle* 7, no. 6 (June 1934): 1.

31 "Preach the Doctrine of Americanism," *The Huddle* 5, no. 5 (May 1932): 1.

32 "National Convention Mandates Intensive Americanism Program," *The Huddle* 7, no. 11 (November 1934): 1. See also J. Ray Murphy, "AMERICANISM IS THE SOUL OF AMERICA," *American Legion Magazine* 7, no. 12 (December 1934). The 1932 National Convention had already passed a resolution against the Griffin Bill, which would allow immigrants to become citizens without the requirement of an oath to bear arms to defend the United States in a time of war. Such legislation was derided as 'un-American, unpatriotic, and against the best interest of our institutions and the welfare and strength of our nation'. See "National Commander Urges All Posts to Carry on in Americanism," *The Huddle* 5, no. 11 (November 1932): 4.

33 *Americanism Manual* (Indianapolis: National Americanism Commission of The American Legion, 1933), 47.

34 Helen Silcox Memo to National Commander Chadwick, 20 February 1939, Definitions Files, TAL HQ.

35 *Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States: Hearings Before A Special Committee on Un-American Activities*, House of Representatives, 75th Congress 3rd Session, esp. Volume 4.

36 *Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States: Hearings Before A Special Committee on Un-American Activities*, House of Representatives, 75th Congress 3rd Session. For Chaillaux, see Volume 1; for Knowles and Nimmo Volume 2. As a further example of that cross-pollination, in May 1940, Chaillaux wrote in the *American Legion* that Dies' investigators had finally found evidence to 'support what the American Legion had for years' stated – and what he personally had told them repeatedly – was the correct record of radical subversion within the American League for Peace and Democracy. Chaillaux, "What Next, Tovarich?" 18 May 1940, *American Legion Magazine*. For the conservative counterattack, see Gerstle, *American Crucible*, esp. 191.

37 Knowles' quote from *Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States: Hearings Before A Special Committee on Un-American Activities*, House of Representatives, 75th Congress 3rd Session, Volume 2, 1976–77. For the slander charges, see William Pencak, *For God & Country: The American Legion, 1919–1941* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1989), 250.

38 Chaillaux letter to James F. Barton, 5 Feb 1940; Reynolds telegram to Chaillaux, 13 March 1940, Immigration Files, Reel 3, TAL HQ.

39 Theoharis, "The FBI and the American Legion Contact Program," 273.

40 Palmer, "The Reds Look to Youth," *American Legion Monthly*, April 1936.

41 Such an endorsement 'would be very helpful'. Sam Hobs telegram to Thomas M. Owen, National Historian American Legion, 4 November 1941; Telegram [n.d.], Joe Starnes to Hon John Thomas Taylor, c/o NAL HQ; "Bill to Pen Up Aliens is Voted Down Inside House," *Chicago Tribune* clipping, 17 November 1941.