

ACHESON RENEWS DEFENSE OF HISS

Says He Won't Turn Back, Cites Bible Passage—Senators Criticize His Attitude

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 25—Secretary of State Dean Acheson told his news conference today that regardless of what the courts or other men might do he did not intend to turn his back on Alger Hiss, the former State Department official who was sentenced this morning to five years in prison for perjury.

Mr. Acheson, who proclaimed his friendship for Mr. Hiss a year ago before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said that it would be "highly improper" for him to discuss anything to do with the case itself, but he observed that each man who had worked with Hiss had upon his conscience "the very serious task of deciding what his attitude is and what his conduct should be."

As for himself, Mr. Acheson continued, he would be guided by the principles of charity recommended by Jesus on the Mount of Olives in the last judgment.

These remarks were made after Mr. Acheson was criticized by various members of Congress for his past associations and comments about Hiss. At the opening of his press conference this afternoon, the secretary was asked if he had any comment on the case.

Secretary Shows Emotion

After refusing to comment in any way on the evidence, the secretary edged forward in his chair and with some feeling made the following extemporaneous statement:

"I take the purpose of your question was to bring something other than that out of me. I should like to make it clear to you that, whatever the outcome of any appeal which Mr. Hiss or his lawyer may take in this case, I do not intend to turn my back on Alger Hiss.

"I think every person who has known Alger Hiss or has served with him at any time had upon his conscience the very serious task of deciding what his attitude is and what his conduct should be. That must be done by each person in the light of his own standards and his own principles.

"For me, there is very little doubt about those standards or those principles. I think they were stated for us a very long time ago. They were stated on the Mount of Olives and if you are interested in seeing them you will find them in the Twenty-fifth Chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, beginning at Verse 34."

This passage of Scripture referred to the prophecy that those who were merciful to men in trouble shall be welcomed on the judgment day into "life eternal" and those who were indifferent to the misery of others "shall go away into everlasting punishment."

The Biblical passage reads as follows:

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink:

38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink:

43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

45 Then shall he answer them, saying, verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Incident Year Ago Recalled

Mr. Acheson took much the same position when he came before the Foreign Relations Committee just a year ago last week to be confirmed as Secretary of State. At that time he was asked whether he knew Hiss and replied that he did. When he was pressed for a statement of his feeling about Hiss, he remarked that his friendship was not easily given nor was it easily withdrawn.

Later, in a secret meeting of the Foreign Relations Committee, it was suggested to him that this statement might raise questions in the minds of some people that he would place personal friendship above the security of the Department of State. Consequently, it was proposed that he might agree to a statement which would remove any such doubts.

Mr. Acheson replied that he was perfectly willing to make a statement of his opposition to communism and of his determination to maintain the security of the department, but that no job, not even that of Secretary of State, would induce him to desert a friend who was in need and who was entitled to an assumption of innocence until he was finally proved guilty.

The first public reaction to Mr. Acheson's statement this afternoon was again critical of the Secretary of State. Senator Joseph R. McCarthy, Republican, of Wisconsin, told the Senate about Mr. Ache-

son's remark and characterized it as "a fantastic statement."

Senator Homer E. Capehart, Republican, of Indiana, took the floor after Senator McCarthy's observations and said he was more proud than ever that he had voted against Mr. Acheson's confirmation as Secretary of State.

Senator Karl E. Mundt, Republican, of South Dakota, who was reviewing the Hiss case in the Senate while Mr. Acheson was talking to the press, said that he was not surprised by Mr. Acheson's remarks, and observed that the Secretary of State could not be regarded as an objective witness in view of his close friendship for Hiss.

Senator Mundt, who was formerly a member of the House Un-American Activities Committee, which originally investigated charges that Hiss had collaborated with former Soviet agents, criticized President Truman for describing the House committee's investigation as a "red herring." He said that the committee had "suffered severely from obstructionist tactics" of the Executive branch of the Government during the Hiss case.

In his criticism of the executive branch for failing to give certain information to the Government he was joined by Senators Bourke B. Hickenlooper of Iowa, Homer Ferguson of Michigan, and William F. Knowland, of California, all Republicans.

Mundt Asks 5 Questions

In his summary of the Hiss case, Senator Mundt urged the Senate to devote "careful and thoughtful consideration" to these five questions:

1. What impact and influence did Alger Hiss have on his associates in the State Department in the formation of our present foreign policy and in international commitments?
2. Why should not the Republican party not assume a greater responsibility in the formation of foreign policy, so that such agreements as were made at Yalta will never again be repeated?
3. Why should the statute of limitations not be expanded, so that "men like Alger Hiss and Henry Julian Wadleigh" cannot buy immunity from punishment merely by the lapse of three short years?
4. Why should the so-called Mundt-Nixon bill outlawing the Communist party not be passed by the Congress?
5. Why should the Congress not continue to support the House un-American activities committee in its efforts to "stand guard at all times to help expose and detect those who would destroy our way of life by subversion and conspiratorial treachery?"