

House Un-American Activities Committee

August 18, 1955

Pete Seeger

A Subcommittee of the Committee on Un-American Activities met at 10 a.m., in room 1703 of the Federal Building, Foley Square, New York, New York, the Honorable Francis E. Walter (Chairman) presiding.

Committee members present: Representatives Walter, Edwin E. Willis, and Gordon H. Scherer.

Staff members present: Frank S. Tavenner, Jr., Counsel; Donald T. Appell and Frank Bonora, Investigators; and Thomas W. Beale, Sr., Chief Clerk.

MR. TAVENNER: When and where were you born, Mr. Seeger?

MR. SEEGER: I was born in New York in 1919.

MR. TAVENNER: What is your profession or occupation?

MR. SEEGER: Well, I have worked at many things, and my main profession is a student of American folklore, and I make my living as a banjo picker-sort of damning, in some people's opinion.

MR. TAVENNER: Has New York been your headquarters for a considerable period of time?

MR. SEEGER: No, I lived here only rarely until I left school, and after a year or two or a few years living here after World War II I got back to the country, where I always felt more at home.

MR. TAVENNER: You say that you were in the Armed Forces of the United States?

MR. SEEGER: About three and a half years.

MR. TAVENNER: Will you tell us please the period of your service?

MR. SEEGER: I went in in July 1942 and I was mustered out in December 1945.

MR. TAVENNER: Did you attain the rank of an officer?

MR. SEEGER: No. After about a year I made Pfc, and just before I got out I got to be T-5, which is in the equivalent of a corporal's rating, a long hard pull.

MR. TAVENNER: Mr. Seeger, prior to your entry in the service in 1942, were you engaged in the practice of your profession in the area of New York?

MR. SEEGER: It is hard to call it a profession. I kind of drifted into it and I never intended to be a musician, and I am glad I am one now, and it is a very honorable profession, but when I started out actually I wanted to be a newspaperman, and when I left school --

CHAIRMAN WALTER: Will you answer the question, please?

MR. SEEGER: I have to explain that it really wasn't my profession, I picked up a little change in it.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: Did you practice your profession?

MR. SEEGER: I sang for people, yes, before World War II, and I also did as early as 1925.

MR. TAVENNER: And upon your return from the service in December of 1945, you continued in your profession?

MR. SEEGER: I continued singing, and I expect I always will.

MR. TAVENNER: The Committee has information obtained in part from the Daily Worker indicating that, over a period of time, especially since December of 1945, you took part in numerous entertainment features. I have before me a photostatic copy of the June 20, 1947, issue of the Daily Worker. In a column entitled "What's On" appears this advertisement: "Tonight-Bronx, hear Peter Seeger and his guitar, at Allerton Section housewarming." May I ask you whether or not the Allerton Section was a section of the Communist Party?

MR. SEEGER: Sir, I refuse to answer that question whether it was a quote from the New York Times or the Vegetarian Journal.

MR. TAVENNER: I don't believe there is any more authoritative document in regard to the Communist Party than its official organ, the Daily Worker.

MR. SCHERER: He hasn't answered the question, and he merely said he wouldn't answer whether the article appeared in the New York Times or some other magazine. I ask you to direct the witness to answer the question.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: I direct you to answer.

MR. SEEGER: Sir, the whole line of questioning-

CHAIRMAN WALTER: You have only been asked one question, so far.

MR. SEEGER: I am not going to answer any questions as to my association, my philosophical or religious beliefs or my political beliefs, or how I voted in any election, or any of these private affairs. I think these are very improper questions for any American to be asked, especially under such compulsion as this. I would be very glad to tell you my life if you want to hear of it.

MR. TAVENNER: Has the witness declined to answer this specific question?

CHAIRMAN WALTER: He said that he is not going to answer any questions, any names or things.

MR. SCHERER: He was directed to answer the question.

MR. TAVENNER: I have before me a photostatic copy of the April 30, 1948, issue of the Daily Worker which carries under the same title of "What's On," an advertisement of a "May Day Rally: For Peace, Security and Democracy." The advertisement states: "Are you in a fighting mood? Then attend the May Day rally." Expert speakers are stated to be slated for the program, and then follows a statement, "Entertainment by Pete Seeger." At the bottom appears this: "Auspices Essex County Communist Party," and at the top, "Tonight, Newark, N.J." Did you lend your talent to the Essex County Communist Party on the occasion indicated by this article from the Daily Worker?

MR. SEEGER: Mr. Walter, I believe I have already answered this question, and the same answer.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: The same answer. In other words, you mean that you decline to answer because of the reasons stated before?

MR. SEEGER: I gave my answer, sir.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: What is your answer?

MR. SEEGER: You see, sir, I feel-

CHAIRMAN WALTER: What is your answer?

MR. SEEGER: I will tell you what my answer is.

(Witness consulted with counsel [Paul L. Ross].)

I feel that in my whole life I have never done anything of any conspiratorial nature and I resent very much and very deeply the implication of being called before this Committee that in some way because my opinions may be different from yours, or yours, Mr. Willis, or yours, Mr. Scherer, that I am any less of an American than anybody else. I love my country very deeply, sir.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: Why don't you make a little contribution toward preserving its institutions?

MR. SEEGER: I feel that my whole life is a contribution. That is why I would like to tell you about it.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: I don't want to hear about it.

MR. SCHERER: I think that there must be a direction to answer.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: I direct you to answer that question.

MR. SEEGER: I have already given you my answer, sir.

MR. SCHERER: Let me understand. You are not relying on the Fifth Amendment, are you?

MR. SEEGER: No, sir, although I do not want to in any way discredit or depreciate or depredate the witnesses that have used the Fifth Amendment, and I simply feel it is improper for this committee to ask such questions.

MR. SCHERER: And then in answering the rest of the questions, or in refusing to answer the rest of the questions, I understand that you are not relying on the Fifth Amendment as a basis for your refusal to answer?

MR. SEEGER: No, I am not, sir.

MR. TAVENNER: I have before me a photostatic copy of May 4, 1949, issue of the Daily Worker, which has an article entitled, "May Day Smash Review Put on by Communist Cultural Division, On Stage," and the article was written by Bob Reed. This article emphasizes a production called Now Is the Time, and it says this: Now Is the Time was a hard-hitting May Day show of songs and knife-edged satire. New songs and film strips walloped the enemies of the people in what the singers called "Aesopian language." And other persons [participated], including Pete Seeger. Lee Hays is recited to be the MC, or master of ceremonies. Did you take part in this May Day program under the auspices of the Music Section of the Cultural Division of the Communist Party?

MR. SEEGER: Mr. Chairman, the answer is the same as before.

MR. SCHERER: I think we have to have a direction.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: I direct you to answer the question.

MR. SEEGER: I have given you my answer, sir.

MR. TAVENNER: The article contains another paragraph, as follows: This performance of Now Is the Time was given in honor of the twelve indicted Communist Party leaders. And then it continues with Bob Reed's account of the show: This reviewer has never seen a show which stirred its audience more. Add up new material, fine personal and group performances, overwhelming audience response—the result was a significant advance in the people's cultural movement. Now Is the Time is that rare phenomenon, a political show in which performers and audience had a lot of fun. It should be repeated for large audiences. Mr. Lee Hays was asked, while he was on the witness stand, whether or not he wrote that play, and he refused to answer. Do you know whether he was the originator of the script?

MR. SEEGER: Do I know whether he was the originator of the script? Again my answer is the same. However, if you want to question me about any songs, I would be glad to tell you, sir.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: That is what you are being asked about now.

MR. TAVENNER: You said that you would tell us about the songs. Did you participate in a program at Wingdale Lodge in the State of New York, which is a summer camp for adults and children, on the weekend of July Fourth of this year?

(Witness consulted with counsel.)

MR. SEEGER: Again, I say I will be glad to tell what songs I have ever sung, because singing is my business.

MR. TAVENNER: I am going to ask you.

MR. SEEGER: But I decline to say who has ever listened to them, who has written them, or other people who have sung them.

MR. TAVENNER: Did you sing this song, to which we have referred, "Now Is the Time," at Wingdale Lodge on the weekend of July Fourth?

MR. SEEGER: I don't know any song by that name, and I know a song with a similar name. It is called "Wasn't That a Time." Is that the song?

CHAIRMAN WALTER: Did you sing that song?

MR. SEEGER: I can sing it. I don't know how well I can do it without my banjo.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: I said, Did you sing it on that occasion?

MR. SEEGER: I have sung that song. I am not going to go into where I have sung it. I have sung it many places.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: Did you sing it on this particular occasion? That is what you are being asked.

MR. SEEGER: Again my answer is the same.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: You said that you would tell us about it.

MR. SEEGER: I will tell you about the songs, but I am not going to tell you or try to explain-

CHAIRMAN WALTER: I direct you to answer the question. Did you sing this particular song on the Fourth of July at Wingdale Lodge in New York?

MR. SEEGER: I have already given you my answer to that question, and all questions such as that. I feel that is improper: to ask about my associations and opinions. I have said that I would be voluntarily glad to tell you any song, or what I have done in my life.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: I think it is my duty to inform you that we don't accept this answer and the others, and I give you an opportunity now to answer these questions, particularly the last one.

MR. SEEGER: Sir, my answer is always the same.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: All right, go ahead, Mr. Tavenner.

MR. TAVENNER: Were you chosen by Mr. Elliott Sullivan to take part in the program on the weekend of July Fourth at Wingdale Lodge?

MR. SEEGER: The answer is the same, sir.

MR. WILLIS: Was that the occasion of the satire on the Constitution and the Bill of Rights?

MR. TAVENNER: The same occasion, yes, sir. I have before me a photostatic copy of a page from the June 1, 1949, issue of the Daily Worker, and in a column entitled "Town Talk" there is found this

statement: The first performance of a new song, "If I Had a Hammer," on the theme of the Foley Square trial of the Communist leaders, will be given at a testimonial dinner for the 12 on Friday night at St. Nicholas Arena. . . .Among those on hand for the singing will be . . . Pete Seeger, and Lee Hays and others whose names are mentioned. Did you take part in that performance?

MR. SEEGER: I shall be glad to answer about the song, sir, and I am not interested in carrying on the line of questioning about where I have sung any songs.

MR. TAVENNER: I ask a direction.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: You may not be interested, but we are, however. I direct you to answer. You can answer that question.

MR. SEEGER: I feel these questions are improper, sir, and I feel they are immoral to ask any American this kind of question.

MR. TAVENNER: Have you finished your answer?

MR. SEEGER: Yes, sir.

MR. TAVENNER: I desire to offer the document in evidence and ask that it be marked "Seeger exhibit No.4," for identification only, and to be made a part of the Committee files.

MR. SEEGER: I am sorry you are not interested in the song. It is a good song.

MR. TAVENNER: Were you present in the hearing room while the former witnesses testified?

MR. SEEGER: I have been here all morning, yes, sir.

MR. TAVENNER: I assume then that you heard me read the testimony of Mr. [Elia] Kazan about the purpose of the Communist Party in having its actors entertain for the benefit of Communist fronts and the Communist Party. Did you hear that testimony?

MR. SEEGER: Yes, I have heard all of the testimony today.

MR. TAVENNER: Did you hear Mr. George Hall's testimony yesterday in which he stated that, as an actor, the special contribution that he was expected to make to the Communist Party was to use his talents by entertaining at Communist Party functions? Did you hear that testimony?

MR. SEEGER: I didn't hear it, no.

MR. TAVENNER: It is a fact that he so testified. I want to know whether or not you were engaged in a similar type of service to the Communist Party in entertaining at these features.

(Witness consulted with counsel.)

MR. SEEGER: I have sung for Americans of every political persuasion, and I am proud that I never refuse to sing to an audience, no matter what religion or color of their skin, or situation in life. I have

sung in hobo jungles, and I have sung for the Rockefellers, and I am proud that I have never refused to sing for anybody. That is the only answer I can give along that line.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: Mr. Tavenner, are you getting around to that letter? There was a letter introduced yesterday that I think was of greater importance than any bit of evidence adduced at these hearings, concerning the attempt made to influence people in this professional performers' guild and union to assist a purely Communist cause which had no relation whatsoever to the arts and the theater. Is that what you are leading up to?

MR. TAVENNER: Yes, it is. That was the letter of Peter Lawrence, which I questioned him about yesterday. That related to the trial of the Smith Act defendants here at Foley Square. I am trying to inquire now whether this witness was party to the same type of propaganda effort by the Communist Party.

MR. SCHERER: There has been no answer to your last question.

MR. TAVENNER: That is right; may I have a direction?

MR. SEEGER: Would you repeat the question? I don't even know what the last question was, and I thought I have answered all of them up to now.

MR. TAVENNER: What you stated was not in response to the question.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: Proceed with the questioning, Mr. Tavenner.

MR. TAVENNER: I believe, Mr. Chairman, with your permission, I will have the question read to him. I think it should be put in exactly the same form.

(Whereupon the reporter read the pending question as above recorded.)

MR. SEEGER: "These features": what do you mean? Except for the answer I have already given you, I have no answer. The answer I gave you you have, don't you? That is, that I am proud that I have sung for Americans of every political persuasion, and I have never refused to sing for anybody because I disagreed with their political opinion, and I am proud of the fact that my songs seem to cut across and find perhaps a unifying thing, basic humanity, and that is why I would love to be able to tell you about these songs, because I feel that you would agree with me more, sir. I know many beautiful songs from your home county, Carbon, and Monroe, and I hitchhiked through there and stayed in the homes of miners.

MR. TAVENNER: My question was whether or not you sang at these functions of the Communist Party. You have answered it inferentially, and if I understand your answer, you are saying you did.

MR. SEEGER: Except for that answer, I decline to answer further.

MR. TAVENNER: Did you sing at functions of the Communist Party, at Communist Party requests?

MR. SEEGER: I believe, sir, that a good twenty minutes ago, I gave my answer to this whole line of questioning.

MR. TAVENNER: Yes, but you have now beclouded your answer by your statement, and I want to make certain what you mean. Did you sing at the Communist Party functions which I have asked you about, as a Communist Party duty?

MR. SEEGER: I have already indicated that I am not interested, and I feel it is improper to say who has sung my songs or who I have sung them to, especially under such compulsion as this.

MR. TAVENNER: Have you been a member of the Communist Party since 1947?

(Witness consulted with counsel.)

MR. SEEGER: The same answer, sir.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: I direct you to answer that question.

MR. SEEGER: I must give the same answer as before.

MR. TAVENNER: I have a throwaway sheet entitled "Culture Fights Back, 1953," showing entertainment at the Capitol Hotel, Carnival Room, Fifty-first Street at Eighth Avenue, in 1953, sponsored by the Committee to Defend V. J. Jerome. It indicates that Pete Seeger was one of those furnishing the entertainment. Will you tell the Committee, please, whether or not you were asked to perform on that occasion, and whether or not you did, either as a Communist Party directive, or as what you considered to be a duty to the Communist Party?

MR. SEEGER: I believe I have answered this already.

MR. TAVENNER: Are you acquainted with V. J. Jerome?

MR. SEEGER: I have already told you, sir, that I believe my associations, whatever they are, are my own private affairs.

MR. TAVENNER: You did know, at that time, in 1953, that V. J. Jerome was a cultural head of the Communist Party and one of the Smith Act defendants in New York City?

MR. SEEGER: Again the same answer, sir.

MR. SCHERER: You refuse to answer that question?

MR. SEEGER: Yes, sir.

MR. TAVENNER: I hand you a photograph which was taken of the May Day parade in New York City in 1952, which shows the front rank of a group of individuals, and one is in a uniform with military cap and insignia, and carrying a placard entitled CENSORED. Will you examine it please and state whether or not that is a photograph of you?

(A document was handed to the witness.)

MR. SEEGER: It is like Jesus Christ when asked by Pontius Pilate, "Are you king of the Jews?"

CHAIRMAN WALTER: Stop that.

MR. SEEGER: Let someone else identify that picture.

MR. SCHERER: I ask that he be directed to answer the question.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: I direct you to answer the question.

MR. SEEGER: Do I identify this photograph?

CHAIRMAN WALTER: Yes.

MR. SEEGER: I say let someone else identify it.

MR. TAVENNER: I desire to offer the document in evidence and ask that it be marked "Seeger exhibit No.6."

CHAIRMAN WALTER: Make it a part of the record.

(Witness consulted with counsel.)

MR. TAVENNER: It is noted that the individual mentioned is wearing a military uniform. That was in May of 1952, and the statute of limitations would have run by now as to any offense for the improper wearing of the uniform, and will you tell the Committee whether or not you took part in that May Day program wearing a uniform of an American soldier?

MR. SEEGER: The same answer as before, sir.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: I direct you to answer that question.

(Witness consulted with counsel.)

MR. SCHERER: I think the record should show that the witness remains mute, following the direction by the Chairman to answer that question.

MR. SEEGER: The same answer, sir, as before.

MR. SCHERER: Again, I understand that you are not invoking the Fifth Amendment?

MR. SEEGER: That is correct.

MR. SCHERER: We are not accepting the answers or the reasons you gave.

MR. SEEGER: That is your prerogative, sir.

MR. SCHERER: Do you understand it is the feeling of the Committee that you are in contempt as a result of the position you take?

MR. SEEGER: I can't say.

MR. SCHERER: I am telling you that that is the position of the Committee.

MR. TAVENNER: The Daily Worker of April 21, 1948, at page 7, contains a notice that Pete Seeger was a participant in an affair for Ferdinand Smith. Will you tell the Committee what the occasion was at which you took part?

MR. SEEGER: I hate to waste the Committee's time, but I think surely you must realize by now that my answer is the same.

MR. TAVENNER: Do you know whether Ferdinand Smith was under deportation orders at that time?

MR. SEEGER: My answer is the same as before, sir.

MR. TAVENNER: I think that he was not under deportation orders until a little later than that.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: What is his name?

MR. TAVENNER: Ferdinand Smith, a Communist Party member and former vice-president of the maritime union. My purpose in asking you these questions, Mr. Seeger, is to determine whether or not, in accordance with the plan of the Communist Party as outlined by Mr. Kazan and Mr. George Hall, you were performing a valuable service to the Communist Party, and if that was the way they attempted to use you.

MR. SEEGER: Is that a question, sir?

MR. TAVENNER: That is my explanation to you, with the hope that you will give the Committee some light on that subject.

MR. SEEGER: No, my answer is the same as before.

MR. TAVENNER: Did you also perform and entertain at various functions held by front organizations, such as the American Youth for Democracy? I have here photostatic copies of the Daily Worker indicating such programs were conducted in Detroit in 1952, at Greenwich Village on May 10, 1947, and again at another place in March of 1948. Did you entertain at functions under the auspices of the American Youth for Democracy?

(Witness consulted with counsel.)

MR. SEEGER: The answer is the same, and I take it that you are not interested in all of the different places that I have sung. Why don't you ask me about the churches and schools and other places?

MR. TAVENNER: That is very laudable, indeed, and I wish only that your activities had been confined to those areas. If you were acting for the Communist Party at these functions, we want to know it. We want to determine just what the Communist Party plan was.

MR. SCHERER: Witness, you have indicated that you are perfectly willing to tell us about all of these innumerable functions at which you entertained, but why do you refuse to tell us about the functions that Mr. Tavenner inquires about?

MR. SEEGER: No, sir, I said that I should be glad to tell you about all of the songs that I have sung, because I feel that the songs are the clearest explanation of what I do believe in, as a musician, and as an American.

MR. SCHERER: Didn't you just say that you sang before various religious groups, school groups?

MR. SEEGER: I have said it and I will say it again, and I have sung for perhaps-

(Witness consulted with counsel.)

MR. SCHERER: You are willing to tell us about those groups?

MR. SEEGER: I am saying voluntarily that I have sung for almost every religious group in the country, from Jewish and Catholic, and Presbyterian and Holy Rollers and Revival Churches, and I do this voluntarily. I have sung for many, many different groups-and it is hard for perhaps one person to believe, I was looking back over the twenty years or so that I have sung around these forty-eight states, that I have sung in so many different places.

MR. SCHERER: Did you sing before the groups that Mr. Tavenner asked you about?

MR. SEEGER: I am saying that my answer is the same as before. I have told you that I sang for everybody.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: Wait a minute. You sang for everybody. Then are we to believe, or to take it, that you sang at the places Mr. Tavenner mentioned?

MR. SEEGER: My answer is the same as before.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: What is that?

MR. SEEGER: It seems to me like the third time I have said it, if not the fourth.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: Maybe it is the fifth, but say it again. I want to know what your answer is.

(Witness consulted with counsel.)

MR. SEEGER: I decline to discuss, under compulsion, where I have sung, and who has sung my songs, and who else has sung with me, and the people I have known. I love my country very dearly, and I greatly resent this implication that some of the places that I have sung and some of the people that I have known, and some of my opinions, whether they are religious or philosophical, or I might be a vegetarian, make me any less of an American. I will tell you about my songs, but I am not interested in telling you who wrote them, and I will tell you about my songs, and I am not interested in who listened to them.

MR. TAVENNER: According to the Daily Worker, there was a conference program of the Civil Rights Congress on April 2, 1949, at which you were one of the performers. On August 27, 1949, the People's Artists presented a summer musicale at Lakeland Acres picnic grounds, Peekskill, New York, for the benefit of the Harlem chapter of the Civil Rights Congress, at which you were a participant. At another meeting of the Civil Rights Congress of New York, around May 11, 1946, you were a

participant. Will you tell the Committee, please, under what circumstances you performed, because you have said that you sang at all sorts of meetings. Under what circumstances were your services acquired on those occasions?

MR. SEEGER: My answer is the same as before, sir. I can only infer from your lack of interest in my songs that you are actually scared to know what these songs are like, because there is nothing wrong with my songs, sir. Do you know-

MR. SCHERER: You said you want to talk about your songs, and I will give you an opportunity. Tell us what songs you sang at Communist Party meetings?

MR. SEEGER: I will tell you about the songs that I have sung any place.

MR. SCHERER: I want to know the ones that you sang at Communist Party meetings, because those are the songs about which we can inquire. Just tell us one song that you sang at a Communist Party meeting.

MR. SEEGER: Mr. Scherer, it seems to me that you heard my testimony, and that is a ridiculous question, because you know what my answer is.

MR. TAVENNER: Mr. George Hall testified that the entertainment that he engaged in, at the instance of the Communist Party, was not songs of a political character. He did say, however, that he was expected by the Communist Party to perform in order to raise money for the Communist Party. Now, did you, as Mr. Hall did, perform in order to raise money for Communist Party causes?

(Witness consulted with counsel.)

MR. SEEGER: I don't care what Mr. Hall says, and my answer is the same as before, sir.

MR. TAVENNER: That you refuse to answer?

MR. SEEGER: I have given my answer.

MR. SCHERER: Was Mr. Hall telling the truth when he told the Committee about the entertainment he engaged in at the instance of the Communist Party?

MR. SEEGER: I don't feel like discussing what Mr. Hall said.

MR. TAVENNER: The American Committee for Yugoslav Relief has been designated as a front organization. According to the October 22, 1947, issue of the Daily People's World, in California, Pete Seeger headed the list of entertainers to appear at a picnic given by the Southern California chapter of that organization. Did you participate in that program?

MR. SEEGER: If you have a hundred more photostats there, it seems silly for me to give you the same answer a hundred more times.

MR. TAVENNER: What is your answer?

MR. SEEGER: It is the same as before, sir.

MR. TAVENNER: There are various peace groups in the country which have utilized your services, are there not?

MR. SEEGER: I have sung for pacifists and I have sung for soldiers.

MR. TAVENNER: According to the Daily Worker of September 6, 1940, you were scheduled as a singer at a mass meeting of the American Peace Mobilization at Turner's Arena, in Washington, D.C. What were the circumstances under which you were requested to take part in that performance?

MR. SEEGER: My answer is the same as before, sir.

MR. TAVENNER: You were a member of the American Peace Mobilization, were you not?

MR. SEEGER: My answer is the same as before.

MR. TAVENNER: Were you not a delegate to the Chicago convention of the American Peace Mobilization on September 5, 1940?

MR. SEEGER: My answer is the same as before.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: Is that organization subversive?

MR. TAVENNER: Yes.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: What is the name of it?

MR. TAVENNER: American Peace Mobilization, and it was the beginning of these peace organizations, back in 1940. Did you take part in the American Peace Crusade program in Chicago in April of 1954?

MR. SEEGER: My answer is the same as before. Of course, I would be curious to know what you think of a song like this very great Negro spiritual, "I'm Gonna Lay Down My Sword and Shield, Down by the Riverside."

MR. TAVENNER: That is not at all responsive to my question.

MR. SEEGER: I gave you my answer before I even said that.

MR. TAVENNER: If you refuse to answer, I think that you should not make a speech.

(Witness consulted with counsel.)

MR. TAVENNER: Did you also perform a service for the California Labor School in Los Angeles by putting on musical programs there?

MR. SEEGER: My answer is the same as before, sir.

MR. TAVENNER: Did you teach in the California Labor School?

MR. SEEGER: My answer is the same as before, sir.

MR. SCHERER: I think for the record you should state whether the California Labor School has been cited.

MR. TAVENNER: It has.

MR. SCHERER: As subversive and Communist dominated?

MR. TAVENNER: Yes, it has been.

(Witness consulted with counsel.)

MR. TAVENNER: Did you also teach at the Jefferson School of Social Science here in the city of New York?

MR. SEEGER: My answer is the same as before, sir.

MR. SCHERER: I ask that you direct him to answer.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: I direct you to answer. Did you teach at the Jefferson School here at New York?

MR. SEEGER: I feel very silly having to repeat the same thing over and over again, but my answer is exactly the same as before, sir.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: Has the Jefferson School of Social Science been cited?

MR. TAVENNER: Yes, and it has been required to register under the 1950 Internal Security Act.

MR. SCHERER: There are a number of people here who taught at that school, Mr. Walter.

MR. TAVENNER: I desire to offer in evidence a photostatic copy of an article from the September 21, 1946, issue of the Daily Worker which refers to music courses at Jefferson School, and I call attention to the last sentence in the article wherein Peter Seeger is mentioned as a leader in one of the courses. * * * According to the March 18, 1948, issue of the Daily Worker, it is indicated that you would entertain at a musical presented by the Jefferson Workers' Bookshop. According to the November 25, 1948, issue of the same paper you would perform also under the auspices of the Jefferson School of Social Science. Also you were a participant in a program advertised in the Daily Worker of June 1, 1950, put on by the Jefferson School of Social Science, and according to an issue of February 15, 1954, of the same paper, you were expected to play and lecture on songs and ballads in the Jefferson School. Will you tell the Committee, please, what were the circumstances under which you engaged in those programs, if you did?

MR. SEEGER: My answer is the same as before, sir.

MR. TAVENNER: Did you also engage in performances for the Labor Youth League in 1954?

MR. SEEGER: My answer is the same as before. Did you think that I sing propaganda songs or something?

MR. TAVENNER: In 1947, what was your connection with an organization known as People's Songs?

(Witness consulted with counsel.)

MR. SEEGER: I take the same answer as before regarding any organization or any association I have.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: What was People's Songs, Mr. Tavenner?

MR. TAVENNER: People's Songs was an organization which, according to its issue of February and March 1947, was composed of a number of persons on the board of directors who have been called before this Committee or identified by this Committee as members of the Communist Party, and the purpose of which, from information made available to the Committee, was to extend services to the Communist Party in its entertainment projects. Mr. Lee Hays was a member of the board of directors, was he not, along with you, in this organization?

(Witness consulted with counsel)

MR. SEEGER: My answer is the same as before, sir.

MR. TAVENNER: Were you not the editor of People's Songs, and a member of the board of directors in 1947?

MR. SEEGER: My answer is the same as before.

MR. TAVENNER: You were actually the national director of this organization, were you not?

MR. SEEGER: My answer is the same as before.

MR. TAVENNER: Was the organization founded by Alan Lomax?

MR. SEEGER: My answer is the same as before.

MR. TAVENNER: Was the booking agent of People's Songs an organization known as People's Artists?

MR. SEEGER: My answer is the same.

MR. TAVENNER: Will you tell the Committee, please, whether or not during the weekend of July 4, 1955, you were a member of the Communist Party?

MR. SEEGER: My answer is the same as before, sir.

MR. TAVENNER: Were you a member of the Communist Party at any time during the various entertainment features in which you were alleged to have engaged?

MR. SEEGER: My answer is the same.

MR. TAVENNER: Are you a member of the Communist Party now?

MR. SEEGER: My answer is the same.

MR. SCHERER: I ask for a direction on that question.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: I direct you to answer.

MR. SEEGER: My answer is the same as before.

MR. TAVENNER: I have no further questions, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN WALTER: The witness is excused.

Pete Seeger was sentenced to a year in jail for contempt of Congress but appealed his case successfully after a fight that lasted until 1962.

