



New York State Archives

**New York State Joint Legislative Committee to Investigate
Seditious Activities Hearing Testimony and Executive
Session Transcripts L0026**

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Table of Contents

Overview of the Records	3
Arrangement	3
Scope and Contents	4
Other Finding Aids	5
Use of Records	5
Administrative Information	6
Access Terms	6

Overview of the Records

Repository:	New York State Archives
Summary:	The series consists of testimony related to an investigation of individuals and organizations suspected of violating the State's criminal anarchy law. The majority of the testimony relates to organizing activity and publications aimed at overthrowing the United States government and replacing it with a Socialist government. Witnesses included the Attorney General his staff, state and local police; local district attorneys; foreign language translators; and individuals familiar with conditions within Russia or with immigrant agencies.
Creator:	New York (State). Legislature. Joint Legislative Committee to Investigate Seditious Activities
Title:	Joint Legislative Committee to Investigate Seditious Activities hearing testimony and executive session transcripts
Quantity:	1.6 cubic feet
Quantity:	3 microfilm rolls 35mm
Inclusive Date:	1919-1920
Series:	L0026

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Arrangement

Organized into three subsets of records: Committee Hearing Transcripts, 1919-1920, 0.8 cubic foot; Executive Session Transcripts, 1919-1920, 0.4 cubic foot; and Chairman's Transcripts, 1919-1920, 0.4 cubic foot.

Chronological by date of hearing or executive session.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Scope and Content Note

The series consists of over 3,000 pages of testimony given before the Joint Legislative Committee to Investigate Seditious Activities, known as the "Lusk Committee" for its chairman Clayton R. Lusk. Testimony was taken for the purpose of gathering information about activities of suspected radical organizations and to investigate the roots of communist or socialist movements worldwide, but particularly in the United States and New York. Records are arranged in three subsets.

Committee Hearing Transcripts, 1919-1920, 0.8 cubic foot. This subset consists of testimony relating to the organization and propaganda activities of many socialist and labor groups and to political conditions in Russia. The committee was also interested in the finances of these groups: how and where funds were solicited and what were they used for. Most of the testimony relates to radical activity in the New York City area but there is information about groups active in Buffalo, Rochester, and Utica.

Much of the testimony was provided by the New York State Attorney General, who served as the committee's counsel, or members of his staff. Other witnesses included state and local police (who served as agents of the committee), local district attorneys, translators of foreign language documents, individuals with knowledge of conditions in Russia, individuals who worked with immigrant agencies, and others who may have worked for or had connections with suspected subversive organizations and/or individuals. The testimony between committee members and this last category of witnesses was often contentious. Included is testimony from Ludwig C.A.K. Martens (the Bolshevik government's representative to the United States), and prominent members of the socialist movement, Nathan Chabrow and Dr. Michael Mislig.

The testimony includes verbatim transcripts of correspondence, pamphlets, newspaper articles, and other material seized by the committee during raids on suspected radical organizations. Included are transcripts of documents from the Russian Soviet Bureau, the Industrial Workers of the World, the Rand School of Social Science, and national and local branches of the Socialist Party and the Communist Party.

Executive Session Transcripts, 1919-1920, 0.4 cubic foot. This subset is largely testimony from representatives of businesses engaged in various aspects of the international sugar beet industry showing why there were consistently high consumer prices for sugar. The committee had concluded that many individuals were being attracted to radical philosophies because of a belief that capitalism unnecessarily raised prices of products. The committee hoped to use this testimony to help educate people on the positive benefits of the capitalist system.

Chairman's Transcripts, 1919-1920, 0.4 cubic foot. This subset consists of three volumes of transcripts of committee hearings and executive sessions, possibly kept by Senator Lusk himself, and which may duplicate portions of the other subsets.

The testimony of Ludwig C.A.K. Martens, head of the Russian Soviet Bureau, is found in the transcript of the June 12, 1919 executive session conducted immediately after the committee's detectives raided the bureau. During the testimony, Martens explained the general operations

and the commercial nature of the bureau, and Committee Chairman Clayton Lusk denied any knowledge of the raid on the bureau. Also, two special agents testified anonymously as to the activities of the bureau and its employees. The commercial agent for the bureau also testified as to the problems of buying American equipment for the new Soviet government. The tone of these conversations, at times, is accusatory and contentious.

The volume containing hearing testimony given in New York City discusses radical activity nationwide (mentioning Cleveland, Ohio, specifically) and the political situation in Russia, in addition to the finance of the Russian Soviet Bureau and the activities of Hungarian groups in New York City.

The volume containing testimony gathered in Buffalo, Utica and Rochester between December 31, 1919 and January 2, 1920 contains testimony from private investigators on communist and socialist activities in those cities, various ethnic groups' activities (mainly Italians and Poles), and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Testimony on the activities of Ludwig C.A.K. Martens, the Rand School, John Reed, Emma Goldman, and the anarchist movement are detailed also. Often, seized letters and pamphlets were read verbatim into the transcript; discussion on the Rand School's publication Love and Marriage, a booklet discussing sexual issues (contraception, the role of women), is found here.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Other Finding Aids

Available at Repository

The first folder in the series contains an incomplete index, generated by the committee, to exhibits, topics, and witnesses.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Use of Records

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions regarding access to or use of this material.

Alternate Formats AvailableAlternate Formats Available

Microfilm is available for use at the New York State Archives or through interlibrary loan.

Administrative Information

Custodial History

L0026-78 was originally accessioned as part of boxes 8 and 9 of old collection #281, accessions -236 and -237.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Access Terms

- Hungarians--United States
- Rochester (N.Y.)
- Sugar beet industry--United States
- Cleveland (Oh.)
- Radicalism
- Buffalo (N.Y.)
- Transcripts
- Socialist parties--United States
- Anti-communist movements--New York (State)
- New York (State)
- Communist parties--United States
- Investigating communism
- Testimony
- Anarchism--United States
- Socialism
- Investigating socialism
- National security--United States
- Capitalism--United States
- Goldman, Emma, 1869-1940.
- Industrial Workers of the World
- Socialist Party of the United States of America
- Soviet Union. Russian Soviet Government Bureau (New York, N.Y.)
- Mislis, Michael.