Hardy, George, 1884-1966.

George Hardy letters to Elizabeth Gurley Flynn
1954

Abstract: In 1954 British labor activist and Communist organizer George Hardy wrote to his American colleague Elizabeth Gurley Flynn to renew their acquaintance, express support for her testimony at her recent trial, and discuss the labor struggles in the United States and Great Britain.
Descriptive Summary

Identification: MSS 099, F922
Creator: Hardy, George, 1884-1966.
Title: George Hardy letters to Elizabeth Gurley Flynn
Inclusive Dates: 1954
Extent: 2 items (8 p.)
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Citation: MSS 099, F922, George Hardy letters to Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.

Shelving Summary: Box 63, F922: Shelved in SPEC MSS 099 manuscript boxes

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Biographical Notes

George Hardy

Labor activist and communist organizer George Hardy was born on July 26, 1884, in Cottingham, Yorkshire, Great Britain.

George Hardy joined the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.) in Vancouver, British Columbia, in about 1909 and served as General Secretary-Treasurer of the I.W.W. in 1921. In 1923 Hardy returned to Great Britain and began a lifelong association with the Communist Party of Great Britain. In the 1935 he was a "special instructor" to the South African Communist Party and worked in China as well.

Hardy wrote many articles and reviews for Labour Monthly from 1931 ("British Workers and the War in Manchuria") to 1960 ("Strike for the Pensioners" and "Seamen's Struggles"). His autobiography is titled Those Stormy Years: Memories of the Fight for Freedom on Five Continents (1956).

George Hardy died at the age of 82 on May 24, 1966. In his obituary the editor of Labour Monthly wrote: "His life was a proud record of militant struggle in many countries, including in the United States and in China as well as in this country."

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, born on August 7, 1890, in Concord, New Hampshire, formed the original united front defense group for labor, the Workers Defense Union (WDU), in 1914.

Although Flynn did not graduate from high school, her interest in constitutional law and her strike organizing work made her a defender of workers' rights and free speech. Flynn organized the defenses and directed the legal strategies for Joe Ettor and Arturo Giovannitti, Joe Hill, Tom Mooney and Warren Billings, as well as for Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti. She also helped defend women opposed to World War I who were arrested for conspiracy or espionage, including Emma Goldman and Marie Equi.

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn was indicted under the Smith Act during the Anti-Communist trials of the 1940s and 1950s. Found guilty in January 1953 of attempting to, or advocating the, overthrow of the government of the United States of America, Flynn was imprisoned from January 1955 until May 1957 at Alderson, West Virginia.

After her imprisonment, Flynn worked mainly defending Communist Party members against charges brought under the Smith Act. On September 5, 1964, Flynn died in Moscow.

Sources:


In 1954 British labor activist and Communist organizer George Hardy wrote to his American colleague Elizabeth Gurley Flynn to renew their acquaintance, express support for her testimony at her recent trial, and discuss the labor struggles in the United States and Great Britain.

Both letters were written following Flynn's 1953 trial but prior to her 1955 incarceration in violation of the Smith Act for Communist activities. The first letter, written by Hardy on July 29, 1954, began by reminding Flynn of their acquaintance which began in 1923. Hardy continued by acknowledging Flynn's recent trial and praising her testimony. Hardy's long letter also mentioned China's negotiation of the cease fire in Vietnam with France and his work for the Communist Party from 1927 to 1930 in China. He offered his thoughts on the class struggles in the United States, the negative perceptions of U. S. government leaders (particularly in Great Britain), and his attempts to undo the bitterness against Americans as a result of American foreign policy.

Hardy's second letter, written September 9, 1954, thanked Flynn for a recent letter and the leaflet announcing her candidacy for Congress, which he had passed on to the *Daily Worker* for possible publication. Hardy again mentioned Flynn's trial and wrote of fellow acquaintances, such as Michael Gold and Charley Doyle. He reported that he recently reviewed Barrie Stavis's book, *Joe Hill: the Man Who Never Died*, and wrote that Flynn figured prominently in the book and wondered who Stavis was. In his letter Hardy also lamented the death of Flynn's son and mentioned the loss of his own son in Spain. He encouraged Flynn to "keep outside as long as you possibly can" (referring to imprisonment) and closed by mentioning the 1954 Manilla Conference.

Both letters offer a unique perspective on labor activism and the early organizing efforts of Communists in Great Britain and the United States.
Selected Search Terms

Personal Names

Hardy, George, 1884-1966--Correspondence.
Flynn, Elizabeth Gurley--Correspondence.

Topical Terms

Communism--United States--20th century.
Communism--Great Britain--20th century.

Form/Genre Terms

Correspondence.

Personal Contributors

Flynn, Elizabeth Gurley, correspondent.

Related Materials in this Repository

This item forms part of MSS 099 Miscellaneous Literary and Historical Manuscripts.
Barrie Stavis papers
Arrangement

Arranged in chronological order.
Detailed Description of the Collection

George Hardy autograph letter signed to Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, 1954 July 29 [Box 63 F922]
1 item (4 p.)

George Hardy autograph letter signed to Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, 1954 September 8 [Box 63 F22]
1 item (4 p.)