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Thunder on the Left



De Lacy has made a Red mark on the Hill

Congressmen have been impressed, some painfully, for many months with the presence among them of Rep. Hugh De Lacy. In his first year in office, the youthful Seattle Democrat has applied so effectively the strategy of militant left-wing politics that he has been in the hair of many, the object of attack of more than a few.

He covered the ground from the obscurity of a freshman Congressman to recognition on Capitol Hill in amazingly few strides. But they were mincing compared with the seven-league steps that have now thrust him into national prominence.

The wavy-haired scholar and former shipyard machinist made a speech in the House on Nov. 26 that sparked a major conflagration. He attacked Ambassador Patrick J. Hurley for his support of Chiang Kai-shek against the North China Communists. In quick succession Hurley resigned in protest, a Senate committee investigated, General of the Army Marshall replaced Hurley, and President Truman advised Chiang to make peace with the Reds and end his one-party rule of China (see page 28).

From Gown to Town: The returns to De Lacy in the legal tender of publicity were immediate. Three thousand letters so swamped his small office he had to hire extra help at his own expense. He got a bid to his first \$100-a-plate dinner and repeated his speech over radio networks.

Whatever they think of his politics, which glow redder than those of any congressman with the possible exception of Vito Marcantonio of New York, De Lacy's colleagues could not belittle the swath he cut.

Eight years ago he was contentedly progressing as an English teacher at the University of Washington. Son of an educator, he had stuck to his studies in the university, graduating with honors and ignorant of politics. He had preferred his position of stroke on the university's third-string crew to campus elections. What finally exposed him to politics was his membership in the parlor-pinkish AFL American Federation of Teachers. As chairman of the local he was elected to the politically wise Seattle Central Labor Council.

In the spring of 1937 De Lacy, then 27, caused a sensation when he announced his candidacy for the Seattle City Council despite a ban on faculty meddling in politics. He was fired, but the publicity put him into office. He hasn't been out of a fight since.

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Red Mark on the Hill

To Fellow Traveler: One year later, he was president of the Washington Commonwealth Federation, militant left-wing organization which fought American scrap and oil shipments to Japan and later opposed American aid to the Allies until the ink dried on the Soviet-Nazi pact. As sponsor and leader in a dozen Communist-front organizations, De Lacy took stands on controversial issues that read like the case history of a fellow traveler:

- A member of the Washington delegation to the 1940 Democratic convention, he voiced the delegation's only "No" to F. D. R.'s renomination because the President was a "warmonger."
- He opposed enactment of the draft that same year, calling for defeat of congressmen who voted for "the military dictatorship."
- After Germany attacked Russia, he demanded extension of the draft law.
- He joined in the appeal to President Roosevelt for Earl Browder's release from prison and served in the defense of Harry Bridges.

Of Reddest Hue: With such a record, De Lacy had a rough time in his race for Congress last year. He barely won the nomination in the Democratic primary and trailed other Democratic candidates in the November landslide, although winning. He slid easily into the Marcantonio bloc when he came to the Capitol. Still as enthusiastic at 35 as a college sophomore, he has tangled with old-timers in the House: John Rankin on Red-baiting, E. E. Cox on the Fair Employment Practice Committee, Howard Smith on labor. Except for Rankin, he takes on his opponents without losing his almost perpetual grin. De Lacy thinks quickly on his feet but his friends point to two weaknesses: he scatters his fire to cover too many fields and he adheres too religiously to the pro-Soviet line. A congressman who joined De Lacy in the demand that American forces be withdrawn from China complained: "When I asked him about Russia withdrawing too, he didn't have an answer."

Despite the Red label, De Lacy is in solidly and Seattle Democrats believe he will be reelected. He studiously takes care of constituents' requests and is in regular contact with them through his weekly newspaper, *The New World*. The pace he keeps is terrific and when he isn't working he keeps busy doing handyman chores in his \$14,000 Washington home. An expert carpenter, he built a scale-model doll house for his daughter's Christmas present.

But last week the pace got him down. While the House fought over labor legislation and full employment, De Lacy sat in his office immobilized. He had lost his voice after addressing the Council of American-Soviet Friendship in Philadelphia.