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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1

THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Y00-1465

FILE NO.

REPORT MADE AT SAN FRANCISCO	DATE WHEN MADE 11/6/43	PERIOD FOR 10/20/43	REPORT MADE BY LEO A. SCHON
TITLE JOHN PITTMAN			CHARACTER OF CASE INTERNAL SECURITY (C)

SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:

Subject still resides 50 Divisadero Street, San Francisco, and is employed as Managing Editor of the People's World newspaper. Recently returned from trip to New York and Georgia. He is still active in the Communist Party and in close contact with high party officials. Subject's draft status is still uncertain.

- P -

REFERENCE:

Report of Special Agent LEO ANTHONY SCHON dated 9/16/43 at San Francisco, California.

DETAILS:

AT SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA:

Inasmuch as subject holds the position of Managing Editor of the People's World newspaper, Communist controlled publication in San Francisco, and has been active in Communist Party circles for several years, he has been designated as a key figure in the San Francisco Field Division.

Miss BERLINDA DAVISON, Negro, President of the San Francisco Chapter of the N.A.A.C.P., 2838 Pine Street, San Francisco, telephonically advised that the subject still resides at 50 Divisadero Street, San Francisco.

Source of Information A stated that subject still maintains his position as Managing Editor of the People's World newspaper, Communist controlled newspaper organ; that he recently returned from a trip to visit his mother in Georgia. Informant also advised that the subject spent several days

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in New York City where he conferred with Communist Party functionaries in New York.

Source A further advised that subject was a member of the Metal Trades Section of the Communist Party, San Francisco, and that this section was being dissolved and the Party planned to transfer members into neighborhood branches. Informant stated that he had not yet learned to what branch the Party planned to transfer the subject.

Confidential Informant SF-939 advised that subject was guest of honor at a party held by the Fillmore Branch of the Communist Party at the Abraham Lincoln Victory Center, 1750 Fillmore Street, San Francisco, on August 27, 1943.

Source B advised that he had received information through a contact available to him at Party Headquarters reflecting that the subject was considered by Party officials as a possible choice as a candidate for the office of the Board of Supervisors in the city elections in San Francisco. After some consideration, he said that the Party chose as their candidate OLETA O'CONNOR YATES, Executive Secretary of the Communist Party for San Francisco County.

Source A stated that the subject ran out of funds in New York City during his recent trip to the East Coast and that subject sent a collect telegram to LEO BAROWAY, the State Financial Director for the Communist Party in California, saying that he had no money to return to the coast and wanted to know what to do. LEO BAROWAY advised informant that JOHN PITTMAN acted like a "country hick" and that when he returned from his trip from New York the Party would have to instruct him how to handle himself. BAROWAY further stated that PITTMAN should have known enough to go into the Party Headquarters in New York or the Daily Worker office and borrow \$50.00.

Source C stated that on the occasion of the visit of JOSEPH NORTH, Editor of the New Masses, Communist Party magazine, to San Francisco during October of 1943, NORTH had a conference with the subject on October 11, 1943.

Source C stated that he received information that subject assisted FELICE CLARK STRATTON, New Organizer of the Golden Gate Section, Communist Party, San Francisco, and MARGERY POGUE, Negress, member of the Golden Gate Section, in writing a campaign leaflet on the racial question to be used in the city election campaign.

In a written report submitted by Source A, he stated that subject was present at a meeting of high Communist Party functionaries which included BILL SCHNEIDERMAN, OLETA O'CONNOR and HELEN WINTER, held at the

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Case originated at: SAN FRANCISCO

File No. 100-1465

Report made at:	Date:	Period:	Report made by:
SAN FRANCISCO	9/16/43	9/2,3/43	LEO ANTHONY SCHON 11
Title:		Character of case:	
JOHN PITTMAN		INTERNAL SECURITY - C	
SYNOPSIS OF FACTS: Subject, a Negro, has been promoted to managing editor of the PEOPLE'S WORLD. His editorial policy has been criticized by Communist Party officials for not correctly interpreting the Party line. Subject is a member of the San Francisco County Committee of the CP, and has been transferred to the Shipfitters Branch, Metal Trades Section of the Party. He is a popular public speaker and has delivered addresses at several CP meetings on the Negro problem. PITTMAN has been classified 1A in the draft and the Party is attempting to get a deferment for him. - P - REFERENCE: Report of Special Agent GEORGE V. SCHNEIDER dated at San Francisco January 11, 1943. DETAILS: AT SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA Source A advised that when AL RICHMOND, managing editor of the PEOPLE'S WORLD, well known Communist publication			
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in San Francisco, was inducted into the Army in February 1943, subject who was formerly the foreign editor, succeeded him. Source B asserted that in carrying out his present duties as managing editor of the PEOPLE'S WORLD, subject is called upon frequently to write editorials which expound the Communist Party policy. Informant asserted that the subject's editorial policy has been frequently criticized by WILLIAM SCHNEIDERMAN, California State Secretary of the Party, and also by other high Party officials who feel that frequently the approach of PITTMAN to laying down the Communist Party line is not that which the County Committee had decided upon. Informant stated that subject's editorials sometimes were said to be almost as bad as WESTBROOK PEGLER's column and that the subject almost justified PEGLER. Informant stated further that subject, who is a Negro, was even criticized by WILLIAM SCHNEIDERMAN for his approach on the Negro question, and that SCHNEIDERMAN said that if the subject can't write straight on the Negro problem the Party officials won't allow PITTMAN to write on it at all.

On January 9, 1943 Source B advised that subject is a member of the San Francisco County Committee of the Party. Source C advised on July 9, 1943 that subject was being transferred to the Shipfitters Branch, Metal Trades Section of the Party. This transfer was verified on August 26, 1943 by Source D who made available an official registration blank of the Communist Party showing subject to be a member of this branch and section, which is being maintained in the files of the San Francisco Field Division.

Source B advised that despite subject's affiliation with known Communists and his position on the staff of the PEOPLE'S WORLD, he appears to desire that his Party membership be kept a secret. In this connection informant asserted that on the occasion of EARL BROWDER's address at the Eagle's Hall in San Francisco in January 1943, there was a discussion among high Party officials as to the advisability of having a Negro sit on the platform at this rally. Informant asserted that the name of subject was suggested but it was stated that subject would probably refuse because of his desire to keep his Party membership a secret.

CONF. INFT. SF 939 stated that subject attended a special meeting of the Fillmore Branch of the Party on May 12, 1943 at which time the coming State Convention of the Party was discussed.

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San Francisco #100-1465

Source A advised that when Admiral EMERY LAND held a press conference on the West Coast Maritime situation in San Francisco the last week of May 1943, subject PITTMAN was in conference with HARRY BRIDGES, well known West Coast Communist, who asked the subject to send a PEOPLE'S WORLD reporter to the press conference to ask Admiral LAND certain questions furnished by BRIDGES in order to "put Admiral LAND on the spot".

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ SF 1212 stated that subject was the former Educational Director of the JAMES CONNOLLY Branch of the Golden Gate Section of the Party, however that when he was unable to devote sufficient time to carrying out the duties attendant to this position, subject was asked by VIOLET MORR, Organizer of the Golden Gate Section, to resign as Educational Director or else he would be dismissed for his lack of activity and leadership in this position. Informant advised that the James Connolly and the Frederick Douglas Branches of the Party had been consolidated into the Fillmore Branch, and that previously to the subject's transfer into the Shipfitters Branch, Metal Trades Section, he held a position in May 1943 on the Executive Committee of the Fillmore Branch.

An article appearing in the PEOPLE'S WORLD issue of April 23, 1943 announced a lecture to be delivered by subject entitled "Africa Against the Axis" on April 23 at the TOM MOONEY LABOR SCHOOL, 678 Turk Street, admission fifty cents. It is noted that the TOM MOONEY LABOR SCHOOL is a well known front organization for the Communist Party.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ SF 1159 stated that on June 23, 1943 subject delivered an address on race riots before a joint meeting of the Fillmore Branch and Branch 6 of the Metal Trades Section of the Party. He stated that all riots which had recently broken out such as the Detroit and Beaumont riots, started at the same time which proves they were inspired by Axis friends. He further stated that he had observed that the riots started when the Axis powers were caught between two forces of Allies in Europe. He said that Communist Party policy is to demand protection for Negroes and Mexicans from the police, and also to contribute more to war production.

A news item in the OAKLAND TRIBUNE on July 13, 1943 stated that JOHN PITTMAN, Negro columnist, would be the guest speaker at a public meeting to be held by the Berkeley Branches of the Communist Party at 1942 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley, California on July 15, and that subject was to discuss the effect of the recent so-called "race riots".

85407

On July 23, 1943 an article appeared in the PEOPLE'S WORLD stating that the first of a special series of six weekly classes on "Peoples of the Pacific" would be held at the TOM MOONEY LABOR SCHOOL, and that JOHN PITTMAN, managing editor of the PEOPLE'S WORLD would talk on Japan at meetings to be held on July 24 and 31.

SF 939 advised that on August 30, 1943 PITTMAN spoke at a Communist Party meeting held at the Abraham Lincoln Victory Center, 1759 Fillmore Street, on the problems of Negroes, stating that his people have always been discriminated against and were prevented from progressing to a normal and satisfactory manner of living.

Source D made available a handbill advertising a speech to be delivered by subject, the editor of the PEOPLE'S WORLD, on the coming election in San Francisco on August 19, 1943 at 1402 Powell Street, San Francisco. This meeting was held under the auspices of the North Beach Branch of the Communist Party.

Source E advised that subject had been classified 1A and that the Party, through GEORGE ANDERSEN, well known attorney for the Party in San Francisco, had been trying to get a deferment for him. Informant advised that subject's draft board advised PITTMAN on August 4, 1943 that he would be ordered for induction soon. Party officials feel however that if he can be deferred for a few months, the Army will not take him inasmuch as he will be 38 on December 17, 1943. Source A advised that on August 26, 1943 subject received permission from his draft board to leave the city for a month in order that he might visit his aged mother in Georgia.

~~1~~ SF 517 reported that on September 12, 1939 subject spoke under the auspices of Lodge 694, IWO, at 136 Valencia Street, San Francisco on the subject of the world situation and the German and Soviet Non-Agression Pact. Informant advised that an article appeared in the July 1939 issue of the FILLMORE SPOTLIGHT, published by the 22nd Assembly District of the San Francisco Communist Party, advertising an open branch meeting of the Party scheduled to be held on July 20, 1939 at 1732 O'Farrell Street. The article stated that JOHN PITTMAN, staff member of the PEOPLE'S WORLD, would speak on "The Negro Looks at 1940". Informant further advised that on March 20, 1940 subject led a forum sponsored by the PEOPLE'S WORLD on the topic "This Week Abroad" held at the Sorosis Hall, 536 Sutter Street, San Francisco. Informant advised that subject delivered an address at the Eagle's Hall, 273 Golden Gate Avenue, on September 19, 1941, the occasion being a meeting held under the auspices of the Peoples' World Forum. ELIZABETH GURLEY FLYNN, Secretary of the Citizens Committee to Free EARL BROWDER, and a nationally known Communist Party functionary, spoke on the same program.

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