

Playing It Safe Trend

By Malvina Lindsay

National Danger

SOME OF MY craftier friends whisper behind their hands that from now on they are going to play it safe. They will belong to nothing, contribute to nothing. They will say nothing, do nothing, even think nothing that might conceivably put them in line of an ideological mudslinger. They will live tight little, rabbit, "me first," un-American lives.

This will mean that many citizenship activities will suffer. And that I believe is just what some of those making reckless charges of communism want. They would like to discourage all "nosey" groups in political disagreement with themselves.

For example, the defaming of Judge Dorothy Kenyon got under way about two years ago in the Middle West when she was used as a straw man for a general attack on the Women's Committee for Lasting Peace in which she was active. This group, devoted to furthering international cooperation, had opposed isolationist candidates at the polls. Such direct action was unheard of from a group of women.

It had also made the mistake of using the bugaboo word "Action" in its title. I submit a much smarter title would have been "The Genteel Females' Poetry Circle." But its leaders, many of them women of wealth and standing, were not used to pussyfooting. So Judge Kenyon was singled out for a whispering campaign. Later these same charges were aired by Senator McCarthy—and rebutted by Judge Kenyon—at a congressional hearing.

NOW THEN it also appears it is dangerous to get mixed up in "consumer activities." Senator McCarthy, in charging Dr. Esther Brunauer of the State Department with "Communist front activities," stated that back in the 1930s while she was connected with the American Association of University Women she involved that organization in "consumer activities."

Senator McCarthy supposedly meant consumer activities that from his viewpoint were questionable. Yet there is now a growing tendency to insinuate that any organized consumers are in some way subversive. Yet hasn't the consumer the same right as the National Association of Manufacturers, the American Medical Association and the American Federation of Labor to organize in his own interest?

Now I personally had been thinking of starting a consumers' movement to do something about American technology's sad failure to devise a satisfactory can opener. But maybe I had better play safe. Especially since I have just recalled that fresh out of college on my first newspaper job I joined a group of artistic and literary rebels with the subversive sounding name, "The Wicked Few."

We lasted for only three meetings because of failure to pay the rent for our clubroom over a shoe shining parlor, in which we popped corn over a monkey stove and discussed plans for writing the great American novel. However because of this misadventure, I must now watch my step.

HOWEVER, playing it safe can be a confusing process. Here is Dr. Brunauer, a staid, honorable, basically conservative woman who has distinguished herself in educational fields and also on this country's UNESCO delegation. Yet she has a husband who was born in Hungary! And Hungary is now Communist.

Yet, strange as it may seem to some people, there are former Hungarians who are not Communists! About three years ago when Hungary fell completely into Communist control there was a lot in the papers about the courageous, dramatic step taken by the Hungarian Minister here and his staff. All but the one Communist member of the legation staff resigned, severed ties with their homeland, became exiles, most of them penniless, in this country.

Dr. Brunauer was a friend of the group that took this courageous anti-Communist action. And it was she who encouraged a legation wife to write an account of how the staff members felt in giving up the country they loved for the sake of a principle. That material appeared in my column June 18, 1947, under the title "When Exile Strikes."

Yet the inverted Alice in Wonderland reasoning of those who charge guilt by association could make this incident proof of Dr. Brunauer's Communist affiliations. For was she not a friend of the legation staff that resigned? And had not these staff members been associating with the one Communist member who didn't resign? Hence they had Communist associations. And so had Dr. Brunauer through them! And so bad!!

You see, you can't win!

