

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT – 2009-2012

*Lesson Title –Connecticut Communists*

Grade - 11

Length of class period – 45 minutes

**Inquiry – (What essential question are students answering, what problem are they solving, or what decision are they making?)**

How real was the threat of communism in Connecticut?

**Objectives (What content and skills do you expect students to learn from this lesson?)**

- Students analyze the impact of the Cold War on Connecticut
- Students examine varying perspectives
- Students defend an argument with evidence

**Materials (What primary sources or local resources are the basis for this lesson?) – (please attach)**

The Smith Act

Materials from the Dodd Center at

<http://doddcenter.uconn.edu/research/TAH/TAH05122010.htm>

Smith Act Indictment

Smith Act “What is Behind the Headlines?” Pamphlet published by indicted men

Letters to the indicted men from Connecticut Citizens

Optional- 100 Things You Should Know about Communism in the U.S.A.,

H.U.A.C

**Activities (What will you and your students do during the lesson to promote learning?)**

The teacher will introduce the lesson within the context of Cold War politics and domestic policy in the 1940s and 1950s. The class will review the Smith Act and discuss the perceived need for this law in 1940.

The teacher will review the facts behind the case in Connecticut in which seven Communists were indicted for violating the Smith Act. Students will be divided into two groups to explore the essential question: Were these men a threat to democracy? One side will represent the defense and the other will represent the prosecution. Each group will be charged with identifying the strengths and weaknesses of each side and prepare a closing statement that reveals knowledge of the case and implications for national security and

politics. The statements will be read aloud. The class should discuss the essential question to conclude the lesson.

## **The Alien Registration Act of 1940(Smith Act of 1940)**

§ 2385. Advocating Overthrow of Government.

Whoever knowingly or willfully advocates, abets, advises, or teaches the duty, necessity, desirability, or propriety of overthrowing or destroying the government of the United States or the government of any State, Territory, District or Possession thereof, or the government of any political subdivision therein, by force or violence, or by the assassination of any officer of any such government; or

Whoever, with intent to cause the overthrow or destruction of any such government, prints, publishes, edits, issues, circulates, sells, distributes, or publicly displays any written or printed matter advocating, advising, or teaching the duty, necessity, desirability, or propriety of overthrowing or destroying any government in the United States by force or violence, or attempts to do so; or

Whoever organizes or helps or attempts to organize any society, group, or assembly of persons who teach, advocate, or encourage the overthrow or destruction of any such government by force or violence; or becomes or is a member of, or affiliates with, any such society, group, or assembly of persons, knowing the purposes thereof--

Shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than twenty years, or both, and shall be ineligible for employment by the United States or any department or agency thereof, for the five years next following his conviction.

If two or more persons conspire to commit any offense named in this section, each shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than twenty years, or both, and shall be ineligible for employment by the United States or any department or agency thereof, for the five years next following his conviction.

As used in this section, the terms "organizes" and "organize", with respect to any society, group, or assembly of persons, include the recruiting of new members, the forming of new units, and the regrouping or expansion of existing clubs, classes, and other units of such society, group, or assembly of persons.

### **How will you assess what student learned during this lesson?**

Students will write the closing arguments for either the defense or the prosecution in the case of the Connecticut Seven. These can be presented in class orally and evaluated by the teacher and the students.

### **Connecticut Grade Level Expectations- Grades 9-12**

1.2 Describe the importance of significant events in local and Connecticut history and their connections to United States History

14. Describe how major events in U.S. History affected Connecticut citizens