

The Workmen's Circle

CALL



In Quest of Justice

THE CASE OF THE LEGLESS VETERAN. By James Kutcher. 178 Pages, \$1. Pioneer Publishers, 116 University Place, New York 3.

THIS book by the son of a Workmen's Circle member, is a gripping human document, written by one who is not a writer by profession. He tells his story simply, modestly and honestly from the viewpoint of a veteran, who went unwillingly as a draftee into the infantry in World War II, did his duty without complaint during three bitter campaigns, and lost both his legs in the battle of San Pietro, Italy, in 1943.

It is a personal report by a victim of one of the most discussed problems of the day—how to properly label the disloyal organizations of communism and fascism so as to reduce their conspiratorial threat without undermining the principle of freedom of dissent, and without victimizing people for radical or non-conformist political activity.

James Kutcher, son of immigrants from Russia, who came here to escape tyranny, was born and raised in Newark, N. J. He wanted to become a teacher, but couldn't go to college because of the 1929 depression. Looking vainly for a decent job, he became interested in economics and politics, developed an admiration for Norman Thomas and joined the Young People's Socialist League. Later he joined the Socialist Workers Party, one of the "Trotzky-ite" groups which is sharply critical of "Stalinist" communism.

After war service in America and

Europe, he learned to use artificial legs and got a job as a clerk with the Veterans Administration in Newark. For two years, his work in this humble job was graded satisfactory. Then suddenly, in 1948, he was fired—as a "loyalty" risk. Why? Because he freely admitted belonging to the Socialist Workers Party, which was included on the Attorney General's controversial, "subversive list."

This political blacklist has been severely criticized by liberal organizations because it was drawn up without notifying the listed groups in advance, without specifying any charges, and without granting them a hearing at which they could defend themselves.

In 1951 the U. S. Court of Appeals in New York ruled it to be "a purely hearsay declaration by the Attorney General. . . . It has no competency to prove the subversive character of the listed associations." The same year the U. S. Supreme Court, by a vote of 5 to 3, declared the list to be "arbitrary" because the listed groups were not first granted a hearing. Three years have passed since then, but the office of the Attorney General continues to publish the list and still has not granted a hearing to anyone who requested it.

Kutcher has been fighting back. As he says, "I don't want any special sympathy or pity because I lost my legs; all I want are the rights that belong to any man or woman. The significant thing about my case is not that I lost my legs, but that I lost my rights, which are infinitely dearer and more

Books in Review

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precious to me." In 1952 the U. S. Court of Appeals in Washington unanimously ruled that his discharge, merely because of his Socialist Workers Party membership, was illegal. But instead of restoring him to his job, they told him to go back to the beginning of his appeals and start all over again. His eleventh appeal is now before a Washington court.

Kutcher also appealed to the bar of public opinion. As a result, over 800 national and local labor, liberal, fraternal, civic, religious and veterans groups have endorsed his case or contributed money to the non-partisan *Kutcher Civil Rights Committee*, a group formed to help him fight his case in the courts. Among these are several branches of the Workmen's Circle, before which Kutcher has personally appeared with his appeal. Organizations helping him include the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, ILGWU, Farband-Labor Zionist Order, Jewish Socialist Verband, United Hebrew Trades, and others.

This is an important book for our times as well as a moving one. It should be read by every believer in civil liberties and the American tradition of defending the rights of the dissenter. Its sale will help the committee pay the legal expenses of the case.