
Inventory of the William Schneiderman Papers

Accession number: 1988/104

Labor Archives & Research Center

San Francisco State University
San Francisco, California

Contact Information:

- Labor Archives & Research Center
- San Francisco State University
- 480 Winston Drive
- San Francisco, California 94132
- Phone: (415) 564-4010
- Fax: (415) 564-3606
- Email: larc@sfsu.edu
- URL: <http://www.library.sfsu.edu/special/larc.html>

Processed by:

Rex Doane

Date Completed:

October 1990

Encoded by:

James Lake

© 1999 San Francisco State University. All rights reserved.

Descriptive Summary

Title: William Schneiderman Papers

Accession number: 1988/104

Creator: Schneiderman, William, 1905-1985

Repository: San Francisco State University. Labor Archives & Research Center
San Francisco, California 94132

Shelf location: For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the Center's online catalog.

Language: English

Access

Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights

Copyright has not been assigned to the Labor Archives & Research Center. All requests for permission to publish or quote from materials must be submitted in writing to the Director of the Archives. Permission for publication is given on behalf of the Labor Archives & Research Center as the owner of the physical items and is not intended to include or imply permission of the copyright holder, which must also be obtained by the reader.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], William Schneiderman Papers, 1988/104, Labor Archives & Research Center, San Francisco State University.

Introduction

This collection was donated by Leah Schneiderman, the wife of William Schneiderman, in 1988 under the direction of Robert Cherny. The collection was processed by Rex Doane, October, 1990.

Biography

Born on December 14, 1905 in Romanov, Russia, William Schneiderman was brought to the United States at the age of two by his parents. The family settled in Chicago where Schneiderman's father worked in the garment industry. The Schneidermans would later relocate to Los Angeles in the 1920s after William's father contracted T.B. While in Los Angeles, Schneiderman wrote in his autobiography that the "land of promise" had once again "mocked" his family. ¹ It was this disillusionment and the poverty that he suffered as a child that helped to, in Schneiderman's words, develop a strong "working-class consciousness" ² early in life. At age 16, Schneiderman joined the Young Communist League to begin his long career of political activism. Schneiderman also held a number of jobs while in Los Angeles during the Twenties. Letters of recommendation found in this collection indicate that he worked as a bookkeeper for the Upholstery Union No. 15, in a similar capacity for the National Biscuit Company, and as an office clerk for a local grocery. Despite working ten hour days, Schneiderman attended night classes at UCLA. While enrolled, Schneiderman actively opposed the compulsory ROTC program on campus. As a result of his activities, school officials classified him as a "non-citizen." The consequence of this change in status meant that Schneiderman had to pay significantly higher tuition as a non-resident in order to complete his education. The increase in fees proved to be too much for the already strapped Schneiderman and he was forced to drop out. He would finally receive his degree some forty years later.

Schneiderman's political convictions continued to have an impact on his personal fortunes. In 1925, he was fired from a job he had held for five years. The Simon Levi Company stated that Schneiderman was laid-off, "owing to some changes in our office work." ³ Schneiderman held that his dismissal was the result of being "fingered by the Red Squad." In 1927, Schneiderman's final citizenship papers came through and they would later become the source of some controversy. In 1930, Schneiderman was assigned by the Communist Party to become a district organizer in the New England area (a territory hard hit by unemployment). Schneiderman was transferred a year later to Minneapolis, where a number of party leaders had been indicted as a result of a "Red Scare." Serving once again as a district organizer, Schneiderman was also nominated as the Party's candidate for governor and received 5,000 votes. In 1935, Schneiderman spent a year in the Soviet Union and was deeply impressed with what he thought to be the future for all governments.

Returning to California, Schneiderman was appointed as state secretary for the Communist Party, a position he held until 1957. In 1939, the year of his marriage to Leah, the U.S. Justice Department moved to deport Schneiderman on the basis of his membership to the Communist Party during the time of his naturalization. Schneiderman's citizenship trial would eventually reach the Supreme Court where he was represented by Wendell Wilkie without fee. Schneiderman won the case and soon made headlines again, when in 1949 he and fourteen other communist leaders were indicted under the Smith Act (a list of the individuals indicted is included in the noteworthy individuals index at the end of this guide). With the eventual Supreme reversal of the Smith Act, Schneiderman resumed his active role within the Communist Party, and as state secretary he delivered a number of speeches at the various state and national conventions. In 1982, Schneiderman wrote his autobiography, *Dissent on Trial*, chronicling his struggles as a life-long political activist. William Schneiderman died on January 29, 1985.

¹Schneiderman, William, *Dissent on Trial* (MEP Publishing, Minneapolis, MN, 1983) p. 15.

²Ibid. p. 17.

³Simon Levi Co. letter of recommendation dated Nov. 28, 1925 Schneiderman Collection Box #2, folder #75

Scope and Content

The material within this collection chiefly focuses on William Schneiderman's involvement in the Communist Party from 1931 until his retirement in the late 1960s. The types of material in the collection include: official and personal correspondence; court transcripts; newspaper clippings; Communist Party memos, newsletters, and pamphlets; research material; speech notes; and manuscript versions of both published and unpublished writings. The largest segment of the collection are the transcripts of speeches delivered by Schneiderman as California State secretary at the Communist Party state and national conventions. As long-time state secretary (and later chairman) of the California Communist Party, Schneiderman offers a critical and revealing view of the Party's development. As such, researchers will value his insight into the Communist Party and its internal turmoil. Issues often addressed by Schneiderman within his speeches include the rights of minorities and a need to develop a youth movement within the Party. Other issues include the steady decline of membership (particularly in the 1950s and early 1960s) and the developing ideological split in the party. Other noteworthy series in the collection include the Schneiderman citizenship case and the Smith Act trial materials. Included in the citizenship case are the Supreme Court briefs, news clippings, related correspondence, and the manuscripts of Schneiderman's speeches during the trial. This case still serves as a fundamental precedent for the rights of immigrants. Similarly, the speech notes, court transcripts, and newspaper clipping in the Smith Act series help further document the struggles endured by the Communist Party in the United States. Please note that the Smith Act transcripts included in this series are incomplete.

Researchers should value the unpublished epilogue to Schneiderman's autobiography, *Dissent on Trial*. Indicative of Schneiderman's deep concern for the fate of the Communist Party, the epilogue is outspoken and fairly critical. In it, Schneiderman candidly writes that the

Communist Party too quickly dismissed criticisms of the Soviet Union and too often held that these were merely distortions and falsehoods. While emphasizing the continued allegiance to the ideals of communism, Schneiderman warned that the Soviet Union could not be considered infallible and that certain alterations in policy were appropriate and just. The epilogue was considerably revised by Schneiderman prior to publication.

Series I. Citizenship Case, 1939-1943

Physical Description: 4 folders

Scope and Content Note

This series contains court briefs from February, 1941 to October, 1942; court transcripts from December 7 to December 13, 1939; speeches from December, 1939 to June, 1941; newspaper clippings from November, 1941 to June, 1943. Also included are related pamphlets, petitions, and press releases issued by the Schneiderman-Darcy Defense Committee and the Committee for Citizenship Rights. In addition, Schneiderman's statement to the press upon the Supreme Court decision to uphold his citizenship is included as well as telegrams and letters of congratulations.

Series II. Un-American Committee Hearing, 3/27/39-12/02/41

Physical Description: 2 folders

Scope and Content Note

The series contains the 1939 court transcript and related newspaper clippings, December 2, 1944.

Series III. Election Law, 9/27/40-1/12/44

Physical Description: 1 folder

Scope and Content Note

The series contains court briefs concerning the case between Anita Whitney, California Communist Party candidate for State Senator, and Frank Jordan, California Secretary of State.

Series IV. Smith Act Materials, 1949-1957

Physical Description: 53 folders

Scope and Content Note

This series includes an incomplete set of court transcripts; related newspaper clippings, 1951 to 1957; related correspondence, 1955 to 1958; pamphlets, petitions, and newsletters from the California Emergency Defense Committee. Also included are undated speeches delivered by Schneiderman during the trial and Communist Party reports and policy memos issued during the Smith Act trial.

Series V. Communist Party Convention Material, ca.1950-1983

Physical Description: 9 folders

Scope and Content Note

The bulk of this series includes undated speeches given at CP state and national conventions. Also included are materials from the 1957 state convention; a report on the 20th Congress from 1956; speeches and draft election statement from the 1950 California State election; material from undated state reports; and speeches concerning the Communist Party Platform, ca.1950 to 1958.

Series VI. Personal Papers, ca.1920-1985

Physical Description: 7 folders

Scope and Content Note

This series contains correspondence from labor journalist Sender Garlin, March, 1983 to November, 1984. Also included are three letters from Gil Green in late 1962. In addition, there are three booklets written by Schneiderman, school records and miscellaneous personal research material.

Series VII. *Dissent on Trial* material, 1983-1985

Physical Description: 2 folders

Scope and Content Note

This series contains a chronology of Schneiderman's life, correspondence and reviews regarding *Dissent on Trial*, an unpublished foreword by Jessica Mitford and an unpublished epilogue for the book.

Series I: CITIZENSHIP CASE, 1939-1943

Box-folder 1/2	Court Briefs 2/41-10/42
Box-folder 1/3	Supreme Court Transactions 12/7/39-12/3/39
Box-folder 1/4	Newspaper Clippings 11/29/41-1/2/42
Box-folder 1/5	Miscellaneous 12/12/39-6/17/76/undated

Series II: UN-AMERICAN COMMITTEE HEARINGS, 3/27/39-12/2/41

Box-folder 1/6

Court Transcripts 3/27/39

Box-folder 1/7

Newspaper Clippings 12/2/41

Series III: ELECTION LAW, 9/27/40-1/12/44

Box-folder 1/8

Court Briefs 9/27/40-1/12/44

Series IV: SMITH ACT MATERIAL, 1949-1957

Box-folder 1/9	Court Briefs 10/1/56/undated
Box-folder 1/10	Speeches 2/6/52/undated
Box-folder 1/11	Speeches undated
Box-folder 1/12	Newspaper Clippings 7/27/51-6/29/57
Box-folder 1/13	Miscellaneous ca.1951-1959
Box-folder 1/14	C.P. Policy/Defense ca.1951-1959
Box-folder 2/1	Court Transcripts 2/11/52
Box-folder 2/2	Court Transcripts 2/12/52
Box-folder 2/3	Court Transcripts 2/13/52
Box-folder 2/4	Court Transcripts 2/14/52
Box-folder 2/5	Court Transcripts 2/15/52
Box-folder 2/6	Court Transcripts 2/18/52
Box-folder 2/7	Court Transcripts 2/19/52
Box-folder 2/8	Court Transcripts 2/20/52
Box-folder 2/9	Court Transcripts 2/21/52
Box-folder 2/10	Court Transcripts 2/26/52
Box-folder 2/11	Court Transcripts 2/28/52
Box-folder 2/12	Court Transcripts 2/29/52
Box-folder 2/13	Court Transcripts 3/03/52
Box-folder 2/14	Court Transcripts 3/07/52
Box-folder 2/15	Court Transcripts 3/10/52
Box-folder 3/1	Court Transcripts 3/11/52
Box-folder 3/2	Court Transcripts 3/12/52
Box-folder 3/3	Court Transcripts 3/13/52
Box-folder 3/4	Court Transcripts 3/19/52
Box-folder 3/5	Court Transcripts 3/20/52
Box-folder 3/6	Court Transcripts 3/21/52
Box-folder 3/7	Court Transcripts 3/25/52
Box-folder 3/8	Court Transcripts 3/26/52
Box-folder 3/9	Court Transcripts 3/31/52
Box-folder 3/10	Court Transcripts 4/03/52
Box-folder 3/11	Court Transcripts 4/10/52
Box-folder 3/12	Court Transcripts 4/14/52
Box-folder 3/13	Court Transcripts 4/15/52
Box-folder 3/14	Court Transcripts 4/16/52
Box-folder 3/15	Court Transcripts 4/17/52
Box-folder 3/16	Court Transcripts 4/18/52
Box-folder 4/1	Court Transcripts 4/25/52
Box-folder 4/2	Court Transcripts 4/28/52
Box-folder 4/3	Court Transcripts 4/30/52
Box-folder 4/4	Court Transcripts 5/01/52
Box-folder 4/5	Court Transcripts 5/02/52
Box-folder 4/6	Court Transcripts 5/05/52
Box-folder 4/7	Court Transcripts 5/06/52
Box-folder 4/8	Court Transcripts 5/07/52
Box-folder 4/9	Court Transcripts 5/08/52
Box-folder 4/10	Court Transcripts 5/09/52
Box-folder 4/11	Court Transcripts 5/12/52
Box-folder 4/12	Court Transcripts 5/13/52
Box-folder 4/13	Court Transcripts 5/15/52
Box-folder 4/14	Court Transcripts 5/16/52
Box-folder 4/15	Court Transcripts 5/20/52
Box-folder 4/16	Court Transcripts 5/21/52

Series V: COMMUNIST PARTY CONVENTION MATERIAL, ca.1950-1987

Box-folder 5/1	20th Congress Meeting 4/5/56
Box-folder 5/2	National Convention Report 6/56
Box-folder 5/3	State Convention 1957
Box-folder 5/4	State Conventions 4/53/undated
Box-folder 5/5	State Conventions ca.1945-1983
Box-folder 5/6	Party Election Platforms ca.1945-50/undated
Box-folder 5/7	Radio Speeches undated
Box-folder 5/8	Speech Notes undated
Box-folder 5/9	Speeches undated

Series VI: PERSONAL PAPERS

Box-folder 5/10	Correspondence From S. Garlin 3/83-11/84
Box-folder 5/11	Correspondence From G. Green 10/1/63-12/3/63
Box-folder 5/12	Biographical Data undated
Box-folder 5/13	School Records ca.1958-1962
Box-folder 5/14	Miscellaneous undated
Box-folder 5/15	Miscellaneous Clippings undated
Box-folder 5/16	Miscellaneous Writings undated

Series VII: *DISSENT ON TRIAL*

Box-folder 5/17	Reviews and Correspondence 12/1/81-8/31/84
Box-folder 5/18	Unpublished Epilogue ca.1982
Box-folder 5/19	Jessica Mitford's Unpublished Forward ca.1982