

THE PUMPKIN PAPERS

far, and achieve exposure without destroying the families of the people involved.

“But after my testimony they spread stories that I was insane and that I was a pervert.

“Then they called in my wife and were very rough with her. It made me angry. I know as a Quaker I must never act in anger. So I sat for another day, and I came to the conclusion that the only thing to do was to tell everything I knew, to spare no one. This thing must be stopped. Look what they’re doing in China and Eastern Europe. We’ve got to know what we’re confronted with in this country.”

But no one knew of the man’s tremendous decision until November 17, 1948, when he was next called by Hiss’s attorneys for a pre-trial examination.

There had never been any suggestion that documentary evidence existed in the Hiss-Chambers case. But it is routine for lawyers to ask, and they did ask Chambers, if he had any documentary material to support his allegations.

He reached in his pocket and drew out a sheaf of typewritten documents.

“Alger Hiss gave me these when we worked together in the Communist conspiracy,” he said. They were copies, he said, of secret State Department records. There were 65 of them.

It was a bombshell whose sound almost immediately reached the ears of Alexander Campbell, head of the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice. He rushed to Baltimore and took personal possession of the papers. He imposed secrecy on all concerned.

But the Committee, which appeared to be going down the drain, knew nothing of this at the time. Two weeks later, however, a Chambers attorney named Nicholas Vazzana came into my office to ask permission to examine Hiss’s file and to

secure a copy of the testimony of the previous summer. He had visited us before, but now there was something different about him.

He seemed unusually pleased with himself, and I asked him why.

"Can't talk," he said, "or I might be held in contempt of court."

Something prompted me to keep him around the premises. I suggested that we go up and say hello to Rep. Nixon. "You'll like him," I said. I took him to see the young Californian and we chatted amiably for a time before I brought up the hint he had dropped.

"I can't discuss it with either of you," Vazzana said. "But I suppose I can tell you it has something to do with the Hiss-Chambers libel suit, and it concerns documents."

I doubt if Nixon and I were able to maintain our poker faces when he mentioned "documents." But he would go no further.

On December 11, 1948, an item in a Washington column made reference to "new and sensational" information in the Hiss-Chambers case.

But on that very afternoon, a reporter who has a close tie-in with the Justice Department, and whose stories usually reflected unspoken Justice Department policy, wrote that the Department was ready to drop the whole Hiss-Chambers case. The Committee's demands for a perjury action did not hold water, the Justice Department "source" stated. He added that the Department saw no need of presenting the case to the New York Grand Jury.

This, I must repeat, was after the Department had come into possession of the 65 documents. To double-check, we had newspaper friends of the Committee call the Justice Department to inquire whether there was a new development