Enough Is Enough

Mrs. Roosevelt appears to have been responding to Secretary Acheson's challenge when she reversed her previous comments on the Hiss case at Ames, Iowa, on Friday. The Secretary of State had suggested in effect that the friends of Mr. Hiss ought to stand up and be counted. Each person who has known Mr. Hiss or worked with him, Mr. Acheson told the press, must decide for himself in the light of his own standards and principles what his attitude is and what his conduct will be. For himself, he would not turn his back upon Mr. Hiss. The next day after this statement appeared in the press Mrs. Roosevelt told a news conference:

> A man who has professed innocence is involved by a man who by his own admission is a perjurer and a former Communist. It seems rather horrible to condemn someone on the word of someone else who admits to guilt.

The contrast between this comment and Mrs. Roosevelt's first reaction to the verdict in the Hiss case is striking. In response to many questions that had been asked about the jury's decision she wrote in her newspaper column last Wednesday:

> We believe we have set up the best system under which to obtain justice that can exist in our own country. Trial by your peers is supposed to be the last word in safeguarding the innocent. So how can any one of us question it?

Mrs. Roosevelt's implication that the Government ought not to use the testimony of confessed law-breakers is in itself shocking. To exclude such testimony from criminal cases would put the Government at a perilous disadvantage in enforcing the law. But that is incidental at the moment to the larger issue of respecting the findings of the judicial system unless new evidence is unearthed or some specific weakness in the court proceedings can be pointed out. If we are to have an epidemic of statements from high officials which have the effect of casting doubt upon the findings of the Hiss jury, a critical blow will be struck not only at our judicial system but also at our national unity. President Truman carefully avoided being drawn into this trap, and we hope that other officials will have the good sense to follow his example.

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