



*The Parks Story. He just "drifted" in and out of communism.*

## How a movie star became a Red

Ever since the House Un-American Activities Committee began exposing Hollywood Communists, many Americans have been wondering what would happen if a major star came forward frankly and admitted past CP membership.

Last week handsome Larry Parks, 36, gave them a chance to find out.

Speaking in a low, hesitant voice which revealed his nervousness despite the charm he tried to turn on for the committee, the star of *The Jolson Story* said he had "drifted into" a Hollywood Communist cell in 1941 and "drifted out" in 1945. His reasons for "drifting in" were that he was "a young man of 25, liberal in thought . . . idealistic. . . . I felt this was a legitimate political party . . . the most liberal of the political parties of that time."

His reasons for "drifting out" were more obscure. He said he had only attended "ten, twelve, maybe fifteen meetings" at which "twelve or fifteen people" discussed the war and current events. Finally his attendance "just petered out"—not, according to his testimony, because he came to have any real understanding of the Communist conspiracy, but just because he got tired of going. He refused to name other Hollywood Communists in



*Old pattern. Miss Sondergaard seeks Constitutional protection.*

open session because "they were people like myself, small-type people" and to subject them to adverse publicity would be counter to his concept of "American justice." When the committee insisted, he told them in closed session.

**"I Refuse . . ."** Parks' willingness to co-operate, which committee member Harold Velde (R.-Ill.), an ex-FBI agent, hailed in a speech on the House floor, was in noticeable contrast to that of the two witnesses who followed him. Howard da Silva, screen heavy, shouted an angry protest against the committee's "inquisitorial proceedings" and refused to testify on the Constitutional ground that it might incriminate him. Actress Gale Sondergaard, wife of writer Herbert Biberman, one of the "Hollywood Ten" sentenced to jail last year for defying the committee, also refused on the same ground. Committee counsel Frank Tavenner said the committee had evidence she held Communist Party cards in 1944 and 1945.

Da Silva and Miss Sondergaard, perhaps because their testimony fell into the expected pattern for suspected Hollywoodites, seemed to get off relatively easy so far as public relations was concerned. But Larry Parks was another matter. His studio, Columbia Pictures, had dropped him from one picture when he was subpoenaed to testify; M-G-M may hold back another picture awaiting the reaction to his appearance. His future, a studio spokesman said, was "more up to the public than it is to us."