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Grad Research: Josephine Hill on Communism and Hybrid Corn

by American

Studies

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Congratulations to UT AMS grad student Josephine Hill, who recently published an article called “Sowing the Seeds of Communism: Corn Wars in the USA” on Not Even Past, the blog of the UT History department. You can read the article [here](#), and we’ve included an excerpt below.

Today we often associate hybrid or genetically modified corn with agricultural monopolies, big business, and capitalism, in the early Cold War some feared that the rise of hybrid corn would sow the seeds of Communism in the United States. Daniel Robert Fitzpatrick’s editorial cartoon, “Alien Corn,” published in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch on April 28, 1948, shows Henry A. Wallace grinning at a corn plant, whose leaves bear hammers and sickles and whose



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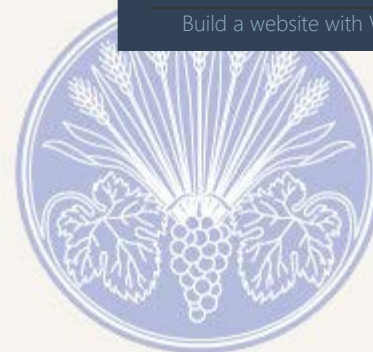
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tassel sports a Soviet star -- the fruits of Communism. Wallace was the founder of the Hi-Bred Corn Company (today owned by the Dupont Corporation). He was also vice president to Franklin Roosevelt, Secretary of Agriculture (1933-1940), Secretary of Commerce (1945-1946), and 1948 presidential nominee of the Progressive Party. Appearing during the 1948 election season, the cartoon most directly reflects contemporary suspicions about Wallace's possible Communist sympathies, which were fueled by his endorsement from the U.S. Communist Party, his progressive platform that included universal health care, voting rights for African-Americans, and an end to segregation, and his interest in Eastern religions. Here, the fear of the "alien" seems to have stronger political than environmental implications, yet this title presciently describes the many ways in which these two concerns would become more and more closely intertwined.

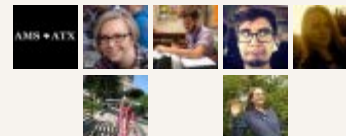
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