

A Legacy of Advocacy Is Born as AAI Confronts McCarthyism

by Bryan Peery and John Emrich

Today, across-the-board cuts in federal funding for scientific research threaten to drive leading scientists overseas and deter the next generation from entering scientific professions. Sixty years ago, scientists had similar concerns for their own funding, albeit for very different reasons.

Although federal spending was on the rise in the decades immediately following the Second World War, it was also the height of the Second Red Scare associated with Senator Joseph McCarthy (R-WI), and scientists faced the possibility of having their individual funding withheld on the basis of mere rumor or innuendo about their past political associations.

In this political climate, scientists increasingly turned to their professional societies to defend their interests before policy makers. The leadership of the American Association of Immunologists (AAI) chose to address the crisis. Rather than limit themselves to defending individual members, AAI leaders spoke out for all victims of the unjust policy, plunging headlong into the complicated waters of public affairs for the first time. Not only did they draft a resolution protesting the policy of discriminating against researchers based on personal politics, but they also worked with representatives of other scientific organizations to ensure that scientists' concerns were heard by policy makers. The organized protest proved effective, and the government policies regarding unclassified research grants were changed. This first overt engagement in public policy by AAI demonstrated the importance of collective political action and laid the groundwork for the next 60 years of advocacy on behalf of immunologists.

A Call to Political Action

Following sessions on poliomyelitis and complement, attendees at the 1954 AAI annual meeting turned their attention from science to politics as they convened



Members of the House Un-American Activities Committee outside of Chairman J. Parnell Thomas's home (l-r): Rep. Richard B. Vail, Rep. Thomas, Rep. John McDowell, Robert Stripling (chief counsel), and Rep. Richard M. Nixon

New York World-Telegram and the Sun Newspaper Photograph Collection, Library of Congress

for the business meeting late in the afternoon on Tuesday, April 13. Rumors that the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS), which administered National Institutes of Health (NIH) grants, was blacklisting scientists on political grounds had circulated among attendees during the first two days of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) meeting. Disturbed by these rumors, Michael Heidelberger (AAI '35, president 1946–47, 1948–49) brought the matter to the floor of the business meeting. A firm believer that scientists could not afford to stay aloof from politics in the

postwar era, Heidelberger had used the occasions of his two AAI president's addresses to call for openness and international cooperation in science and to challenge AAI members to become politically engaged.¹ Now he called upon AAI to issue a formal protest of the alleged USPHS policy.

At the suggestion of Albert Sabin (AAI '46), a committee comprised of Heidelberger, Thomas P. Magill (AAI '37, president 1953–54), and Morris Scherago (AAI '48) drafted a resolution in April 1954 protesting the blacklisting and mailed it to AAI members for a vote. The resolution recognized the necessity of secrecy and thorough background checks in classified research but argued that such measures were unnecessary in unclassified areas. It "earnestly urge[d]" that unclassified research funds "be allocated solely on the basis of scientific merit of the proposals and for the competence of the investigators involved, and that no funds be denied because of the investigator's political associations or beliefs."²

1. Michael Heidelberger, "Science, Freedom and Peace," *Federation Proceedings* 6 (1947): 484–85; *Ibid.*, "Ivory Pawn in the Ivory Tower," *Federation Proceedings* 8 (1949): 579–80.

2. Resolution and mail ballot attached to the minutes of the AAI Business Meeting, April 13, 1954, AAI Archive, Bethesda, MD [hereafter AAI-Bethesda].

McCarthyism and the NIH Blacklists

The rumors about the USPHS were new in 1954, but the practice of blacklisting individuals whose politics were deemed subversive was not. Shortly after the end of the Second World War, anti-communist sentiment quickly grew in the United States (see “The Roots of McCarthyism,” p. 16). The fear of communist subversion was so pervasive by March 1947 that President Truman issued Executive Order 9835, which established a federal loyalty program and subjected all current and future federal employees to loyalty tests and reviews. If Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) records or testimony from anonymous informants provided “reasonable grounds” to suspect an employee of affiliating with a group deemed by the attorney general to be subversive, the employee could be summarily dismissed. Although employees were entitled to a hearing before the Loyalty Review Board, they were not provided the names of their accusers, much less afforded the opportunity to confront them in court.

The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) extended the search for communists beyond the federal workforce and perpetuated the notion that communists in every sector of American society threatened the nation from within. HUAC captured headlines with the well-known investigations of the Hollywood Ten in 1947 and Alger Hiss in 1948. Other HUAC cases, such as that of physicist Edward U. Condon in 1948, may be less familiar to us today but were nonetheless significant at the time. In fact, the AAI Council first spoke out against the tactics associated with McCarthyism when it issued a resolution at the 1948 AAI annual meeting condemning HUAC for its handling of the Condon case (see “Protesting the Politicization of Science,” p. 18).³

American anxiety over communism increased dramatically in response to global and domestic developments of the late 1940s and early 1950s. The Soviets carried out their first successful atomic bomb test in August 1949, and Mao Zedong proclaimed the establishment of the communist People’s Republic of China two months later. On February 2, 1950, Klaus Fuchs was arrested for espionage, sparking the investigation that, months later, resulted in the arrest of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. One week after Fuchs’s arrest, Senator Joseph McCarthy rose to national



Oveta Culp Hobby speaking at the dedication of the NIH Clinical Center, 1953
Images from the History of Medicine, National Library of Medicine

prominence when he delivered a speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, dramatically claiming to have in his hand a list of subversives in the State Department.

It was against this backdrop that the USPHS changed its procedures for screening NIH grant applications in June 1952. The change had been implemented quietly and was known to members of AAI and other FASEB societies only as an unverified rumor when they met in early April 1954. Confirmation came only after the FASEB meeting when the American Society of Biological Chemists issued a resolution calling upon the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to investigate the rumors.⁴

Oveta Culp Hobby, secretary of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare,⁵ responded to the inquiry with the following statement on April 28:

We do not require security or loyalty investigations in connection with the award of research grants. When, however, information of a substantial nature reflecting on the loyalty of an individual is brought to our attention, it becomes our duty to give it more serious consideration. In those instances where it is established to the satisfaction of this Department that the individual has engaged or is engaging in subversive activities or that there is serious question of his loyalty to the United States, it is the practice of the Department to deny support.

According to Hobby, more than 2,000 NIH grants had been awarded to 14,000 scientists in each of the

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3. Minutes of the AAI Council Meeting, March 15, 1948, AAI-Bethesda.

4. The American Society of Biological Chemists (ASBC) changed its name to the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology in 1987. A copy of the ASBC resolution is attached to a memorandum from Alwin M. Pappenheimer and F. Sargent Cheever to AAI Councillors, July 13, 1954, Box 1, Folder 2, Councillors’ Correspondence (Chase), The American Association of Immunologists Collection, University of Maryland, Baltimore County [hereafter AAI-UMBC].

5. Now the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The Roots of McCarthyism: Communism and Anti-Communism in America

Since the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, anti-radicalism and fear of internal subversion have been recurring themes in American politics. It is therefore no surprise that when the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) was founded in 1919, the party's revolutionary rhetoric, and the fact that the overwhelming majority of its members were recent immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, immediately aroused suspicion. Following a series of highly publicized bombings by subversive political elements, Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, with the backing of Congress and widespread public support, launched a series of raids in cities across the country in December 1919 and January 1920 that rounded up thousands of individuals suspected of being communists. Hundreds of aliens were deported during what became known as the Red Scare, and the CPUSA was driven underground—its membership falling below 10,000.¹

During the turbulent times of the Great Depression, the CPUSA enjoyed a period of relative success in American politics. Communists worked with progressive groups in the 1930s and attracted new party members by playing a leading role in the social struggles of the day. By the mid-1930s, Americans who championed labor rights, organized the unemployed, fought evictions of farmers and the working poor, promoted civil rights, or called for the U.S. government to take a stand against growing European fascism by intervening in the Spanish Civil War (1936–39) necessarily found themselves working alongside CPUSA members, whether they officially joined the party or were simply “fellow travelers.” For their part, the communists, who once condemned both major American political parties, openly supported President Franklin D. Roosevelt's trade unionization efforts and publicly acknowledged the Democrats as the lesser of two evils by the 1936 presidential election.

Following the signing of the Nazi-Soviet pact and the Russian invasion of Poland in 1939, the CPUSA quickly lost much of the goodwill it had engendered during the Great Depression. The change in policy confirmed suspicions that the party was under direct control of the Soviet government, and, thereafter, the reputation of the CPUSA was tied to that of the Soviet Union.

When Hitler invaded Russia in June 1941, the Roosevelt administration and its supporters, who were, by then, committed to aiding the Allies, actively worked to improve Americans' impressions of the Soviet Union. This U.S.-Soviet cooperation flourished briefly after the United States entered the Second World War, but the relationship quickly soured with the war's end, as both the U.S. and Soviet governments sought to control the post-war world order.

While many liberals, however reluctantly, learned to work with communists during the Great Depression and the Second World War, conservatives (most, but not all of them, were Republicans) never ceased their criticism of communism as un-American. Many critics of President Roosevelt's policies charged that the president was a socialist, and a vocal minority even suggested that his administration was infiltrated with communists who were loyal to the Soviet Union. These charges failed to stick during the 1930s or early 1940s, but Republicans had far more success in portraying the Democratic Party as “soft” on communism by the end of the decade, as they blamed Roosevelt and his successor, President Harry S. Truman, for the “fall” of Eastern Europe and China to communism.

No sector of society was safe from accusations of disloyalty. Leaders of all fields, including science, soon recognized that even their past political affiliations, if only slightly outside of the mainstream, could cost them their careers.

President Truman attempted to seize the domestic communism issue from the Republicans by signing Executive Order 9835 and instituting the federal loyalty program in March 1947, but the Republican-controlled House Un-American Activities Committee conducted high-profile investigations into communist

subversion and further stirred anti-communist sentiment. By the end of the 1940s, the foundation for the systematic persecution of those whose loyalty was called into question had been put into place. Once the federal government implemented the Truman loyalty program and legitimized the practice of screening employees based on their political beliefs and affiliations, similar policies were rapidly adopted by state and local governments as well as private organizations, including universities.²

No sector of society was safe from accusations of disloyalty. Leaders of all fields, including science, soon recognized that even their past political affiliations, if only slightly outside of the mainstream, could cost them their careers.

1. This brief overview of communism and anti-communism in the United States is based on Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), and Ellen Schrecker, *The Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History with Documents*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002).

2. Ellen Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

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two years since the policy change, and fewer than 30 individuals had been denied funding on the basis of the policy.⁶

Elvin A. Kabat versus the NIH

Some of those individuals whose grant applications were rejected under the USPHS policy were likely unaware that they had been blacklisted, and many of those who did suspect that they had been denied funding for political reasons undoubtedly kept quiet to save their careers. Nevertheless, AAI leaders were aware of at least three individuals who were on the USPHS blacklists: the names, “Pauling,” “Kabat,” and “Peters,” are handwritten in the corner of one of AAI Councillor Merrill Chase’s (AAI ’38, president 1956–57) letters regarding the resolution of protest.⁷



Elvin A. Kabat, ca. 1965

The American Association of Immunologists Collection, Center for Biological Sciences Archives, UMBC

Both Nobel laureate Linus Pauling and distinguished Yale biomedical research scientist John P. Peters brought public attention to their cases in 1954 and 1955,⁸ but there can be little doubt that when Heidelberger called upon AAI to act on the matter in April 1954, it was the plight of his former student, colleague at the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons (P&S), and friend, Elvin A. Kabat (AAI ’43, president 1965–66), that weighed heavily on his mind. Heidelberger knew that Kabat had been under investigation by the FBI for his alleged communist affiliations for the past few years, and he dismissed these accusations as “manifestly absurd and of cruel potential damage to the career of one of our most promising and brilliant young scientists.”⁹

In 1953, Kabat had applied to have an NIH grant renewed, only to be informed that his application “falls

in the group of applications for which grants cannot be made.”¹⁰ His other existing NIH grants were promptly terminated. USPHS officials offered clarification during a visit with Houston Merritt, chair of the Department of Neurology at P&S where Kabat was conducting the NIH-sponsored research. They informed Merritt that the grant application was rejected because of Kabat’s past political associations but would be reconsidered if resubmitted without his name. Kabat refused to agree to this arrangement and instead imposed a boycott on USPHS. No one receiving USPHS funds would work in his laboratory until the blacklist was lifted.¹¹

Kabat first encountered McCarthyism in 1947, when he began working as a part-time consultant at the Bronx Veterans Administration Hospital, a position that required a loyalty and security investigation in accordance with Truman’s Executive Order 9835. During the investigation an anonymous informant, whom Kabat later identified as chemist and Nobel laureate James Batcheller Sumner, told the FBI that Kabat had been a communist in 1937–38, the year that Kabat and Sumner were research fellows together in Uppsala, Sweden.¹² Kabat was dismissed by the Veterans Administration in light of this information, but he appealed the decision to the Loyalty Review Board and was reinstated as a consultant.¹³



Letter from AAI Councillor Merrill W. Chase to Secretary-Treasurer F. Sargent Cheever, February 6, 1955, with the names Pauling, Kabat, and Peters inscribed at upper left

The American Association of Immunologists Collection, Center for Biological Sciences Archives, UMBC

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6. The backstory behind the Hobby statement is explained by A. M. Pappenheimer in a letter to John H. Dingle dated October 29, 1954. A copy of the statement is attached to the letter. Box 1, Folder 1, Councillors’ Correspondence (Dingle), AAI-UMBC.
7. M. W. Chase to F. S. Cheever, February 6, 1955, Box 1, Folder 2, Councillors’ Correspondence (Chase), AAI-UMBC.
8. On the Pauling case, see Scientists’ Committee on Loyalty and Security, “Loyalty and U.S. Public Health Service Grants,” *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* 11, no. 5 (1955): 197. On Peters, see Jessica Wang, *American Science in an Age of Anxiety: Scientists, Anticommunism, and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 286, and Theodore B. Schwartz, “Two against McCarthyism: Me and John P. Peters,” *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 44, no. 3 (2001): 438–45.
9. M. Heidelberger to Loyalty Review Board, Bronx Veterans Administration Hospital, February 21, 1949, Michael Heidelberger Papers, MS C 245, Box 3, MH51A5, National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, MD [hereafter MH-NLM].
10. Elvin A. Kabat, “Getting Started 50 Years Ago—Experiences, Perspectives, and Problems of the First 21 Years,” *Annual Review of Immunology* 1 (1983): 1–32, quote from 31.
11. *Ibid.*, 31.
12. *Ibid.*, 27.
13. *Ibid.*, 28.

Protesting the Politicization of Science

AAI Decries HUAC Treatment of Edward U. Condon

“Our scientists, it seems, are well schooled in their specialties but not in the history of Communist tactics and designs,” wrote staunch conservative Rep. J. Parnell Thomas (R-NJ) in the weekly magazine *Liberty* in June 1947, a few months after he was appointed chairman of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). “They have a weakness for attending meetings, signing petitions, sponsoring committees, and joining organizations labeled ‘liberal’ or ‘progressive’ but which are actually Communist fronts.”¹

Thomas’s criticism was aimed at those scientists who actively resisted the secrecy and isolationism that he and many other politicians sought to impose on scientific research in the United States after the Second World War. One scientist, in particular, became the object of Thomas’s criticism—well-respected nuclear physicist and pioneer in quantum mechanics Edward U. Condon. On March 1, 1948, Condon, then the director of the National Bureau of Standards, became the subject of the first high-profile loyalty case involving a scientist when a HUAC subcommittee chaired by Thomas called him “one of the weakest links in our atomic security.”²

During the Second World War, Condon had served briefly as associate director of Los Alamos under J. Robert Oppenheimer but resigned after only six weeks in protest of some of the more stringent Manhattan Project security practices.³ He had accepted the need for security measures, such as fingerprinting and pre-hire background interviews, but protested others, especially the compartmentalization policies that prevented researchers from knowing what research teams working on other aspects of the same project were doing. Despite his disagreements with security officers at Los Alamos in 1943, Condon’s security clearance remained intact, and he continued to serve as a consultant on the Manhattan Project until 1945, when he was confirmed, without dissent, as director of the National Bureau of Standards by the Senate.

After the war, however, Condon’s aversion to secrecy and his support for international scientific cooperation appear to have been enough to attract the attention of Thomas and his HUAC colleagues. In terms of specific charges against Condon, the subcommittee report made much of his membership in the American-Soviet Science Society, an organization formed during the war to foster scientific cooperation between the two allied nations, but which was now deemed a communist front by HUAC.

AAI and four of the other five Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology member societies were

among the first scientific organizations to protest the mistreatment of Condon.⁴ Meeting in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on March 15, 1948, the AAI Council approved a strongly worded resolution declaring that it “deplores the accusations made against American scientists” by the HUAC subcommittee. “At a time when there is increasing need for scientists of the highest caliber in the Government service,” the resolution continued, “we regret the use of methods which lack the elements of fair play inherent in the American concept of democracy and resemble more the very tactics of those foes of democracy the Committee is striving to guard against.” The resolution was sent to HUAC, and copies were mailed to AAI members so that they might forward them to their members of Congress.⁵

In the short-term, Condon and his supporters were victorious. In addition to the outpouring of support he received from scientists, he was also publicly defended by President Truman, who invoked executive privilege and refused to hand over any files related to the loyalty program to members of Congress. Without access to the files, Thomas and HUAC dropped the investigation. In July 1948, the Atomic Energy Commission renewed Condon’s security clearance, and the case faded from the headlines.

Although no longer chaired by Thomas, who resigned his seat in December 1949, HUAC subpoenaed Condon in August 1952. No new evidence was presented in the hearing, but the committee’s report nevertheless declared that Condon was unsuitable for any position that required a security clearance. As individual agencies, not Congress, granted security clearances, the report was nonbinding. When Condon, in his capacity as director of research and development at the Corning Glass Company, applied for a new clearance to work on a contract with the U.S. Navy in June 1954, he initially received it. In October, however, the secretary of the Navy revoked the clearance and ordered a second security review after the Republicans used the Condon case as political fodder in the mid-term election. Fed up with having his loyalty questioned repeatedly, Condon retired from Corning and sought an academic appointment. Yet even in academia, the HUAC accusations impeded his search for permanent employment, and several universities withdrew their offers before he settled in at the University of Colorado at Boulder.⁶

1. J. Parnell Thomas, “Reds in Our Atom-Bomb Plants,” *Liberty*, June 12, 1947, 15, 90–93, quote from 90.

2. Quoted in Jessica Wang, *American Science in an Age of Anxiety: Scientists, Anticommunism, and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 132.

3. *Ibid.*, 133.

4. “Biologists Assail Thomas Committee,” *New York Times*, March 20, 1948, 15.

5. Minutes of the AAI Council, March 15, 1948, AAI Archive, Bethesda, MD.

6. For an overview of the Condon case, see Wang, *American Science in an Age of Anxiety*, 130–45; Wang, “Science, Security, and the Cold War: The Case of E. U. Condon,” *Isis* 83, no. 2 (1992): 238–69; and Robert K. Carr, *The House Committee on Un-American Activities, 1945–1950* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1952): 131–53, 384–90.

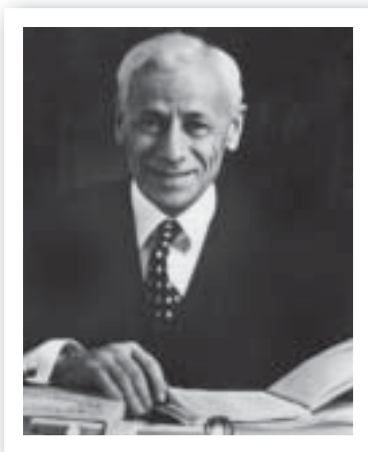
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When it first dismissed Kabat, the Veterans Administration notified the local passport office of its findings, and Kabat's passport was revoked. Although Kabat won his appeal before the Loyalty Review Board, his passport was not returned, and he was unable to attend the First International Congress of Allergists in Zurich, at which he was scheduled to deliver a plenary lecture in 1951.¹⁴ That year, President Truman responded to increased political pressure to get tougher on communism by changing the standard for dismissal from government positions from "reasonable grounds" to suspect disloyalty to "reasonable doubt" of loyalty, shifting the burden of proof from agency loyalty boards to those individuals suspected of being disloyal.¹⁵ Rather than endure another round of loyalty hearings, Kabat resigned his position at the VA hospital.¹⁶

Although never a Communist Party member, Kabat, like many politically progressive Americans at the time, held the Soviet Union in high esteem during the 1930s (see "The Roots of McCarthyism," p. 16). Reflecting on his political leanings during these tumultuous years in 1983, Kabat recalled how the economic hardships

that his family endured during the Great Depression had radicalized him and how he had admired the Soviet stand against fascism during the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), when the United States, Britain, and France attempted to remain neutral.¹⁷ He had even traveled to Leningrad and Moscow in the summer of 1937, before his fellowship

year in Uppsala, and then to Spain the following summer, despite the fact that his U.S. passport did not permit him to do so.¹⁸ When Stalin agreed to the Nazi-Soviet pact in 1939, Kabat grew disillusioned with the Soviet Union and communism, later writing that the pact, along with the subsequent Soviet invasions of Poland and Finland, "shook me and I began to worry about my political views."¹⁹ But, in 1941, after Germany invaded Russia, "the doubts generated by the Nazi-Soviet pact were stilled," and Kabat helped establish a Russian war relief group at the Columbia University Medical Center.²⁰ Even in the turbulent 1930s, these activities placed Kabat on the far left of the political spectrum; they were not, however, seen as sinister until the late 1940s.



Michael Heidelberger, ca. 1953
Lasker Foundation

Kabat's prominence prepared him to survive the ordeal better than could other, less distinguished scientists. Immediately after losing his NIH grants, Kabat secured funding from the Office of Naval Research and continued to receive support from the Navy for 17 years.²¹ Furthermore, he had the backing of other prominent scientists, such as Heidelberger, who not only called upon AAI to speak out but also took matters into his own hands. In response to one USPHS request for him to review a grant application in December 1954, Heidelberger wrote, "Because it has been the policy of the U.S. Public Health Service to judge contracts on the basis of vague charges and political considerations in addition to scientific fitness, I do not propose to waste my time on any consideration of the accompanying application for a Public Health Service grant, at least until authoritative announcement is made that this policy has been abandoned."²²

The AAI Resolutions

The protest resolution authored by the Heidelberger committee in the wake of the April 1954 business meeting was mailed to AAI members in June of that year, following Hobby's statement on USPHS policy. To the surprise of AAI President Alwin M. Pappenheimer, Jr. (AAI '38, president 1954–55) and members of the AAI Council, the resolution "met with considerable disapproval and a number of disturbed letters from members."²³ One member even resigned from AAI in protest of the resolution.²⁴ When the final tally was recorded in August, 133 members had approved the resolution, and 49 opposed it; 252 members did not respond to the mail ballot.²⁵

The opposition to the resolution reflected the anti-communist consensus of the era. The majority of those who disapproved of the resolution expressed concerns that it went too far to protect the rights of communists.

14. *Ibid.*, 28; M. Heidelberger to Chief, Passport Bureau, Department of State, June 11, 1951, Box 3, MH51A6, MH-NLM.

15. Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 131; Wang, *American Science in an Age of Anxiety*, 253.

16. Kabat, "Getting Started 50 Years Ago," 27–28.

17. *Ibid.*, 5.

18. *Ibid.*, 5–6, 8–9.

19. *Ibid.*, 13.

20. *Ibid.*, 16.

21. *Ibid.*, 29.

22. M. Heidelberger to F. W. Appel, December 1, 1954, Box 3, MH51A10, MH-NLM.

23. Memorandum from A. M. Pappenheimer and F. S. Cheever to AAI Council Members, July 13, 1954, Box 1, Folder 1, Councillors' Correspondence (Dingle), AAI-UMBC.

24. AAI Council meeting agenda, April 9–10, 1955, Box 1, Folder 2, Councillors' Correspondence (Chase), AAI-UMBC.

25. Memorandum from A. M. Pappenheimer to AAI Members, July 13, 1954, Box 1, Folder 1, Councillors' Correspondence (Dingle), AAI-UMBC.

Although it did not explicitly mention communism, it implied that not even avowed communists should be prohibited from receiving funds, declaring that “even those who are in marked discord with the rest of the people . . . may, through the results of their research[,] render great service, present or future, to the very people with whom they are in discord.”²⁶

Despite the surprising objections from a significant minority of members, Pappenheimer and Secretary-Treasurer F. Sargent Cheever (AAI '50, president 1963–64) were unwilling to let the matter drop. Believing that “the purpose of the resolution and the high moral tone which permeates it are most laudable,” they hoped it might be rewritten so as to receive “unanimous, or practically unanimous, support of the members.”²⁷ The AAI Council agreed and appointed a new committee composed of John H. Dingle (AAI '41, president 1957–58), John F. Enders (AAI '36, president 1952–53), and Frank J. Dixon (AAI '50, president 1971–72) to draft a new resolution.

Committee members recognized the risks involved in issuing a statement of protest. Enders, in a letter written the day before learning that he would be awarded the 1954 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, pointed out that the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) had recently announced that tax-exempt organizations that “mixed in politics” would lose their tax-exempt status. He did not, however, discourage AAI from taking action. On the contrary, Enders welcomed the opportunity to challenge not only the USPHS policy but also the IRS regulation: “I should be very happy if this action of ours might lead to the legal determination of this [IRS] ruling which appears to me to be particularly dangerous to the free expression of opinion.”²⁸

As the committee attempted to find the appropriate words to protest the USPHS loyalty policy, Pappenheimer wrote Dingle offering his candid thoughts on what most AAI members desired out of the resolution:

I think that many members of our Society feel that present members of the Communist Party or people of proved disloyalty have no business applying for grants from the very government that they are making every effort to overthrow. This of course has nothing

to do with the present resolution but does render the interpretation of Mrs. Hobby's statement somewhat difficult. When, for example, she says “where it is established to the satisfaction of this Department that the individual has engaged or is engaging in subversive activities” what constitutes the satisfaction of her department? Is the mere fact that an individual once played string quartets with a member of the Soviet consulate satisfactory proof of that individual's disloyalty to the United States? Does the fact that an individual was interested ideologically in the Communist Party prior to 1938 indicate that he is disloyal to the United States at the present time and should not receive support for his research work?”²⁹

After two months of deliberating, the committee completed a fifth and final version of the resolution in December 1954. The authors shrewdly omitted any mention of communism or any statement that might be interpreted as defending the rights of



J. Parnell Thomas, “Reds in Our Atom-Bomb Plants,” *Liberty*, June 12, 1947, 15 (See “Protesting the Politicization of Science,” p. 18)

26. Mail ballot attached to the minutes of the AAI Business Meeting, April 13, 1954, AAI-Bethesda.

27. Memorandum from A. M. Pappenheimer and F. S. Cheever to AAI Council Members, July 13, 1954, Box 1, Folder 1, Councillors' Correspondence (Dingle), AAI-UMBC.

28. J. F. Enders to J. H. Dingle, October 20, 1954, Box 1, Folder 1, Councillors' Correspondence (Dingle), AAI-UMBC; “3 U.S. Doctors Win Nobel Award for Work in Growing Polio Virus,” *New York Times*, October 22, 1954, 1.

29. A. M. Pappenheimer to J. H. Dingle, November 3, 1954, Box 1, Folder 1, Councillors' Correspondence (Dingle), AAI-UMBC. Emphasis in original.

communists, allowing AAI to avoid establishing a policy of condemnation or tolerance toward the party. The resulting resolution, a clear and concise statement of principles, was stronger for the omission. It declared that unclassified research grants “should be awarded to investigators on the basis of their competence and integrity and the merits of the problem to be studied.” It also warned of the consequences of violating the principle of scientific freedom: “When research is open and unclassified, the imposition of political or other extraneous requirements on the investigator as a condition for awarding a research grant not only threatens the freedom of science and the principles of the American constitutional government, but may also deprive the nation of achievements of outstanding intellectual ability.”³⁰

The resolution was mailed to AAI members on February 16, 1955, so that they could consider it before the upcoming annual meeting. When it was finally voted on by members at the business meeting in San Francisco on April 12, 1955, the resolution received widespread approval, with only three members dissenting.³¹

The Legacy of McCarthyism in Science

The AAI Council forwarded the resolution to NAS President Detlev W. Bronk, whom President Dwight D. Eisenhower had asked to investigate the growing controversy concerning selection criteria for unclassified research grants. The final NAS report sent by Bronk to the president in 1956 contained recommendations in accord with those outlined in the AAI resolution, namely that applicants for unclassified research grants should be judged solely on “scientific integrity and competence” and “the scientific merits of their program.”³² In August 1956, the Eisenhower administration declared that all executive agencies would adhere to the NAS recommendations for awarding unclassified research grants, effectively ending the NIH policy of withholding funds based on suspicions of disloyalty.³³

We know the names of only a few scientists who were persecuted for their political beliefs, not because there *were* only a few individuals but because we are aware of only those who were prominent enough that they could fight the accusations of communism and have their careers survive intact. Many others, perhaps some of them AAI members, who were denied funding or forbidden international travel because of their political beliefs, likely remained silent to salvage what they could of their reputations. All scientists of the era were affected, at least indirectly, for even those who did not suffer explicit sanctions had to be wary of crossing an unspecified political line. Many, no doubt, adopted self-imposed restrictions on political speech to ensure that their own careers were not threatened. The full extent to which McCarthyism affected AAI members and other scientists can never be measured.

We can be certain, however, that McCarthyism had profound effects on scientists’ professional societies, including AAI, as well as individuals. As navigating public policy became simultaneously more difficult and more necessary for scientists in the 1940s and 1950s, they increasingly relied on professional organizations, such as AAI, FASEB, and the NAS, to take political stands and make policy recommendations, because they could do neither effectively as individuals. One commentator on scientific freedom in the 1950s noted this change and offered the following sound advice: “Let the scientist ... become a functionally operating member of his professional organizations; they need his help, and he may someday need theirs.”³⁴ ■

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30. Resolution attached to memorandum from A. M. Pappenheimer to AAI members, [February 16, 1955], AAI-Bethesda.

31. Minutes of AAI Business Meeting, April 12, 1955, AAI-Bethesda. The minutes do not indicate how many members attended the meeting.

32. National Academy of Sciences, “Report of the Committee on Loyalty in Relation to Government Support of Unclassified Research,” March 13, 1956, AAI-Bethesda. The report is also reprinted as “Loyalty and Research,” *Science* 123, no. 3199 (1956): 660–62.

33. “The White House and Unclassified Research,” *Science* 124, no. 3218 (1956): 398.

34. Carl E. Taeusch, “The Unlisted Freedom: Science,” *Scientific Monthly* 75, no. 1 (1952): 12–18, quote from 18.