

# F. A. S. NEWSLETTER

FEDERATION OF AMERICAN SCIENTISTS  
M. Stanley Livingston, Chairman

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April 26, 1954 -- 54 - 4

## OPPENHEIMER SUSPENSION STIRS SCIENTISTS

### FAS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

(FAS members have already seen this April 17 release in mimeograph form; it is reprinted here for the benefit of the larger audience of this present Newsletter.)

"The suspension of J. Robert Oppenheimer has relegated to official ostracism a distinguished scientist and citizen, long a confidential and respected adviser in our innermost councils of government. The charge that his continued public service threatens the security of the United States has shocked the nation and the scientific community in particular. The bases for the charge are activities and associations of more than 10 years ago, long known and several times evaluated under the most responsible auspices, and his officially expressed opinions and recommendations in the autumn of 1949 and subsequently on policy questions relating to thermonuclear weapons.

**SHAKES CONFIDENCE** "The unseating of any major public figure under such circumstances is bound to create confusion and shake the confidence of our people in their leadership. When the figure in question is an acknowledged initiator and outstanding expert in atomic developments, an area of

Summaries of charges and reply in the Oppenheimer case, and background, comment and reactions are contained in FAS Information Bulletins Nos. 34 to 41.

crucial national and international importance surrounded by much secrecy and fear, the effects are likely to be many times multiplied. The bases for the action taken against Oppenheimer therefore must come under special scrutiny, as to their adequacy and justification. The possible risks entailed in continuing to entrust classified information to any individual during a review of old charges or evaluation of new charges must in each case be weighed against the risks to the good names of the individual and of the government which are entailed in summary suspension.

**OLD CHARGES** "It is disturbing that old facts and alleged facts of belief and association, all relating to the period before Oppenheimer began his active public service, should now be incorporated in the attack against him. Little new in this category appears to have been added and the old facts have not been strengthened in their aging. Whatever value such facts may have in estimating the risk of allowing an individual to enter the realm of confidential information, it is hard to see how they can now justify summary suspension in the light of a 12-year record of distinguished performance on tasks of the highest sensitivity. It is noteworthy that the only charges involving alleged official indiscretion or breach of confidence are technical and minor and are flatly denied by Oppenheimer.

"It is especially disturbing to  
(Continued on Page 4, Column 2)

### WIDESPREAD SUPPORT

In what has been dubbed the "strange case of J. Robert Oppenheimer," one fact stands out as not at all strange. There has been a veritable flood of support for Oppenheimer -- based on personality and principle -- from the scientific community.

Typical is an editorial to appear in the May issue of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, of whose Board of Sponsors Oppenheimer is chairman. The editorial, signed by Eugene Rabinowitch, Harold C. Urey, S. K. Allison, Leo Szilard, Cyril S. Smith and five others, affirms the signers' trust in Oppenheimer's integrity and respect for his motives. Released to the press on April 19, the editorial asserts:

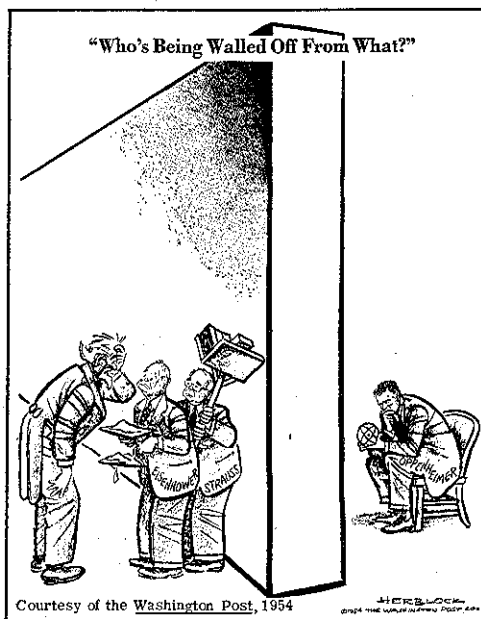
**BULLETIN EDITORIAL** "The accusations against Dr. Oppenheimer fall into 2 main categories: one concerns his contacts prior to 1943 with Communists or Communist-sponsored groups. The other is his opposition many years later to the development of the thermonuclear bomb. ...

"Assuming as we do that the government has no other grounds for distrusting Dr. Oppenheimer, we do not see how the treatment he has received can be justified. The first set of facts were substantially known to military intelligence ..., the Atomic Energy Commission ..., and to the Security Council ... These charges required examination when they were first made; but to revive them now from the irrelevance to which a brilliant record of national service had finally relegated them, appears to us to be contrary to both decency and common sense. ...

"In so far as Dr. Oppenheimer's opposition [to diverting men, money and fissionable materials from A-bombs to H-bomb] was based on the then existent nuclear technology, it was shared by several other very able men. ... Scientists as a community feel no obligation to vindicate all of Dr. Oppenheimer's judgments. ... But past differences do not affect our trust in his integrity and in our respect for his motives."

**REACTION ABROAD** Comment and alarm has not been confined to scientific circles. Columnists and editorialists at home and abroad have given the strange case full coverage, and have mainly judged its handling unfortunate. The influential liberal British newspaper, the Manchester Guardian, found new evidence "that Americans have become acutely suspicious of each other and strangely credulous of 'Communist' charges." The Guardian asked, "Was he suspended because the Administration is scared of the slightest risk that it may be accused of lax security -- perhaps even by its own nominal supporters, such as Senator McCarthy?"

The London Times remarked that American scientists see in the case "a trial, not only of the loyalty of one distinguished member of their body, but also, in a general way, a challenge to the attitude of American science to the fateful questions of the atomic and hydrogen bombs."



Courtesy of the Washington Post, 1954

# RAMIFICATIONS OF H-BOMB TESTS

## U. S. OFFICIAL COMMENT

The March 1 H-bomb test with its far-reaching implications eventually brought official comment and another measure of "candor" started by the President in his UN speech of Dec. 8. AEC Chairman Strauss gave some official details of the Mar. 1 test and announced that others took place on Mar. 26 and Apr. 6. President Eisenhower spoke calmly about the probability of nuclear warfare and indicated no bigger bombs were needed or would be built. The startling official film of the now small-time 1952 H-test was released, shown on TV and put up for public sale. Other administration officials released tidbits about H-defense and A-offense. At the same time, there was an obvious attempt to increase emphasis on non-weapons applications (see page 4).

**H-TEST DETAILS** Strauss' March 31 statement (FAS Information Bulletin #33) reviewed the US H-build-up and indicated that the Russians, who he said tested a device last August, had started even earlier. To this, Wm. H. Stringer of the Christian Science Monitor (Apr. 1) commented "Soviet experts could not have relied on American secrets if they were developing a process which was in advance of the American techniques." Strauss also noted that "we now fully know that we possess no monopoly of capability in this awesome field."

Strauss played down the blast effects, saying that what was destroyed was a "large sandspit or reef" and not an "entire atoll" or a "large island." He discussed mid-Pacific meteorology. He made much of the thoroughness of preparation for the tests and the precautions. He acknowledged the unexpected shift in wind and that the Japanese fishing trawler "appears to have been missed" in the aerial search before the test. He related the steps taken to take care of the Americans and natives exposed to fall-out on Pacific islands and says all is well. He complained that "our people" have not been permitted to make a proper clinical examination of the Japanese fishermen said to have been exposed. He said the "facts do not confirm" the stories of widespread contamination of tuna and other fish.

Eisenhower spoke to the nation on April 5, specifically to calm growing apprehension about nuclear warfare. He cited the "deterrents upon the men in the Kremlin" which make war "less likely" and mentioned our potentialities for retaliation and our civil and continental defense.

## RUSSIAN A-NEWS

The government of the Soviet Union has apparently decided to tell its people something about nuclear weapons too. On March 20 Red Star, the Soviet Army newspaper (according to the N. Y. Times, Mar. 21) carried in the third of a series on atomic topics an article describing what atomic warfare really means in physical terms long familiar to the non-Soviet world. It included some ABC's of the A-bomb and referred to use in rockets, which can be sent "many thousands of kilometers," and also mentioned utilization in torpedoes and artillery. The Times said that just a week earlier Premier Malenkov had warned that a new war in the age of atomic weapons would mean the destruction of world civilization.

On March 26 the same paper presented an account of a hydrogen bomb explosion accompanied by a simplified drawing of the essential details of the weapon. The explosion of a hydrogen bomb was described as reminiscent of the million-ton meteorite that fell in Siberia in 1908. The article also spoke of using this energy to solve problems of interplanetary communications.

**REPEATED REFERENCES** The Times has reported other Russian A-comment. March 26: Pravda declared that war under contemporary conditions -- that is atomic war -- involved the very question of existence. April 2: the "Soviet press" again called the Russians' attention to the US H-tests in publishing a resolution of the Communist-sponsored World Peace Council in Vienna, calling for banning of weapons of mass annihilation. April 7: Red Star had an article on atomic-powered submarines, planes, rockets, interplanetary rocket craft and electric generating stations. April 10: Red Star warned that A-bombs and H-bombs could be used over the United States.

## WORLDWIDE REACTIONS

As bits of information slowly filtered out in regard to the US H-bomb tests of Mar. 1 and Mar. 26, culminating in the official release of pictures of the terrifying blast of 1952 (Operation Ivy), apprehension over the rising destructiveness, and the horrifying results if such a weapon were ever used in war, mounted rapidly throughout the world. The demand for international control of atomic energy is being heard again.

**PARLIAMENT DEBATES** Reports of the prodigious March 1 H-bomb blast in the Pacific promptly touched off a general public uproar in Britain and fast became a major political issue. This uproar included a continuing series of questions, proposals and demands put to the Conservative party leadership, clamor raised in the press, and public meetings and demonstrations organized by leading trade union organizations, women's clubs, etc. The principal demands and issues raised included (1) An apparent lack of cooperation and consultation between US and Britain in regard to the H-bomb tests. (2) A call for immediate top-level talks by responsible leaders of the major powers. (3) Demands that the British government request the United States to stop the tests.

Churchill defended the present consultation procedures between the US and Britain as satisfactory. The demands for international talks were supported by many Conservative Party members and also by a group of British scientists led by Prof. H. W. Massey of University College, London, president of the Atomic Scientists Association. Churchill felt that such a meeting immediately would be wrongly timed. When Churchill finally acceded to a full parliamentary debate, he defended the H-bomb and experimentation with it as a deterrent to war, but the opposition, under Attlee, attacked this position and won a motion for high-level international talks.

**OTHER COUNTRIES** INDIA -- Prime Minister Nehru contended that nothing could be achieved by banning the hydrogen bomb since "When fear overtakes [people] they will not hesitate to bring it out again." (Reuters, Apr. 11). He did request, however, that a standstill agreement with respect to test explosions be made (N. Y. Times, Apr. 3). JAPAN -- The lower House of Parliament approved a resolution calling for international control of atomic energy and nuclear tests. Since the Soviet Union is continuing its atom tests, the US is not being asked to abandon hydrogen bomb tests (UP, Apr. 1). SOVIET UNION -- Russian papers in answer to an appeal from England stressed the destructiveness of the hydrogen bomb, indicating to Moscow observers that the Kremlin might be interested in discussions to outlaw such weapons (N. Y. Times, Apr. 3).

AUSTRALIA -- Dr. Herbert V. Evatt, leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party, urged an international agreement binding all nations to strict control of atomic energy at the experimental level. Minister for External Affairs Richard G. Casey urged an effective international control of atomic weapons (N. Y. Times, Mar. 29 and Apr. 1). GERMANY -- The Soviet zone proposed that East and West German Parliaments cooperate in pressing for outlawing atomic weapons. Although the West German government refused these overtures, communist plans appear to be exploitation of fears of the hydrogen bomb in an effort to force withdrawal of any US atomic artillery from Germany.

VATICAN -- The Pope in his Easter message said he would never cease his endeavor to bring about by international agreement "the effective proscription and banishment of atomic, biological and chemical warfare."

## HOME REACTION

Reactions at home to the H-bomb tests cover many ramifications and arise from a wide spectrum of political views.

**WATERED-DOWN INFORMATION** Among those concerned about the inadequacy of official information is George Sokolsky. In his Mar. 25 column he mentions the fading of last summer's much discussed "operation candor," and raises (Continued on Page 3, column 1)

questions about "those who believe in secrecy" and who "succeeded in suppressing a recital of the menace to us." Roland Sawyer, in the Christian Science Monitor of Apr. 2, hits hard at the scarcity of official information. He attributes this situation to "a deep division among officials of two administrations," one position being "that the public should not be unduly alarmed, that ugly facts should be made palatable," and the other "that people in a democracy can be trusted with facts, however drastic, and to act with calmness and common sense accordingly."

**GRIM PROSPECTS OF BOMB USE** Sokolsky notes too: "We are . . . told that our retaliatory powers are enormous. . . . Such retaliation may be a fascinating study for those

who are planning it, but what about . . . our civilization under such circumstances of [H-bomb warfare]?" Herbert Elliston, in the Washington Post on Apr. 4, stresses the "awful arithmetic [600 times as powerful as the Hiroshima bomb]" of the H-bomb and its effect on Asian peoples. Referring to the fall-out of radioactive dust on Japanese fishermen, and the contamination of fishing grounds, Elliston writes: "Even the dullard will comprehend, in the light of Hiroshima, the reminders which the incident has provoked among the Japanese."

**DETERRENT?** Although in some quarters the H-bomb is viewed as an effective deterrent to future wars, others are not optimistic about this effect. A Washington Post editorial of Apr. 4 opines: "Inasmuch as the Russians also have hydrogen weapons, what deterrent there is lies, not in superiority in numbers, but in the sheer horror of hydrogen war." In Charlotte, N.C., on Apr. 3, Adlai E. Stevenson urged informing our allies on the "implications" of the H-bomb, saying: "For us to rattle bombs like sabres is a source of great anxiety to these nations, since they would most likely be the first victims if such bombs were used."

**IDEAS VS. BOMBS** A Christian Science Monitor editorial of Apr. 2 attempts to add perspective by reminding: "Ideas have produced and exploded the bombs; ideas can control and disarm them. The great contest in the world today is not an atomic arms race but a race between good and evil, between constructive and destructive ideas to win the thought of man."

**USSR JOINS UNESCO.** After staying aloof for eight years, the USSR on April 21 finally joined UNESCO. The only formality for joining by a UN member, that of signing the roll, was carried out by Jacob Malik, USSR Ambassador to Great Britain. Within a few hours a 7-man Soviet delegation appeared at a UNESCO-sponsored conference on protection of national treasures in wartime at The Hague and, according to the UP, immediately asked that Red China and East Germany be allowed to participate. This renewed interest by USSR in international cultural activities should be looked at in the light of Czechoslovakia's and Hungary's resignations from UNESCO in the winter of '52-53, and the March anti-Lysenko articles in the Soviet press.

**HISTORICAL NOTE.** The first anniversary of the Astin affair found the Bureau of Standards facing a continuation of the more than 20% cut in direct appropriations for research and testing, the House Appropriations Committee proving deaf to the exhortation of Dr. M. J. Kelly, head of the special committee which last year evaluated the Bureau's functions. And the battery additive manufacturer is running for Congress, but finds his product again in trouble. The Federal Trade Commission has finally complained of his advertising as false, deceptive, and misleading.

**SSRS.** FAS members will soon receive from the Society for Social Responsibility in Science an informational folder and a sample copy of the SSRS Newsletter. This distribution has been approved by the FAS Executive Committee.

The FAS is a national organization of scientists and engineers concerned with the impact of science on national and world affairs. This Newsletter is designed primarily to inform the membership and stimulate discussion of relevant issues. The facts and opinions contained do not reflect official FAS policies unless specifically so indicated. The Newsletter is edited by members of the FAS Washington Chapter.

## SCLS MONMOUTH REPORT

On April 25 (as this Newsletter goes to press) the 66-page comprehensive report on "The Fort Monmouth Security Investigations, August 1953-April 1954" was released by the FAS Scientists' Committee on Loyalty and Security. Culminating 3 months of intensive work, the report concerns the Monmouth situation -- both the Senate subcommittee investigation and the actions taken under the federal employee security program. The SCLS report, undertaken at the request of the FAS Council and released with the approval of the FAS Executive Committee, describes the Signal Corps Engineering Laboratories (SCEL) at Ft. Monmouth and attempts to assess the security threat and the disruptive effects of the investigations.

The SCLS study was based on press reports, personal interviews, copies of charges and responding affidavits and various official documents. Rather complete information was available to SCLS on all the suspendees and on some 90% of the about 50 believed to have been implicated. The report recommends that an official and even more detailed survey of the situation be made. Excerpts from the summary conclusions follow:

**NO EVIDENCE OF ESPIONAGE** "No evidence of espionage at SCEL, in recent years or at present, was shown during the Subcommittee investigation. Most persons publicly linked with the investigation had little or no connection with the Laboratories, and only one of the 40-odd SCEL employees implicated by the Army was called before the Subcommittee in open hearings. None of these employees has refused to testify, on the grounds of possible self-incrimination or any other grounds: all have cooperated fully during the investigations, and have denied under oath the charges against them, or the conclusions inferred. The sensational headlines arising from the Subcommittee investigation have lowered morale.

**HEARINGS FAIR, CHARGES HASTY** "While Army security board hearings . . . have been objective, fair, and thorough, security charges by the Army appear to have been drawn up hastily, under pressure, and without mature judgment, raising serious doubts as to the competence of those responsible for maintaining security. . . . Charges detail many manifestly trivial matters together with some more serious allegations. . . . Of over 120 charges against 19 employees which were analyzed in detail, only 6 involved Communist membership or affiliations, 5 of which were denied under oath; the sixth was an admission of attending Communist meetings with the employee's mother at the age of 12 or 13.

**EFFECT ON WORK AND MORALE** "Damage to the work of the Laboratories has been substantial. . . . Morale among the professional staff has dropped as a result of the unfortunate handling of the investigations; a number of employees implicated and not implicated intend to leave the Laboratories. . . . Many of the employees implicated have suffered severe personal hardship. . ." (Copies of the report are available from FAS or from SCLS, 2153 Yale Station, New Haven, Conn.; cost 50¢ to cover mimeographing and mailing.)

- MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION** -- Dues: Regular - \$5 (with income below \$2500 - \$3); Supporting - \$10; Patron - \$25. New membership and an introductory subscription to Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists - \$7.50 (with income below \$2500 - \$5.50).
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## UN, U.S. INITIATE NEW A-ACTIONS

Worldwide public concern over the problem of control of atomic energy has been strongly renewed by the recent US weapons experiments in the Pacific. There has been active discussion in all the major capitals reflecting, in general, a new sense of urgency in attempts to reach international agreement.

### UN DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

One effect has been to reactivate the UN Disarmament Commission. The Commission, dormant since last August 20 when it bogged down on a world arms census, has now implemented the Assembly suggestion of last September to form a committee "of those principally involved" to meet in private to seek a solution. The composition was expanded April 20 to include Britain, Canada, France, Russia and the US. Vishinsky served warning that the exclusion of India, Czechoslovakia and Communist China would create difficulties concerning Russian participation, but he would not elaborate.

### SPECIFIC A-ACT AMENDMENTS

During the developments, HR.8862 was submitted by Joint Committee Chairman W. Sterling Cole (R, N.Y.), and the identical S. 3323 by Sen. Hickenlooper (R, Ia.), to amend the McMahon Act of 1946. The Joint Committee plans to begin hearings on May 3. A brief summary of the bills follows (N. Y. Times, April 18):

1) Permit the US Atomic Energy Commission to give the Allies information necessary to development of defense plans and the training of personnel in the use of a defense against atomic weapons -- but not information on the design or manufacture of weapons.

2) Allow the AEC to give the Allies data on "industrial and other applications of atomic energy for peaceful purposes. . ." and to release to them fissionable materials for industrial and research use. This would permit the formation of the international atomic pool for peaceful purposes which the President proposed before the UN last December.

3) Create a "great new industry in atomic energy" by allowing and encouraging private industry to own and operate atomic reactors and power plants, under AEC regulation.

### INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC CONFERENCE

In a move that may serve to de-emphasize present concern over the waxing destructive potential of atomic energy, President Eisenhower, through AEC Chairman Strauss, has disclosed his intention to call an international conference of atomic scientists to consider peacetime applications. In the Washington Daily News of April 21, Watson Davis, Director of Science Service, points out that "visas will not be obtainable for some of the world's leading atomic scientists unless exceptions are authorized by the Department of State."

FAS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (Cont. from Page 1). find that attitudes and opinions on technical and policy matters expressed by Oppenheimer in the normal course of official advisory duties are cited as bases for questioning his veracity, conduct, and loyalty. This kind of attack threatens to stifle at its source the expression of independent views by government personnel, advisers and consultants. When such views are sought by government, they must be regarded as privileged in the highest sense, and immune from any possible subsequent personal attack on the individuals concerned. This is essential not only in justice to the individual, but to protect the ability of government to obtain advice unprejudiced by fear of reprisal; This principle is of the greatest importance to scientists who are called upon by government to give professional and technical assistance -- often in connection with vital matters of the national security. Violation of this principle jeopardizes the continued fruitful utilization of scientists in the vital governmental programs for military and scientific development.

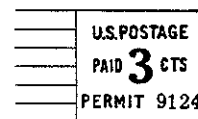
### INVESTIGATION BEYOND BOUNDS

"The issues raised in this unfortunate affair are grave and an early resolution of the entire matter is essential. The efforts to achieve security by secrecy and restriction are placing a heavy burden on reason and on justice to the individual. They now have placed in the dock one whose achievements have contributed as much as any to our scientific eminence and our military strength. It is past time that our entire program for security and loyalty investigations, including the circumstances which led to them and the pressures which are driving them beyond bounds, should be reviewed dispassionately and objectively. In this, we are confident that all responsible scientists stand ready to assist. As citizens, we accept our full responsibility for maintaining the strength and democratic ideals of our country. As scientists, we recognize an additional responsibility due to our special knowledge and training in one of the areas most affected by security."

FAS ELECTION RESULTS. The new chairman of FAS is M. Stanley Livingston, Professor of Physics at M.I.T. Livingston is past chairman of the Brookhaven Chapter, has been active in Cambridge, and was a member of the FAS Executive Committee this past year. Elected vice-chairman for 1954-55 in last month's election was Prof. Ernest C. Pollard, Physics Professor at Yale and Chairman of the FAS' Scientists Committee on Loyalty and Security. Elected delegates-at-large to the Council, which has its first meetings Apr. 28 and May 1 in Washington, were: Lyle B. Borst, J. Bregman, C. D. Coryell, T. Harrison Davies, Wm. C. Dickinson, David H. Frisch, Jules Halpern, Lindsay Helmholtz, Joseph O. Hirschfelder, Julian E. Mack, John Phelps, V. F. Weisskopf, Arthur S. Wightman, Hugh C. Wolfe, and Wm. M. Woodward.

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Federation of American Scientists  
1749 L Street, N.W.  
Washington 6, D.C.



FIRST CLASS MAIL

DR. ROBERT SIMBA  
6505 SLIGO PARKWAY  
W. HYATTSVILLE, MD.