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Security

Few would disagree about the necessity for reform in our security system. The current arrangements present an image of chaos; no fewer than seven systems are in existence for civilian employees of the Government alone. It was recognition of these and other difficulties that led to the appointment of the Commission on Security nearly two years ago. The commission's report [abstracted in *Science* 125, 114 (10 July 1957)] offers some valuable recommendations as well as some of doubtful merit.

Among the more valuable reforms are the recommendations for uniform security standards; the right of an employee to subpoena witnesses, to appeal rulings, and to confront and cross-examine accusers (unless they are Government informers, the disclosure of whose identity would diminish their usefulness), and the recognition that there may be a distinction between a person who is a security risk and one who is disloyal.

Some of the other recommendations have had considerable criticism in the press. There is some question about the wisdom of setting up a Central Security Agency to administer the entire program. Such an agency would inevitably acquire a good deal of power and would be difficult to control. In addition, the recommendation that it be a criminal offense for anyone to publish, knowingly or unknowingly, any material classified as secret or top secret is regarded by some as excessive and also as a limitation on the freedom of the press. In the latter connection the fear has been expressed that the classification of secret might be applied improperly and thus be used as an unwarranted means of censorship.

But there is a more important issue. This is the commission's proposal that security coverage be extended to all Government employees (except for those in the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency, who would be subject to more stringent requirements). This proposal runs counter to the stands taken in the statement by the Board of Directors of the AAAS [*Science* 120, 957 (10 Dec. 1954)] and in the *Report of the Special Committee on the Federal Loyalty-Security Program of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York* (1956) as well as in a decision of the Supreme Court last year. The stand taken by all these bodies was that the present security system is broader than need be and that, in the words of the bar association, "positions are covered which have no relationship to national security" and that "clearance should be required for all sensitive positions and for no others." The AAAS board voiced a similar view and said, "No satisfactory justification has yet been advanced for screening persons engaged in unclassified research. . . ." The board also stressed the importance of taking a positive view of security questions and stated that the question should be not "How can we minimize our losses?" but "How can we maximize our gains?"

Ordinarily, it would be expected that Congress would consider these questions on their merits, hold hearings to permit the expression of different points of view, and, finally, prepare legislation to put all or part of the program into effect. To cast the security net more widely would certainly be expensive and would, in the opinion of a good many responsible people, do more harm than good to the security program. For Congress to act on security without the usual deliberation and without considering the whole program would be especially unfortunate. Yet precisely such a hasty and fragmentary approach is being advocated by the chairman of the commission, Loyd Wright, and by Representative Francis E. Walter. Walter has introduced, with Wright's backing, a "stop-gap" bill to blanket all federal employees into the security program at once. We trust that Congress will not be stampeded.—G. DUS.