

# News of Science

## Security System Hit

A past president of the AAAS spoke about the political abuse of the government's personnel security system at a meeting of the American Physical Society on 29 November in St. Louis, Mo. Edward U. Condon, who at present is professor of physics at Washington University in St. Louis, drew largely upon his own experience. An excerpt of his address follows.

"During the last two months there has come about a general public awareness that America is not automatically, and effortlessly, and unquestionably the leader of the world in science and technology. This comes as no surprise to those of us who have watched and tried to warn against the steady deterioration in the teaching of science and mathematics in the schools for the past quarter century. It comes as no surprise to those who have known of dozens of cases of scientists who have been hounded out of jobs by silly disloyalty charges, and kept out of all professional employment by widespread blacklisting practices. It comes as no surprise to those of us who have known how good American scientists have had to face vilification by political speechmakers in and out of Congress, and have been falsely prosecuted for perjury, and have been improperly denied passports, or have had their passports seized and invalidated without due process by the State Department, or who have had their telephones tapped or their letters intercepted by government agents. . . .

"I do not wish to seem boastful, and in this respect I would gladly change places with any of you, but I think that I have probably had a bigger dose of this kind of mistreatment than any of my fellow members of the American Physical Society. It began ten years ago last summer.

"In that time I have had two full-scale loyalty hearings in the Department of Commerce, a full field investigation for the Atomic Energy Commission, which occupied the efforts of 300 FBI agents, and finally in 1954 had a hearing under the policies and procedures set up by this Administration. In all of these I received full clearance. All cov-

ered essentially the same ground, which was no ground at all. The House Committee on Un-American Activities made numerous attacks on me in 1947 and 1948 before its then chairman went off to serve a term in a federal penitentiary. . . . Finally this committee staged a political hearing on the same old stale and outworn material just before the 1952 elections.

"During most of this period I kept on working to develop the scientific strength and stature of the National Bureau of Standards. Happily this work is being carried on by my successor in spite of his having been summarily fired for a time by the present Secretary of Commerce who wanted the free play of the market place to take precedence over careful scientific experimentation.

"Edward Teller told this last personnel security board hearing in April 1954 that the bureau's work on the hydrogen bomb which I organized advanced our achievement of that goal by many months, probably a year. If he is correct in the implication that without that work we would have been delayed by about a year, then the lack of that work would have made us come in second in the international rivalry for the hydrogen bomb.

"Nevertheless, all the old stuff was rehashed once in 1952 and again in 1954. I was badgered all those years for having been interested in the American-Soviet Science Society, an organization which received a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation ten years ago to foster translation and wider distribution in this country of the Russian scientific literature. Now, a decade late, we read of crash programs to translate the Russian scientific literature and spread it around in this country. . . .

"In July 1954 I was given complete security clearance by the Eastern Industrial Personnel Security Board. You might think now that I would be allowed to go back to work. Yet in October 1954, just before the elections, we find Nixon . . . boasting that he got the Secretary of the Navy to suspend my clearance, as was done on October 21.

"It was arbitrarily suspended without any pretense that additional evidence needed to be considered. It was sus-

pending by a Secretary of the Navy who admitted that he had not seen the record. I was told that I would have to go through the same old dreary business again. Three years ago I faced a very difficult decision—whether to continue to fight for the Government's honor, or whether to yield to the Administration's determination to disgrace itself. . . .

"You might think that now I would be allowed to go back to work. I came East in January 1955 after giving my retiring presidential address to the American Association for the Advancement of Science and was offered the post of chairman of the department of physics in a leading university. In March the chancellor of that university told me that he could not follow through on the appointment because a high government official threatened one of the university trustees that if my appointment went through, that university would lose all of its Federal funds.

"In June of 1955 I was asked to serve on a committee on a nonclassified problem of military importance—and then suddenly asked not to, just before the first meeting of that committee.

"Incidentally I was cleared from July 1954 to October 1954. During that period some navy people came to see me with an urgent problem on the development of a radome for a guided missile. It was highly secret, but I was cleared for it. By the time we had the development models made my clearance had been suspended 'pending further consideration,' as Secretary [of the Navy] Thomas put it. Some of our cleared young men tried to deliver the radomes but found these navy men in such a state of panic that they would not accept them! A few weeks later—all this was just about three years ago—they regained their courage and sheepishly asked to have the radomes. They were tested and found to be good and are now in production. Detail problems about them come up from time to time, but I am not allowed to help in their solution. . . ."

## Shippingport Reactor Starts

The central station atomic power plant at Shippingport, Pa., was started on 2 December, the 15th anniversary of the first self-sustaining nuclear fission in the reactor at the University of Chicago. The Westinghouse Electric Corporation designed and constructed the nuclear portions of the plant under contract with the Atomic Energy Commission, and contributed \$500,000 toward its cost. The Duquesne Light Company contributed \$5 million toward the expenses of the nuclear portion of the reactor and