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☐ Literature ☐ Demonstration ☐

HUAC Methods and Motives

... In Martin's comment on Langer's HUAC note (Letters, 19 Aug.), he asserts that when the Soviets bring Sinyavsky and Daniel to trial on heresy charges, they show their "implacable resolve to prohibit freedom of thought, expression, and dissent." On the other hand, if HUAC goes heresy-hunting, it is merely trying to "keep itself informed." Martin is asking us to use suppression as a remedy for the disease of suppression. This amounts to ascribing opposite motives to the same performance, depending on whether it is done by our side or theirs.

I would hope that "the academic community might itself be concerned" as much about Martin's kind of thinking as it is about HUAC. ...

WILLIAM SCHWARTZ

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Martin appears to identify un-American activities with acts to "alter the form of our government." Does this make George Washington and the American Revolution un-American? Are we to consider our American Constitution un-American because it provides for amendments to itself? This inability to define what in America is "un-American" poses a greater threat than witnesses before HUAC. For, like the Roman Empire and its successors, we are more likely to decline through reluctance to adapt than through too great eagerness to do so.

R. HOBART ELLIS, JR.

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... May I suggest that the kernel of the problem has been expressed in [Martin's] own words: "... the word 'un-American' is certainly not precisely definable. ..." It is because this is true that many academicians regard this committee as a dangerous menace to civil liberties. Such a word can be conveniently defined and redefined to suit the momentary political objectives of the definer, much as the words "Jew" and "Communist" were employed by the Nazis to impound and liquidate whomever they wished.

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When Martin asks why the academic community should object so strenu-

ously to HUAC, he dismisses too quickly the question of HUAC procedures. The committee's methods greatly injure individuals and organizations. Despite some change in its pattern of operation over the years (the more flagrant abuses of the McCarthy era are no longer present), the committee violates constitutional rights by:

1) Conducting public hearings without traditional due process safeguards; seeking vast publicity, then tossing witnesses to the community and the local press for later punishment; attempting to act as prosecutor, judge and jury of witnesses (all functions of the executive and judicial branches of government); and inviting economic and social sanctions against uncooperative witnesses by holding them up to public exposure and scorn.

2) Encouraging Americans to become informers on past associates' political beliefs and associations.

3) Allowing abuses of its raw, unevaluated files; failing to supervise the use made of information it has gathered, which results in character assassination and widespread smears grounded on admittedly unproven items.

The committee has hurt vital areas of American life by (i) attacking education and educators so persistently as to curb discussion of controversial issues, and (ii) by assaulting individuals and groups which are motivated by religious or ethical concerns and are active in various social movements. This summary of the case against HUAC is based on a pamphlet by the American Civil Liberties Union entitled "The Case Against the House Un-American Activities Committee."

It is to be hoped that members of the academic and scientific community generally will raise their voices even more strongly against HUAC. While Congress needs to hold hearings pertinent to proposed legislation relating to national security, this function can surely be handled more justly and effectively by other congressional committees, such as the Judiciary.

LOUIS K. ACHESON, JR.

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When Are Statistics Appropriate?

In their letter (19 Aug.) "On using inferential statistics," Driessen and Derbyshire criticize nine reports of the 22 April issue which "could have used

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inferential statistics" but did not. "How 'significant' these observations are is a matter for the reader to judge."

As Fisher pointed out in the 1920's (1), the assumption underlying statistical inference is that the experiment to which it is applied meets the following conditions: (i) There has been a random selection of units from the population under study, from which the population parameters can be estimated. And (ii) for the estimation of experimental effects, there has been a random assignment of experimental treatments to experimental units (and of nontreatment to control groups).

Unfortunately many biological and social scientists do not achieve these controlled experimental conditions. Hence, inferential statistics would be inappropriate since they do not meet the assumptions.

Mark Twain said, "There are lies, damn lies, and statistics." Using inferential statistics in preexperimental studies without randomization does not lead to "significance" but to the implication of Twain's third case.

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Reference

1. R. A. Fisher, *Statistical Methods for Research Workers* (Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1925).

IEG's: Some Evaluations

Hooray for the American Association of Immunologists in its attempt to discontinue the use of IEG No. 5 (Letters, 12 Aug.). I agree with them. I find the IEG's are becoming a dangerous nuisance because these bulky "pre-prints" are piling up, mostly unread. At this moment they are no longer being rapidly published, but are coming to me rather simultaneously (within a few weeks) of the truly published, edited, and refereed papers. They are dangerous because a parallel publication system is being set up for complete papers (and they are being referred to as complete papers), a system which has none of the safeguards associated with scientific publication, which makes up its own rules as it goes along, which has its own little "czar" telling scientists how and what to publish (hurry up, you will get priority), and which is seemingly out of the control of scientific bodies such as editorial boards or societies.