

Oppenheimer

The following is the draft of a statement to be issued by the Council of the American Physical Society if and when the Loyalty Review Board or the AEC publish their decision. It is written for the case of a favorable decision; in case of an unfavorable decision, version B is to be substituted for the first two paragraphs.

The Drafting Committee consisted of Professor E. Bright Wilson, Jr. and Professor Norman Ramsey, both of Harvard. They state that they are not very satisfied with their own efforts and would like to see a statement with more public appeal. I personally believe that the statement in its present form is satisfactory. Version B is supplied by myself.

VERSION "A"

The Council of the American Physical Society welcomes the decision of the Loyalty Review Board in affirming its belief in the loyalty of Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer. Many members of the American Physical Society have known and worked with Dr. Oppenheimer for many years and share with the Review Board its confidence in the loyalty and integrity of Dr. Oppenheimer.

However, two features of the original charges against Dr. Oppenheimer have caused much concern to the Council, which believes that repeated use of charges with similar characteristics would be harmful to the best interests of the United States.

The Council is disturbed that practically all of the charges against Dr. Oppenheimer concern past associations which occurred more than twelve years ago. These associations have been well known to government authorities and have been repeatedly reviewed and restudied by the wartime Manhattan District of the U.S. Army and by its successor, the Atomic Energy Commission. Because of the changing nature of the threat against our country, security criteria must of course be continuously revised; however, for precisely the same reason, past actions of an individual under an entirely different international situation must not be judged to have the same implications as similar actions at present.

The chief new charge against Dr. Oppenheimer arose from the advice he gave on request concerning the H bomb. This question was a very difficult technical and policy matter on which opinions widely differed, with many men of assured loyalty sharing Dr. Oppenheimer's views. Disloyalty charges based on policy disagreements appear to be customary in Russia, but we regard them as not only morally reprehensible but also very harmful to our national welfare. If a man whose advice is

sought must fear that his loyalty and integrity may be challenged because his reasoned recommendations later become politically unpopular, he may be tempted to give advice that is politically safe rather than technically valid. In our country, a wise decision is most easily reached by the free conflict of opposing opinion.

VERSION "B"

The Council of the American Physical Society is deeply perturbed by the decision of the AEC (or Loyalty Review Board, as the case may be) in withdrawing the clearance of Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer. Many members of the American Physical Society have known and worked with Dr. Oppenheimer for many years and as a consequence of this association have great confidence in the loyalty and integrity of Dr. Oppenheimer.

From the very beginning, two features of the original charges against Dr. Oppenheimer have caused much concern to the Council, which believes that repeated use of charges with similar characteristics would be harmful to the best interests of the United States.

Hans A. Bethe