

GENERAL SCIENCE

Oppenheimer's "Security"

Transcript of the hearings concerning Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer's security clearance, as well as two briefs filed by lawyers in his behalf, have now been made public.

► TRANSCRIPT OF the hearings in the security clearance procedure against Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer by the Atomic Energy Commission have now been made public.

Also released are two briefs of Oppenheimer's lawyers, one addressed to the special hearing board, the other to the five AEC commissioners now reviewing the scientist's appeal from a two-to-one denial of his security clearance by this board. (See SNL, June 12, p. 371.)

The commissioner's decision on the appeal is expected before the end of June.

Publication of the 992-page record by the AEC, a departure from established custom for federal agencies in security procedures, was abrupt and preceded the commissioner's final decision in order to "best serve the public interest."

Rep. Chet Holifield (D-Calif.) has urged a congressional investigation of the transcript's release.

Scientific testimony at the hearings showed that the H-bombs tested in the Pacific this spring were far different from the theoretical hydrogen weapon being discussed in the fall of 1949. It was Dr. Edward Teller's "brilliant discovery" tested and proved in 1951 that made possible the hydrogen weapons of 1952 and 1954.

The hearings began April 12 in room 2022 of the AEC's T-3 building at 17th and Constitution in Washington.

Dr. Gordon Gray, chairman of the special board, opened the hearings by noting they were being held under provisions of the Atomic Energy Act of 1946 because of "information which casts doubt upon the eligibility of Dr. Oppenheimer" to have access to classified information.

He then read Maj. Gen. Nichols' letter of charges against Oppenheimer, dated Dec. 23, 1953, and Oppenheimer's reply dated March 4, 1954. (See SNL, April 24, p. 259.)

Dr. Gray stated that the proceeding was "an inquiry and not in the nature of a trial." Before swearing Oppenheimer in as a witness, he pointed out that the hearings were considered as "strictly confidential between Atomic Energy Commission officials participating in this matter and Dr. Oppenheimer, his representatives and witnesses. The Atomic Energy Commission will not take the initiative in public release of any information relating to the proceeding before this board."

This statement was made to all witnesses before they were heard by the board.

In releasing the testimony, for which it is understood consent of the witnesses but not of Oppenheimer's lawyers was obtained, the AEC charged that the scientist's attorneys had issued texts of some documents.

These documents, the attorneys said, were the two letters mentioned above, containing the charges and Oppenheimer's reply, the decision of the Gray board and his attorney's reply. (See SNL, April 24 and June 12, op. cit.)

On June 16, the day after the testimony was released, it was revealed that a 100-page summary of the transcript, had been temporarily lost by AEC commissioner Eugene M. Zuckert over the weekend of June 12. The next day, however, it was learned that this temporary loss had nothing whatever to do with the AEC decision to publish the full transcript.

The hearings ended on May 6, with about 600,000 words of testimony from the following witnesses as well as from Oppenheimer and his wife.

Called by the special board were five University of California scientists—Dr. Edward Teller, Dr. Wendell M. Latimer, Dr. Kenneth S. Pitzer, Dr. Luis Alvarez and David Griggs—as well as two Army officers, Maj. Gen. Roscoe C. Wilson and Col. Boris T. Pash, and William L. Borden, formerly executive director of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy.

Dr. E. O. Lawrence, who had been called as a special board witness, was prevented from attending by illness. He did, however, present an affidavit on one point of issue.

The witnesses appearing for Oppenheimer included five former atomic energy commissioners—Gordon Dean, David E. Lilienthal, Robert F. Bacher, Sumner T. Pike and T. Keith Glennan—as well as ten former and present members of the AEC's General Advisory Committee: Hans Bethe, Oliver E. Buckley, James B. Conant, Lee A. duBridge, Enrico Fermi, James B. Fisk, I. I. Rabi, Hartley Rowe, John von Neumann, Walter G. Whitman. John H. Manley, former GAC secretary, testified by affidavit.

Others who testified to Oppenheimer's loyalty and security were: Mervin J. Kelly, Lt. Gen. Leslie R. Groves, Karl T. Compton, Col. John Lansdale Jr., Jerrold B. Zacharias, Frederick H. Osborn, George F. Kennan, Henry A. Winne, Vannevar Bush, Norris Bradbury, James R. Killian Jr., Norman F. Ramsey Jr., Maj. Gen. James McCormack Jr. and Charles C. Lauritsen.

(Transcript of the hearings—with security material deleted—are being made available at the Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C., at an estimated cost of \$2.50. The publication is titled "In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer—Transcript of Hearing Before Personnel Security Board." Inquiries concerning availability of the two briefs filed by Oppenheimer's lawyers should be addressed to Herbert Marks, Ring Building, Washington 6, D. C.)

Science News Letter, June 26, 1954



NATURAL PRESSURE OIL FLOW—At Mene Grande, Venezuela, oil flows today from natural underground gas pressure exactly as it did millions of years ago. Oil seeping out of the earth was first discovered there over 400 years ago by Spaniards.