Response Week 7

Theodore Jagodits

HST 415 / Alex Wellerstein

Why did Oppenheimer have 4 lawyers? It seems like an unreasonable amount considering they still lost the security clearance and declared him unfit for public service. It seems to me that he worked very hard to lose it. From the lecture it sounded like he did not listen to his lawyers and did not prepare well for cross-examination. Especially in front of the JCAE.

The JCAE seemed to care about how the person was and if they were an upstanding citizen. First, they looked at how responsible and moral you are. This process goes into very great depth into many aspects of peoples lives. The chairmen go read into the environment they were born in and postulate about their lives. “The high school clique investigating if you are allowed into their group.” After that they reviewed their known associations with communists which was probably the most important to JCAE. The process looked at your personality and loyalty that is known on paper, then they looked at known associates that had communist affiliations. During this time, I feel like they could not really verify anything anyway and were poking in the dark to see if anything would come through. Anybody who is not responsible in any way would show up on the radar. And “responsible” is defined as what the social norms are at the time. The example with this girl who was promiscuous was only because of the current time. There were other parts to her personality that were discussed that were more relevant, but that one stuck out to me as not relevant to the case.

The protests about the Rosenbergs seemed to represent the larger issue at hand with nuclear weapon secrecy. A country where everything is free, and people can do what they want with freedom of speech to complete secrecy in one area. What happened to the Rosenbergs was a good spark for this issue. The US government did not help by giving a good explanation with VENONA, but the Rosenbergs did not want to cooperate either. In a game of chicken, the US government won. The secrecy with Atomic bomb was still an issue that was not resolved in my opinion at that time. There was no reason to keep it secret to most people that were ignorant to a communist threat.

The current issues in the DOE hearing seem to be the same ones as the issues in the 1950s but with more formality. They look at your character and if you are an upstanding citizen. There are many cases in which alcohol is involved. What struck me was you can actually resolve them quite easily if you follow the directions that are given. Most of these cases seem to handle the issues to make sure that you cannot be blackmailed for an addiction or gambling problem. Concerning Oppenheimer, it was a long and drawn out trial for no reason compared to todays hearings. They discuss one security issue with the person and approve or strip the clearance. Oppenheimer was just a show.

I would have stripped Oppenheimers clearance anyway since it would have expired anyway, and he was not really needed anymore. He was opposed to making the Hydrogen bomb and his inconsistencies did not align with the times even it was the wrong place at the wrong time. I would not have had a long trial to smear him however, he did give most of his life to the US in science and innovation so there was no point of doing that to him.