

Red Alert!: The National Education Association Confronts the "Red Scare" in American Public Schools, 1947-1954

Stuart J. Foster

Typically referred to as the "red scare" or "McCarthy" era, the period from 1947 to 1954 was characterized by an ideological conflict which consumed all aspects of American culture.¹ As prominent historians have argued, a salient feature of the time was the reflexive tendency of many individuals, organizations, and institutions to embrace the prevailing *zeitgeist* that a serious internal threat to the United States existed.² As a result, American society was propelled into a period of fervent anti-communism which produced one of the most severe episodes of political repression the United States has ever experienced.³ Public education was not exempt from this mounting tide of repression.

Significantly, although several historians have portrayed the "red scare's" dramatic impact on American schooling,⁴ the organized teaching profession's response to "red scare" attack has escaped serious historical scrutiny. The National Education Association (NEA), however, warrants special attention for many reasons, two of which appear salient. First, at mid-century the NEA boasted the world's largest teaching organization and claimed a membership in excess of 450,000 educators.⁵ As an organization the NEA reached into every facet of public education and touched upon concerns and issues encountered by educators at local, state, and national levels. Attention to the policies and actions of the NEA during the "red scare" era, therefore, enriches historical understanding of this vital period in postwar American education. Second, by the establishment, in 1941, of the National Commission for the Defense of Democracy Through Education, the NEA created the only educational agency explicitly and expressly charged to protect and to defend public school teachers from unjust attack. Close examination of the work of the Defense Commission, as it was commonly known, offers a broad and detailed perspective on the impact of the "red scare" on American public education and the effectiveness of the NEA's response to it.

Public Schools Under Attack

Historically, public schools and public school teachers have been obvious targets for "red scare" attacks.⁶ With the emergence of anti-communist sentiment and superpatriotic zeal in the years following World War II, their vulnerability dramatically increased. In 1890, high school enrollment in

the United States was estimated at 200,000; by the early 1940s, the figure approached seven million.⁷ Schools became one of the few public institutions that affected the lives of nearly every citizen. They existed in every community and were a public institution that, in the words of historian Diane Ravitch, were conveniently "get-at-able."⁸

Schools became embroiled in bitter socio-political clashes precisely because they wrestled with many of the issues that divided the country in the postwar era. Supporters of federal aid to education, racial integration of schools, modern or "progressive" teaching methods, UNESCO,⁹ and a liberal academic philosophy stood in stark contrast to those who argued for the sovereignty of states' rights, racially segregated schools, a "traditional" and disciplined educational environment, and a strongly nationalistic approach to world affairs. Accordingly, by the late 1940s, American education became a battleground on which strikingly divisive clashes of culture and ideology were fought out. Attacks on public education, principally led by individuals and groups from the political right, proved intensely destructive and impacted educational policy and practice in school districts throughout the United States.

That the NEA should leap to the defense of teachers in this politically charged atmosphere was somewhat inevitable. With considerable foresight, as early as 1941, NEA President Donald DuShane stressed to delegates at the Association's annual meeting in Boston that a "crisis" was developing in the United States. He argued that the NEA "must protect our schools from misunderstanding and unjust attack" and proposed the establishment of a special commission to assume this responsibility.¹⁰ DuShane's concerns were based upon recent historical experience. He, and others within the NEA, noted that during the period following World War I and throughout the Depression years, public education encountered vehement and destructive criticism. With justification, DuShane predicted that with the impending likelihood of war, tax-based funding for education would be reduced, classrooms would become overcrowded, teachers would be dismissed, salaries would be reduced, and criticism of teachers would become rampant.

Several speakers at the NEA's annual meeting in 1941 understood and predicted that critics of education would utilize "red scare" propaganda. For example, one member

noted the regularity with which the tax cutters, "the economic councils, the research bureaus, the merchants' associations, and the chambers of commerce" were accusing teachers of "subversive activity" and invoking "the shameful misuse of our patriotic spirit...to cripple the schools of the nation."¹¹ In the ensuing debate about the establishment of the Defense Commission, not a single objection was raised. Of significance, as a testimony to how serious educators at this time perceived the attacks on education to be, the deliberations which followed centered on whether the assembly had the authority to appropriate more money to the Defense Commission than its proponents originally had requested.¹²

To some extent the NEA's concern in 1941 that schools immediately would become the subject of intense "red scare" criticism appeared somewhat premature. Indeed, although attacks using the rhetoric and practice of the "red scare" surfaced periodically, the period from 1941-1947 appeared as a time of relative calm.¹³ Thus, instead of devoting its resources to challenging "red scare" critics, the actions of the Defense Commission primarily were governed by the desire to enhance educator-lay public relations, to improve the salary and tenure security of teaching professionals, and to conduct investigations in school districts where public schools became embroiled in educational controversy.¹⁴

By the late 1940s and early 1950s, however, the steady trickle of "red scare" criticism which surfaced in the early 1940s soon exploded into a raging torrent of political invective. During this period the staff of the Defense Commission became almost totally consumed with combating the actions and rhetoric of "red scare" attackers.¹⁵ To those from the political right the use of "red scare" tactics and rhetoric became a very powerful weapon with which to attack liberals and progressives who saw the world through a different ideological lens. Set against the backdrop of the cold war, the ubiquitous fear of atomic attack, the perceived threat of the Soviet Union and the "loss of China," reactionary forces effectively could point to the dangers of supporting liberal policies allegedly "soft" on Communism abroad. Furthermore, the conviction of Communist Party leaders for conspiring to overthrow the US Government in 1949, and the dramatic prosecutions of atomic bomb scientist Klaus Fuchs and State Department official Alger Hiss, charged with spying for the Soviet Union, added credence to the theory that the United States systematically was being threatened by internal subversion at home.¹⁶

The increasing virulent attacks on public education in the late 1940s and early 1950s should be viewed within this context. Victory for arch conservatives augured a reduction in tax support for public education, the maintenance of racially segregated schools, the removal of federal interference, the rejection of allegedly un-American instructional materials, and the passionate celebration of nationalist ideals.

Understandably, therefore, in the closing years of the 1940s and the early 1950s, American education increasingly endured hostile criticism.¹⁷

Intense "red scare" attacks on public education manifested themselves in several forms. Many of the most vicious attacks originated from the propaganda unleashed by the sudden proliferation of right-wing pressure groups which emerged in this period. These "red scare" organizations ranged in size, leadership, and style. Unquestionably, however, their combined actions and accusations effectively fueled the public's growing belief that American school children were being poisoned by the pernicious influence of socialism.

The most notable "red scare" critic arguably was Allen A. Zoll who venomously used his organization, the National Council for American Education (NCAE), to attack public education.¹⁸ By appeals to the patriotic loyalties of many influential citizens and wealthy businessmen, Zoll operated a well financed and effective organization throughout the "red scare" era. He employed a series of widely distributed publications as the NCAE's primary vehicle to attack public schools. They appeared with rapid regularity and appeared under revealing titles such as, "How Red Are The Schools?" "Progressive Education Increases Delinquency," "The Yale Whitewash," "They Want Your Child," "Socialism is Stupid," "Red-ucators at Harvard."¹⁹

Central to the arguments expounded in these publications proved the conviction that American schools were infiltrated by "subversive" teachers and communist sympathizers. For example, in "They Want Your Child," Zoll contended,

Early in the conflict, the strategists of the Kremlin saw that the key to the future of America lies in the education given to America's children. AND SO THE INFILTRATION AND CONTROL OF AMERICAN EDUCATION BECAME COMMUNISM'S NUMBER ONE OBJECTIVE IN AMERICA. THEY WANT THE CHILDREN OF AMERICA. THEY WANT YOUR CHILD.²⁰

Masterfully, Zoll exploited local discontentment and fueled an explosion of "red scare" activity in communities across the nation. Citizens in school districts small and large were inundated with propaganda literature, "information" sheets, and accusatorial anti-communist pamphleteering. Frequently, these materials were used by local tax groups, patriotic organizations, or ultra-conservative citizens to attack public schools. For example, between 1950 and 1952 alone, evidence of Zoll's powerful influence turned up in communities in Michigan, California, Texas, Florida, Colorado, New Jersey, New York, Tennessee, Illinois, and countless other troubled towns, cities, and states.²¹

Many other organizations similarly attacked public education. The Committee for Constitutional Government (CCG),

for example, originally founded by wealthy publisher Frank Gannett in New York city in 1937, quickly developed into another extremely powerful right-wing lobbying organization in the 1940s and 1950s. Led by a highly paid executive director, Edward Rumely, the CCG actively campaigned for the elimination of "socialized education"²² and sought fervently to remove alleged "Marxist influences" in the public schools.

In the "red scare" era, the CCG developed into a prominent, influential, and well financed political pressure group. As a measure of its financial clout, the Counsel for the federal House Select Committee on Lobbying Activities reported that the CCG spent almost \$2 million for lobbying purposes, and in one seven year period alone, "distributed 82 million booklets, pamphlets...at the rate of about 12 million pieces a year."²³

Another highly influential and well financed critic of education was the National Economic Council (NEC), an organization led for almost two decades by Merlin K. Hart, a noted right-wing activist, neo-fascist sympathizer, and head of New York's oldest chapter of the John Birch Society.²⁴ The extremist views of Merwin K. Hart and his colleagues, however, did not represent the position of an isolated reactionary fringe. Significantly, among Hart's supporters and financial backers appeared some of America's prominent economic leaders. Hart received substantial contributions from leading officials in the General Motors Corporation, the Bethlehem Steel Corporation, Eastman Kodak, Beech Aircraft, the Shaeffer Pen Company, and the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce. In addition, Hart revealed to a House Select Committee on Lobbying Activities that the NEC received more than \$60,000 from Lamont du Pont and his brother Irene from 1947-1950.²⁵ Hart's influence also spread to the political arena where his views were received favorably by Congressman Ralph W. Gwinn of New York, Senator James P. Kem of Missouri, and ex-Senator Albert W. Hawkes of New Jersey.²⁶

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, public education received the political invective of a myriad of right-wing critics. Individuals and groups within established patriotic organizations such as the Sons of the American Revolution, the American Legion, and the Minute Women USA frequently attacked "traitors in the classroom" and "the enemies of America who infect the minds of the young." Extremist critics like J. T. Flynn, Amos A. Fries and Texas newspaper millionaire, R. C. Hoiles, who used his vast fortune and extensive newspaper chains to attack public education, further fueled the anti-communist crusade and legitimized the use of "red scare" as a weapon of attack against teachers, administrators, and the school curriculum.²⁷

Attention to alleged subversion in the schools, however, did not solely rest with the obsessive machinations of "red

scare" groups. Attracted to the prospect of gaining enormous political capital for unearthing socialism in the schools, influential politicians at the state and federal level jumped on the "red scare" bandwagon.²⁸ As a result of the Republican sweep in the 1952 national elections, investigations into and attacks upon educators dramatically intensified. Until 1951, HUAC (House Un-American Activities Committee), originally formed in 1938, appeared as the only congressional investigating in existence. However, as anti-communist fever assumed a tighter grip on the nation, this situation soon changed. In 1952, HUAC acquired a new chairman, former FBI agent Harold Velde, and a new chief counsel, Robert L. Kunzig. Velde made his intentions clear from the outset. "I feel that we should look into the field of education. That has been left largely untouched up till now but I believe that it is a very fertile field for investigation."²⁹ Significantly, in his relentless pursuit of subversives in education Velde was not alone.

In 1952, Senator McCarthy, after assuming an investigating committee of his own, gleefully announced that he would be "going into the education system" and "exposing Communists and Communist thinkers."³⁰ In addition, between September 8 and October 13, 1952, the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee (SISS), chaired by fiercely anti-communist Senator Pat McCarran, conducted a series of vigorous hearings into "subversive influences into the nation's educational system."³¹ These resourceful politicians implicitly understood the enormous political capital to be gained from attacks on communism and alleged communist sympathizers.

The investigating committees of Velde, McCarthy, and McCarran combined to induce anxiety and fear among many educators. Each forceful prong of this immensely effective "red scare" trident claimed dozens of victims. In Philadelphia, for example, 26 educators, who either invoked the Fifth amendment or refused to answer questions before the Velde Committee, later found themselves dismissed by the Board of Education.³² In March 1953, educators in Los Angeles experienced similar repression after Velde cast his "red scare" cloak over Southern California.³³ In addition, in New York city, out of 31 educators who refused to cooperate with McCarran's SISS investigations, only five later kept their jobs. By July 1953, the Harvard Crimson estimated that over one hundred school teachers had been dismissed for non-cooperation with congressional committees.³⁴

The notoriety of congressional investigating committees also served to spark anti-communist probes at the state level. Investigating committees in New York and California, for example, appeared particularly virulent in their attempts to root out communism in the schools. Educators were similarly concerned by the renewed zeal for loyalty oaths which surfaced in many states. In June 1949, The NEA's

Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom published a nationwide study which reported on teachers' oaths and related state requirements. The comprehensive study revealed that 28 states required public school teachers to take an oath of loyalty, 38 states passed general sedition laws, 31 states prohibited membership in subversive groups, 13 states barred public employment to disloyal persons, and 15 outlawed certain political parties.³⁵ Of concern to the NEA in the ensuing years was the dramatic increase in loyalty legislation throughout the nation.³⁶

Directly or indirectly, the "red scare" had a profound impact on all aspects of American public education.³⁷ Some of the consequences were somewhat absurd and trivial such as one member of the Indiana state textbook commission who objected to the use of *Robin Hood* in elementary schools because she believed that the story was a "communist directive in education" which "lauded robbing the rich to give to the poor."³⁸ Typically, however, the "red scare's" impact appeared more serious and more dramatic. Some teachers lived in a state of constant anxiety through fear of dismissal. Others, troubled by accusations of subversion, worried for loss of their professional integrity and their status in the local community. For many, the trauma and uncertainty of the times strained personal and family relations, led to marriage break-ups, and, in some cases, prompted suicides.³⁹

Without question "red scare" attacks directly led to the dismissal of hundreds of educators in communities across the nation. Historian David Caute, for example, calculated that more than 600 educators lost their jobs as a result of anti-communist political purges, 380 in New York city alone.⁴⁰ Furthermore, in cities, like Houston and Pasadena, where the Defense Commission shone its investigative spotlight, graphic evidence of the use of "red scare" methods to remove "liberal" educators starkly was apparent. Although the circumstances of the many documented and undocumented teacher dismissals certainly remain tragic, arguably the most troublesome aspect of the period was the political and educational climate they induced. As Robert Hutchins noted in 1954, "The question is not how many teachers have been fired, but how many think they might be... You don't have to fire many teachers to intimidate them all. The entire teaching profession of the U. S. is intimidated."⁴¹ In Houston, for example, a survey of the city's teachers initiated by the Defense Commission revealed an alarming atmosphere of fear and intimidation among the teaching profession. Indeed, 58 per cent of the Houston teachers sampled revealed that political groups had exerted intense pressure on them to slant the curriculum toward a certain political belief and over 40 per cent expected to lose their job for expressing their personal political views.⁴²

The "red scare" also seriously affected how, what, and why individual teachers elected to teach. According to the April 1954 issue of the *Defense Bulletin*, a NEA study of 522

school systems reported that, "American teachers are finding it increasingly difficult to consider controversial issues."⁴³ The following year, a comprehensive study of thousands of educators in every state of the nation bar Rhode Island, revealed that 13 per cent of secondary school teachers and 15 per cent of social studies teachers were subject to "increased pressures against freedom to learn" and, as a result, tended "to avoid discussion of controversial issues."⁴⁴

By mid-century, many teachers appeared acutely fearful of engaging in any subject matter which might be construed as subversive or "controversial." They used textbooks and other instructional materials cautiously; self-censorship among teachers appeared common, and teachers used curriculum materials judiciously for fear of alienating political forces in the community. Caught up in the vortex of "red scare" propaganda, educators and public schools suffered. In these difficult times, teachers and administrators looked to the NEA for support and protection. Accordingly, by the late 1940s, the Defense Commission assumed a more prominent, active, and influential role.

The NEA's Response to "Red Scare" Attack

The Defense Commission recognized at an extraordinarily early stage the danger to public education of sustained and unforgiving "red scare" attack. Established in 1941, for almost two decades, the Defense Commission appeared as the teaching profession's principal shield from "red scare" attack. If teachers faced unfair dismissal, encountered criticism laced with anti-communist rhetoric, or stood accused of subversive actions, frequently they turned to the Defense Commission for advice and support. In the "red scare" era, no other educational agency offered the range of resources and the breadth of experience to compare with those of the Commission.⁴⁵

An indication of the NEA's mounting concern with the consequences of vicious "red scare" attack explicitly was revealed by the Association's commitment to allocate increased resources to the Defense Commission. In 1954, for example, the Commission received almost five times the amount it secured ten years previously and, apart from the Department of Classroom Teachers, it received more funds than any other NEA commission or department.⁴⁶ Concomitant with its rapid growth in financial resources was the significant increase in the Defense Commission's staff. In its formative years, the Commission operated with a full-time staff of only two individuals, DuShane and a stenographer.⁴⁷ By 1950, however, it enjoyed a full-time staff of ten.⁴⁸

One of the NEA's most important and telling moves was its decision, in 1949, to appoint Robert Skaife as field secretary to the Defense Commission. Essentially, Skaife's

role was to provide direct support to educators in troubled school districts throughout the United States. Throughout his tenure, he proved a tireless and devoted servant of the Commission and frequently appeared as one of the profession's fiercest opponents of organized "red scare" attack. Like many other influential figures in the NEA, field secretary Skaife realized that to be more effective required the Defense Commission to meet attacks against education head on. In 1951, he wrote that,

deliberate, forthright steps should be taken to challenge untrue statements and false propaganda which are increasingly becoming a part of the stock in trade of the enemies of public education. The point has been reached where the profession can no longer sit back and ignore the charges being made.⁴⁹

Increasingly, the leadership of the Defense Commission reasoned that in order to counter criticism more effectively educators must be made aware of the source and nature of attack. Harold Benjamin, Defense Commission chairman in 1949 and 1950, underscored the essential thrust of this policy in his address to the NEA delegation in St. Louis in July 1950 in which he likened the Defense Commission to a "reconnaissance troop" responsible for gathering intelligence on the critics of education.⁵⁰

Throughout its twenty year existence, the Defense Commission worked assiduously to gather information on "red scare" organizations at local, state, and national levels. Using the NEA's extensive national network, by the early 1950s the Commission had compiled a galaxy of information on over 500 "red scare" organizations. Typically, the Defense Commission used this intelligence to alert educational personnel to the menace of particularly virulent public school critics.⁵¹

Frequently, members of the Commission used educational journals as vehicles to convey their message. In the early 1950s, for example, Robert Skaife, authored a series of articles in the *Nation's Schools* which dealt exclusively with "red scare" attacks. Published under the revealing titles, "They Sow Distrust," "They Want Tailored Schools," "They Oppose Progress," and "The Conflict Continues," these articles portrayed the extremist position of the attackers and launched a punishing and forthright assault on their methods and practices.⁵² Similar articles written by Skaife and other colleagues within the Defense Commission also appeared at this time and unquestionably proved an effective medium to communicate valuable information to America's teaching profession.⁵³

The information services of the Defense Commission were not limited solely to the dissemination of writings in academic publications or popular journals. Throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Commission offered a range

of information sources to educators throughout the nation. For example, the Defense Commission popularized the availability of records, movies, novels, sound recordings, and "information kits" all of which focused attention directly on the attacks on public schools. In addition, the Defense Commission's information and re-prints service offered educators immediate access to articles, information bulletins, and fact sheets either free of charge or at exceedingly low cost.

One of the most effective ways of communicating information to the education profession was through the regular publication of the Commission's newsletter, the *Defense Bulletin*. Early issues of the *Defense Bulletin*, mimeographed on letter sized paper, were confidential in general content and were distributed to no more than 300 select individuals. By mid-century, however, the *Bulletin* boasted a national circulation of more than 20,000 educators and it quickly became an important and valuable mouthpiece for the Defense Commission.⁵⁴ The contents of the *Defense Bulletin* alone serve as an interesting barometer of the escalation of "red scare" attack in the late 1940s. Significantly, in all of the issues of the *Bulletin* between December 1941 and May 1945, only cursory reference was made to "red scare" rhetoric and attack. From 1945 to 1955, however, scarcely an issue of the *Defense Bulletin* appeared without direct, and often dramatic and prolonged, reference to "red scare" propaganda.

As a central component in the Defense Commission's quest to blunt "red scare" attacks, the *Defense Bulletin* performed several important functions. Three, in particular appear salient. First, it acted as a national source of information for educators at the local level. It provided teachers across the country with a central forum for information, opinion, and support. Second, the *Defense Bulletin* suggested to local educators ways they might challenge their accusers. Under banner headlines such as, "Let's Nip this Propaganda in the Bud," "Let's Keep The Witch Hunters Out of the Schools," and "What You Can Do To Stop the Attacks," the Defense Commission published information which advocated that local groups take positive steps to confront "red scare" propaganda.⁵⁵

The third function of the *Defense Bulletin* arguably was its most important. At a time when some teachers and administrators encountered personal accusations of "subversion" and many faced threats of dismissal, the morale of the nation's teaching force sank to low and, in some systems, to desperate levels. In an effort to elevate the status of educators and to raise the confidence of the teaching profession, at every opportunity the *Bulletin* published accounts of prominent individuals and organizations who publicly supported American education. In addition, the *Bulletin* published summaries of research studies that revealed that "modern schools" significantly were superior to schools of the pre-war era. These

"Then and Now" studies boosted the morale of teachers and reminded educators of the enormously important work they were undertaking.

Although the NEA and the Defense Commission often targeted educators, it also offered information to other citizens. For example, the Commission readily responded to requests for information from several sources which included the media, Congressmen, parents, and community leaders. It actively provided mimeographed sheets, information bulletins, article reprints, and leaflets on the attacks and it devoted considerable energy to answering phone calls and writing letters to those concerned by, or interested in, the attacks on public education.⁵⁶

As the "red scare" gathered momentum in the late 1940s, the NEA also expanded its commitment to improved public relations in an effort both to suppress and to counter attacks on the schools. In 1949, the Defense Commission initiated a series of educator-lay conferences explicitly intended to quell increasing "red scare" attacks on the schools. The "Off the Record Conferences Concerning Attack on Educators, Education, and Educational Publications" involved twenty-two national organizations in discussions directly related to the burgeoning attacks on education. As the already serious situation worsened, in the early 1950s, the Defense Commission inaugurated a new series of conferences which operated under the revealing title "Public Education in a Dangerous Era." Convened in major cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Denver, and San Francisco the conferences drew support from prominent members of the local community, business organizations, taxpayer groups, the media, citizens' committees, patriotic organizations, and educators.⁵⁷

In an effort to stamp out undue criticism of the schools the NEA clearly recognized the importance of forging links with citizens' organizations such as the National Citizens Commission for the Public Schools (NCCPS) and the National Congress of Parents and Teachers (NCPT). The growth of these giant organizations revealed the intense interest in public education which blossomed in the "red scare" era. For example, the NCCPS which claimed only 50 citizens' committees in 1949, boasted 8,000 committees in 1953. Similarly, the NCPT doubled its membership between 1946 and 1953. Indeed, by 1953 membership stood at a staggering 7,953 located in 37,000 local PTAs in 50 state branches.⁵⁸

Not only did the NEA recognize the importance of capturing the support of these organizations, they also understood the importance of intensifying their own public relations divisions. In 1950, the NEA conferred departmental status upon the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) and aggressive public relations measures resulted. The work of the NSPRA amplified and extended the work of the NEA's existing Press and Radio

Relations Division.⁵⁹ From 1950 to 1955, a period in which the "red scare" appeared particularly acute, the NSPRA proved immensely successful in its determination to reach out to parents and lay leaders. For example, it continued actively to support "American Education Week" which, in 1955, encouraged an estimated 20 million Americans to visit the schools.⁶⁰ It offered a plethora of information to educators such as the enormously popular "It Starts in the Classroom: A Public Relations Handbook for Classroom Teachers," "88 Techniques in School Public Relations for Teachers and Administrators,"⁶¹ and the 1954 publication, "Let's Go To Press," a handbook designed to "help classroom teachers and other school press representatives to channel more and better school news to the local press and to build better working relations with editors and reporters."⁶² Handbooks also were made available to parents. For example, in 1951, more than 300,000 copies of the NSPRA 12 page booklet "Our Schools Have Kept Us Free," a reprinted version of comments by Henry Steele Commager were distributed. From 1953 to 1955, the NEA also produced more than 850,000 information handbooks to help parents further appreciate and understand the work of the schools.⁶³

Increased public support for schools, however, did not eliminate "red scare" attacks. Despite the NEA's many public relations accomplishments, it proved unable to diffuse explosive attacks in dozens of communities throughout the United States. Two communities in particular, Houston and Pasadena, drew the concerted attention of the Defense Commission for the prolonged and zealous anti-communist attacks on the public schools. Identified by the NEA and the Defense Commission as troubled school districts representative of other communities in the country, the Commission resolved closely to examine events in both locations. Accordingly Houston and Pasadena were accorded the intense scrutiny of one of the NEA's most prominent and well respected activities, a Defense Commission "investigation."

Between 1941 and 1961 the Defense Commission conducted 29 full-scale investigations in towns and cities throughout the United States. Typically initiated by local or state education organizations, representatives from the Defense Commission were invited to examine local situations in which educators frequently received unscrupulous treatment. Investigating teams were sent to trouble spots in an effort to provide an "objective" report on the events and their causes and, perhaps most importantly, to offer recommendations for improved educational relations in the community. Cases ranged in nature, intensity, and size. For example, some focused on educational controversies in large population centers such as Miami, Chicago, and New York City, whereas others focused attention on small communities such as Polson, Montana and Mars Hill, North Carolina. Some

investigations focused on incidents in which evidence of political interference in educational appointments proved conspicuous, others on incidents in which teachers were dismissed for participation in campaigns for improved salary and conditions. In the cases of Pasadena and Houston the Defense Commission sought to investigate the dramatic and intense anti-communist attacks unleashed on prominent school personnel in both school districts.

Of the two investigations Pasadena undoubtedly attracted the greatest amount of attention.⁶⁴ The reasons for this concentration on Pasadena are not difficult to understand. Simply, the Pasadena situation was the first major "red scare" incident to invite widespread national notoriety. The Commission's investigation principally focused on events from the summer of 1949 to the summer of 1951 and, as such, it alerted educators at a relatively early stage to the dangers of organized "red scare" tactics and propaganda. Moreover, the attacks in Pasadena brought down an educational "king." The dismissal of school superintendent Willard Goslin sent shock waves throughout the educational community. As president of the American Association of School Administrators, as an experienced professional, and as a close associate of many influential leaders within the progressive education movement, superintendent Goslin symbolized the sensitive, efficient, forward thinking educator par excellence. His forced resignation on November 21, 1950, therefore, appeared as a dramatic warning sign to educators in school districts throughout the nation.⁶⁵

Houston and Pasadena shared remarkable similarities. Both communities became embroiled in ideological conflicts which surrounded the use of identified instructional materials and teaching methods; both communities became deeply affected by aggressive "red scare" campaigns principally mounted by right wing organizations such as the Committee for Sound American Education and the Minute Women in Houston and Pro-America and the School Development Council in Pasadena, and; citizens in both communities appeared persuaded by the propaganda of national "red scare" organizations such as Allen A. Zoll's National Council for American Education. In Houston, as in Pasadena, powerful right-wing business interests and conservative newspapers manipulated and fueled the crisis mentality of the "red scare."⁶⁶ Decisive political elements in the two cities also shared a reactionary loathing of moves toward the racial integration of the schools or the re-zoning of the school district to ensure a more racially integrated society.⁶⁷ In addition, the "red scare" in Houston and in Pasadena drove educators to self-censorship, restricted the creative energies of many teachers, and profoundly impacted classroom practice.⁶⁸ Finally, despite evidence that no subversive activity existed in either school district, in both cities the promising careers of two prominent school administrators,

George Ebey and Willard Goslin, abruptly were ended.⁶⁹

The effectiveness of the Defense Commission investigations in Pasadena and Houston remain ambivalent. On the one hand, the Commission may claim considerable success. As a result of their lengthy inquiries in both cities the Commission produced detailed and comprehensive reports which identified common problems and suggested ways to improve the unsavory local situations. Significantly, in both cities in the years which followed the controversies, local politicians and school board members embraced many of the NEA's recommendations and implemented them to positive effect. The Defense Commission also proved successful in boosting the morale of a number of school teachers in Houston and Pasadena. Correspondence to the Commission from local educators revealed the comfort and solace that some teachers took from the forceful presence of the NEA in their respective school districts. The NEA investigations also served to alert other educators in school districts throughout the country of the need to be alert to and vigilant of "red scare" attack.⁷⁰ For example, the Defense Commission, advised all teachers and administrators of the need to respond effectively and expeditiously to attack, to improved public relations, and to greater administrative competency.

On the other hand, despite these accomplishments, the NEA's Defense Commission proved deficient in many important areas. In both cities the Defense Commission arrived after much of the real damage was done and proved singularly unable to prevent the dismissal of George Ebey or Willard Goslin. Thus, while the Commission proved reasonably effective in understanding and identifying the source of the problem and in suggesting improvements for the future, it failed to address the violence of the attacks at the time of their occurrence.

An overarching evaluation of the effectiveness of the NEA in its protection of teachers from "red scare" attack offers similar contradictions. On the positive side, the NEA, principally through the work of the Defense Commission, achieved some worthwhile success. The Defense Commission was one of the first professional organizations in any occupational field established primarily for the purpose of defending its members against unwarranted "red scare" criticism. As the "red scare" intensified in the late 1940s, the NEA and the Commission responded in kind. The leadership of the NEA re-enforced its commitment to the Commission by substantially increasing both its budget allocation and its personnel. Some of the NEA's most dynamic and influential leaders were appointed to guide the Defense Commission in its increasingly vital work. Individuals such as Alonzo B. Myers, Ernest O. Melby, Harold Benjamin, Frank Graham, Harold C. Hand, Willard Givens, Richard Barnes Kennan, and Robert Skaife⁷¹ passionately

sought to protect and defend the teaching profession. Accordingly, as the "red scare" gathered momentum in the late 1940s and early 1950s, rather than shirk from the challenge, the Defense Commission intensified its own efforts to defend the rights of educators.

In a fury of activity, the officers of the Defense Commission collected and distributed a plethora of intelligence on "red scare" attacks. It offered educators throughout the country advice, information, and suggestions for positive action. It vigorously challenged the efficacy of loyalty oath legislation and it questioned the political motivations behind state and congressional probes into public education. It highlighted the causes of individual teachers who were unfairly dismissed and, where appropriate, it exposed to the general public the unscrupulous political machinations of community leaders, local business interests, newspaper proprietors, and school board members. Through a concerted program of public relations initiatives and educator-lay conferences it also proved very effective in capturing the support of thousands of citizens. In addition, the Defense Commission gathered and disseminated an array of information on "red scare" organizations which sought to undermine public education. Above all, the Defense Commission both alerted and united the teaching profession in particularly disturbing times. It comforted individual teachers that they were not alone in their personal defiance of harmful "red scare" rhetoric, propaganda, and activity.

At the 1941 NEA annual meeting, the year the Commission was established, a number of speakers predicted that an effective Commission devoted to the protection of educators undoubtedly would encourage more teachers and administrators to join the NEA.⁷² In no small measure that prediction came true. In 1941 NEA membership stood at 211,191; fourteen years later it had soared to 612,716.⁷³ To some extent, this dramatic increase reasonably may be attributed to the Defense Commission's willingness to reach out to educators and to boost the profession's morale in school districts throughout the nation. Unquestionably, therefore, many within the teaching profession deeply valued the work of the Defense Commission. Indeed, repeated expressions of gratitude from teachers stand as the most significant testimony to the Commission's effectiveness during the "red scare" era.⁷⁴

Limits of Accomplishment

The effectiveness of the NEA in blunting attacks on the schools, however, should not be overstated. Despite overwhelming evidence that relatively few public school educators were communists, critics were able to convince many school board members, community leaders, and concerned parents that public schools were riddled with

dangerous advocates from the political left.⁷⁵ In the climate of "red scare" teachers were dismissed, textbooks withdrawn, instructional materials censored, and curriculum guidelines conveniently tailored to suit the wishes of reactionary forces.

Of greatest significance, the NEA itself frequently proved a victim of the "red scare" age. Despite the unceasing efforts of the national organization, it frequently fell a casualty to the infectious tide of anti-communism that swept the country during the postwar years. The most graphic illustration of the stance of the Defense Commission and the National Education Association in this regard stemmed from the 1949 NEA conference resolution to exclude Communist Party members from the teaching profession.⁷⁶ The resolution originated from a comprehensive 54 page report drafted by the NEA's Educational Policies Commission. The report, entitled "American Education and International Tensions," was produced by a twenty person Commission chaired by John K. Norton of Teacher's College, Columbia University and included James B. Conant, president of Harvard University and Dwight D. Eisenhower, president of Columbia University.⁷⁷

Norton's explanation of the main conclusions of the report drew enthusiastic support from the NEA delegation at the annual NEA conference in Boston.⁷⁸ His address frequently was greeted with applause and at the point in which he spoke out against Communist Party members having the right to instruct "your child, my child, and the children of other local citizens,"⁷⁹ the convention accorded him a standing ovation. The overwhelming acceptance of the 1949 resolution demonstrated the extent to which NEA members embraced the orthodoxy of anti-communism. Of chilling significance, the Association's adopted policy made extremely difficult the support of those accused of being a communist often whether or not they were innocent.⁸⁰

"Red scare" concerns also prompted many educators to teach about the Soviet Union in an explicitly biased fashion. The NEA leadership openly encouraged this dubious practice. Ernest O. Melby, for example, argued that students needed to learn about communism in order to be alert to its "corrupt propaganda."⁸¹ Consciously or unconsciously, members of the Defense Commission and the NEA abandoned one of the underlying precepts of free and objective inquiry. Courses and curriculum materials explicitly were to be both anti-communist and slanted in favor of American democracy. For example, the 1949 resolution to bar communists from the profession was bolstered by a further resolution which asserted that "the responsibility of the schools is to teach the superiority of the American way of life."⁸² Andrew Holt, NEA president, additionally added that teachers are duty bound to inspire "our children with a love of democracy that will be inoculated against the false ideology of communism."⁸³

A further indication of the NEA's political conservatism was demonstrated by the Association's repeated flirtation with the practices and opinions of the fiercely anti-communist American Legion. Ironically, despite the fact that a national survey of educators revealed that the American Legion frequently proved one of education's fiercest critics,⁸⁴ and despite the fact that its Magazine launched a caustic attack on teachers,⁸⁵ the NEA and the American Legion collaborated on a number of important projects. Almost without exception the NEA-American Legion relationship during the "red scare" era centered on a blatantly anti-communist stance. The most graphic illustration of this was the NEA's decision to participate with 60 other national organizations in a series of annual conferences sponsored by the American Legion entitled the "All American Conference to Combat Communism."⁸⁶

The essential conservatism of the NEA and the Defense Commission also was illustrated by its position on teacher strikes, loyalty oaths, and state and congressional investigations. During the existence of the Defense Commission, from 1941 to 1961, 105 teacher strikes were reported in school districts throughout the United States. In fourteen cases alone substantial data indicated the loss of 7,691,400 pupil days of school.⁸⁷ The leadership of the NEA and the Defense Commission clearly understood and sympathized with the plight of discontented teachers. Occasionally, they supported industrial action euphemistically referring to strikes as "professional group action by professional methods."⁸⁸ As a general rule, however, the Commission refused to support teacher strikes and warned teachers of the dangers of using them for short term gain.

As the "red scare" intensified in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Defense Commission increasingly sought to disassociate itself from the whiff of militancy. Labor activism and strikes, the Commission's leadership reasoned, smacked too much of socialism. To support such action in an age dominated by anti-communist fervor appeared tantamount to professional suicide. As a consequence, in May 1951, at the height of the "red scare," a Defense Commission investigation in Oglesby, Illinois revealingly concluded that "it is unprofessional for teachers, through striking and picketing, to disrupt a school system."⁸⁹

The "red scare" also led the NEA and the Defense Commission to surrender the teaching profession to the imposition of loyalty oaths and state and congressional investigations. Despite the passage of NEA resolutions which objected to loyalty measures, the Association failed to advise educators to refuse to sign loyalty oaths or to shun co-operation with legislative investigations.⁹⁰ Repeatedly, NEA members endorsed a resolution which stated that, "The National Education Association recognizes the right of legislative bodies to conduct investigations....Educators called

upon to testify in such investigations should do so fully and frankly."⁹¹ To a large degree the actions of the NEA and the Defense Commission were governed by the political expedience of the "red scare." The NEA's refusal to allow communists in the teaching profession, its brittle reaction to loyalty oaths and legislative investigations, its disapproval of teacher strikes, its appeasement of the American Legion, its incessant quest to demonstrate the Commission's unerring loyalty to America, and its ardently anti-Soviet stance illustrated the extent to which the Association fell victim to "red scare" passions.

To appreciate the actions of the NEA and the Defense Commission, however, one must take into consideration the practical alternatives available at mid-century. The ubiquitous, all-consuming, and repressive force of the "red scare" in this period casts serious doubt on whether or not the NEA effectively could have encouraged teachers to refuse to sign loyalty oaths or to refuse to participate in loyalty investigations. Furthermore, in the delicate political atmosphere of the "red scare," few institutions or individuals in American society saw the practical wisdom of challenging the dominant anti-communist orthodoxy. Undoubtedly, therefore, the Defense Commission's leadership reasoned that to renounce allegiance to the American Legion, or to support the right of a communist to teach, or to condone and support teachers' strikes, or to advise teachers to stand against loyalty probes, was certain to invite damaging political reprisal. As such, the NEA refused to go out on a precarious political limb and suffer humiliating public criticism.

The Defense Commission and the NEA also was aware that its actions were bounded by the broader economic climate which confronted educators in the immediate post-war period. Robert Skaife, for example, reported that a Defense Commission survey identified the "high cost of public education" as the general public's number one criticism of the schools in 1951.⁹² The NEA leadership implicitly understood that the Association's actions should not alienate or offend the general public. They appreciated the need to appear non-controversial, to be sensitive to some critics, and to be inherently conservative in many of their activities. Certainly, in order to win over the support of the general public, the NEA could not be perceived as a radical or un-American organization. Much of the work of the NEA and the Defense Commission's in the "red scare" period, therefore, must be viewed within this larger context. To a considerable extent, it accepted the political and societal mood of the age because it believed this to be the most effective way to harness widespread approval of public education.⁹³ The NEA and the Defense Commission kept its eyes on the prize: greater public support for American schooling, increased financial funding for education, and improved professional conditions and security for teachers. In its

hunger to accomplish these goals, however, the Commission undoubtedly surrendered some of its principles and integrity to the "red scare."

Despite the committed efforts of its officers, the NEA could not stop the "red scare" from having a profound influence on educational policy and practice in the immediate postwar period. By the 1950s, the "red scare" which had flickered in the early 1940s, soon flared up into a raging inferno which engulfed American public education. The Association did not have the funds, the personnel, or the political or institutional allies effectively to respond to the crisis. Unquestionably, the Defense Commission did extinguish isolated fires. For example, it dampened the influence of individual critics like Allen A. Zoll and it helped to diffuse attacks in selected communities. However, partly because the NEA and the Defense Commission failed to appreciate the enormity of the "red scare" and the influential, political, business, and reactionary forces behind it, it alone could never eliminate all "red scare" attack.

Of greatest significance, because the NEA's Defense Commission accepted many of the underlying assumptions of the prevailing anti-communist mindset, it failed seriously to influence or to challenge the essence of the "red scare" which so dramatically shaped American culture in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Ultimately, communism was to have profoundly less of an impact on American education than the debilitating forces of anti-communism. In the final analysis, the "red scare" proved such a powerful and dominant force that the NEA appeared unable, and at times unwilling, to prevent this ironic reality.

Notes

1. The terminology used to describe the period of anti-communist hysteria following World War II continues to suffer problems. A few historians prefer to portray the period as the "McCarthy era," whereas most prefer to identify it as the "red scare." For a discussion of this problem see Ellen Schrecker, "Archival Sources for the Study of McCarthyism," *Journal of American History* 75 (June 1988): 197. For the purposes of this paper, the more embracing term, "red scare," generally is used.
2. See, for example, Robert Griffith, *Politics of Fear* (Amherst, Massachusetts, 1987); Robert Griffith and Athan Theoharis, editors, *The Specter: Original Essays on the Cold War and the Origins of McCarthyism* (New York, 1974); Thomas C. Reeves, *The Life and Times of Joe McCarthy: A Biography* (New York, 1982); David Cauter, *The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purges Under Truman and Eisenhower* (New York, 1978); Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective* (New York, 1990).
3. Ellen Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities* (New York, 1986), 9.
4. For historians who have documented these "red scare" attacks and influences see, for example, David Hulburd, *This Happened in Pasadena* (New York, 1951); Robert C. Morris, "Era of Anxiety: An Historical Account of the Effects and Reactions to Right Wing Forces Affecting Education during the years 1949-1954" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana State University, 1976); Cauter, *The Great Fear*; Carleton, *Red Scare! Right Wing Hysteria, Fifties Fanaticism and Their Legacy in Texas* (Austin, 1985); John Beineke, "And There Were Giants in the Land: The Life of William Heard Kilpatrick," (unpublished manuscript); Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*; Robert Iversen, *The Communists and the Schools* (New York, 1959); Mary Ann Raywid, *The Ax-Grinders: Critics of Our Public Schools* (New York, 1962).
5. The rapid growth in NEA membership compared favorably with that of the AFT. For example, in 1940 NEA membership was 203,000. In 1950 it soared to 454,000, and in 1960 it reached 714,000. In contrast, the AFT rose gradually from 30,000 in 1940, to 41,000 in 1950, to 59,000 in 1960. Marjorie Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: The AFT and the NEA 1900-1980* (Ithaca, New York, 1990), 277.
6. See, for example, the Seattle schools' response to post World War I "red scare" in, Bryce E. Nelson, *Good Schools: The Seattle Public School System, 1901-1930* (Seattle, 1988). Also, Cauter, *The Great Fear*, 403-404; Carleton, *Red Scare!* 154; Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 22; Diane Ravitch, *The Troubled Crusade: American Education, 1945-1980* (New York, 1983), 82, 112.
7. For the incredible rise in school enrollment in the first sixty years of the twentieth century see, David Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1974), 66-71, 269.
8. Ravitch, *The Troubled Crusade*, 112.
9. United Nations' Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.
10. Donald DuShane, Presidential Address, "A Challenge to the Teaching Profession," *National Education Association of the United States Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the Annual Meeting* (Washington, D. C., 1941); 33. Hereafter cited as *Addresses and Proceedings*.
11. *Addresses and Proceedings* (1941), 770-771.

12. In a rare move, members of the Representative Assembly extensively debated the motion to increase the amount of money allocated to the Defense Commission. Support for the motion was overwhelming. Eventually, the proposed amount was increased from \$12,500 to \$20,000, *Addresses and Proceedings* (1941), 769-776. For further details of the financial arrangements with regard to the Defense Commission see, for example, *Addresses and Proceedings* (1941), 779.
13. The Defense Commission publication, the *Defense Bulletin*, tracked and monitored "red scare" attack in this period launched by organizations such as, The Friends of the Public Schools, the Committee for Constitutional Government, and the Daughters of the American Revolution, see, *Defense Bulletin* 2 (January 1942): 5-7; *Defense Bulletin* 18 (September 1946): 6-7; *Defense Bulletin* 26 (September 1948): 7. The *Bulletin* also revealed that some taxpayer groups, employers' associations, and manufacturing concerns were readily critical of "subversive practices" in the schools, *Defense Bulletin* 2 (June 1942): 3, 9; *Defense Bulletin* 8 (June 1944): 9; *Defense Bulletin* 14 (December 1945): 6. In addition, the *Bulletin* identified damaging political criticism of American teachers from state representatives Ealum E. Bruffet and Erastic Davis of Missouri, Hamer McKenzie of Mississippi, Mississippi Representative John E. Rankin, and the National Federation of Republican Clubs, *Defense Bulletin* 19 (December 1946): 15; *Defense Bulletin* 20 (March 1947): 6. However, despite these very real anti-communist attacks on public education during the years 1941-1947, relative to the next seven years, these attacks remained both isolated and limited in their impact.
14. In the postwar period, the Defense Commission involved itself in many vital activities. The summaries of the work of the Defense Commission contained within the annual *NEA Proceedings and Addresses* additionally suggested the prime importance of the following issues: (1) programs which supported a focus on human brotherhood and international understanding; (2) support for the United Nations and materials produced by UNESCO; (3) opposition to universal military training; (4) campaigns which advocated federal aid to education. See, for example, *Addresses and Proceedings* (1945), 180-182; *Addresses and Proceedings* (1947), 266; *Addresses and Proceedings* (1948), 174.
15. Significantly, the editors of *Public Education Under Criticism* noted that, during 1951 and 1952, the NEA's Defense Commission "devoted practically all of its time to combating criticisms....The Commission's record on answering criticism and meeting attacks clearly puts it in a class by itself." C. Winfield Scott and Clyde M. Hill, eds., *Public Education Under Criticism* (New York, 1954), 7. In addition, the archival records of the Defense Commission reveal the enormous growth in correspondence and activity on the part of the Commission in its efforts to blunt "red scare" attack in the late 1940s and early 1950s.
16. For an incisive commentary and analysis of American society in this period see, for example, Godfrey Hodgson, *America In Our Time* (New York, 1976), 34-47.
17. The deliberate framing of a "crisis" in order to exact political control over the culture was skillfully explicated by British scholar Stuart Hall and his colleagues in, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging the State, and Law, and Order* (London, 1978). Using the example of how the "mugging" crisis in England in the 1970s was grossly exaggerated by powerful blocs in the media and the political arena, Hall convincingly documents how repressive Conservative Party law and order legislation was initiated to quell an illusory "crisis." The parallels with the United States in the 1950s are somewhat striking. The "red scare" was fueled by a "crisis" mentality which permitted conservative forces to impart "control" over the American culture. For a useful definition of "red scare" see, Carleton's description of the "red scare" as "a widespread series of actions by individuals and groups whose intentions were to frighten Americans with false and highly exaggerated charges of Communist subversion for the purposes of political, economic, and psychological profit." Don E. Carleton, "McCarthyism was more than McCarthy: Documenting the Red Scare at the State and Local Level," *The Midwestern Archivist* 12 (1987): 13.
18. Zoll's influence on American education has been well documented. See, for example, Hulburd, *This Happened in Pasadena*; Iversen, *The Communists and the Schools*; Morris "Era of Anxiety;" Cauter, *The Great Fear*; Herbert M. Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958* (New York, 1986); Raywid, *The Ax-Grinders*. Zoll's prominence as an outspoken national critic of education is exemplified by his appearance in a debate before the Harvard Law School Forum. Appearing with Zoll were Carey McWilliams, author and staff writer for the *Nation* magazine, and McGeorge Bundy, who was later to serve Presidents Kennedy and Johnson as special assistant for National Security Affairs (1961-1966). The event received broad media coverage. In particular, historian Robert Iversen remained convinced of Zoll's destructive influence. Iversen noted that, "He, his followers, and his literature can be found near the center of many postwar campaigns against the schools. His dossier on the University of Chicago was almost the sole basis for the Broyles Commission's attack in

- 1949...He was successful in getting the American Medical Association to demand an investigation of the schools for teaching socialized medicine. He addressed audiences from Harvard to Pasadena....the fact is Zoll took his toll". Iversen, *The Communists and the Schools*, 246.
19. Morris, "Era of Anxiety," 237-38.
 20. Allen A. Zoll, "They Want Your Child," 2, as cited in Morris, "Era of Anxiety," 151.
 21. That Allen Zoll's National Council for American Education was targeted in *Defense Bulletins* 28, 35, 38, 39, 43, 46, 50, and 54 illustrated how carefully the Commission attended to his actions and how seriously they perceived his threat to educators in communities across throughout the country.
 22. Raywid, *The Ax Grinders*, 61.
 23. *Defense Bulletin* 36 (January 1951): 4.
 24. See, for example, Morris, "Era of Anxiety," 245; Gordon D. Hall, *The Hate Campaign Against the U. N.: One World Under Attack* (Boston, 1952), 17, box 1025, NEA Archives. Gordon D. Hall noted the active support Hart gave to the racist organization Columbians, Inc., of Atlanta. Indeed, *Life* magazine, December 23, 1946, devoted a two page spread to the organization describing it as "the first openly fascist movement to emerge in the postwar U.S." as cited in Hall, *The Hate Campaign Against the U. N.*, 20.
 25. Hall, *The Hate Campaign Against the U. N.*, 19.
 26. Hall, *The Hate Campaign Against the U. N.*, 21.
 27. For more expansive accounts of these individuals see, Morris "Era of Anxiety;" Raywid, *The Ax-Grinders*. For an interesting account of Hoiles' views on education, see Lewis Fay, "Abolish Public Schools" *The Nation's Schools* 50 (August 1952).
 28. Significantly, Schrecker remarked that in 1952, 185 of the 221 Republicans in Congress applied for seats on HUAC, an unheard of request only a few years before, *No Ivory Tower*, 8. Attacking communism became equated with defending Americanism. More importantly, the Congressional investigations brought increased media attention, popular national notoriety, and substantial political power.
 29. Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, 180.
 30. See, Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, 180. McCarthy was appointed chairman of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigation of the Senate Committee on Government Operations.
 31. *Defense Bulletin* 48 (January 1953): 3.
 32. Cauter, *The Great Fear*, 419; Iversen, *The Communists and the Schools*, 336.
 33. Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 77.
 34. Cauter, *The Great Fear*, 418; Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, 9.
 35. Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom, "Teachers' Oaths and Related State Requirements," 7, 22, 19, June 1949, box 1010, NEA Archives. The Defense Commission and the Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom worked very closely together in their opposition to loyalty oaths. Indeed, Virginia Kinnaird, associate secretary of the Defense Commission, served as a liaison officer on the Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom during the early 1950s.
 36. NEA, "1952 Report of the Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom," 15, box 1007, NEA Archives.
 37. Scrutiny of the Defense Commission's files clearly reveal the widespread nature of "red scare" attack. Attacks, occurred in dozens of communities many of them explicitly identified by the staff of the Commission. They included: Scarsdale, New York; Port Washington, New York; Englewood, New Jersey; Battle Creek, Michigan; Portland, Oregon; New Haven, Connecticut; Atlanta, Georgia; Palo Alto, California; Montgomery County, Maryland; San Angelo, Texas; New York, New York; Miami, Florida; Houston, Texas; Columbus, Ohio; Muskogee, Oklahoma; Norwalk, Connecticut; San Francisco, California; St. Paul, Minnesota; Tenafly, New Jersey; Birmingham, Alabama; Ferndale, Michigan; Monterey, California; McAllen, Texas; Indianapolis, Indiana; Eugene, Oregon; Denver, Colorado; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Upper Arlington, Ohio; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Pasadena, California; Los Angeles, California; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; New Orleans, Louisiana; Kalamazoo, Michigan; Tulane County, California; Camden, New Jersey. This list of towns and cities was compiled from letters, newspaper reports, investigations, research findings, and information bulletins contained within the box files of the Defense Commission at the NEA Archives.
 38. Iversen, *The Communists and the Schools*, 257.
 39. The personal toll exacted by the "red scare" has been documented by a number of historians. See, for example, Iversen, *The Communists and the Schools*; Raywid, *The Ax-Grinders*; Specifically, in *A Matter of Loyalty*, 29, Kransdorf detailed how one New York teacher was driven to suicide by the trauma of a "red scare" investigation. Ellen Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, 302-305, offered powerful descriptions of how the personal lives of many educators were ruined by the wounding allegations made against them in this period. Although Schrecker's work principally deals with those in higher education, the experiences she describes mirror those uncovered by historians exploring the impact of the "red scare" on public school teachers.
 40. Cauter, *The Great Fear*, 406.
 41. Hutchins made these remarks in an article entitled "Are Our Teachers Afraid to Teach?" published in *Look* on 9

- March 1954. The Defense Commission printed excerpts of the article in *Defense Bulletin* 55 (April 1954): 2, and subsequently made reprints available to NEA members. For historical commentary on the article see, for example, Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, 303; Cate, *The Great Fear*, 429.
42. The National Commission for the Defense of Democracy Through Education, "Report of an Investigation Houston, Texas: The Study of Factors Related to Educational Unrest in a Large School System." (Washington, D.C., 1954): 27, 38. Hereafter cited as Defense Commission Report: Houston.
 43. *Defense Bulletin* 55 (April 1954): 2.
 44. Defense Commission, "State of the Nation in Regard to Attacks on the Schools and Problems of Concern to Teachers," (Washington, D. C., 1955): 4-5, box 1024, NEA Archives.
 45. Certainly, the AFT had no equivalent group. In fact, during the 1940s and early 1950s, the AFT frequently shied away from the defense of teachers identified as "socialist" or "subversive" for fear of appearing un-American or disloyal. For the AFT's stance in this period see, for example, Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 184-195; Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 24-26; Iversen, *The Communists and the Schools*, 208-222. Similarly, other organizations such as the Progressive Education Association, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, and Phi Delta Kappa offered little or no resistance to attack.
 46. *Addresses and Proceedings* (1953), 275; *Addresses and Proceedings* (1954), 114.
 47. *Stewardship Report of the Defense Commission* (Washington D. C., 1961), 6, box 1024, NEA Archives.
 48. By 1950, the Commission's full-time staff included an executive secretary, an associate secretary, a legal counsel, a field secretary, an assistant secretary, and several administrative appointees. From its inception in 1941, the Commission was guided by ten people. The executive committee of the NEA appointed seven members for three-year terms. Also serving were the current president of the NEA, the chairman of the NEA's Board of Trustees, and the NEA's executive secretary. In addition, each state and regional teachers' association named one representative bringing the total membership to sixty. In intention and practice, therefore, the Commission was both a national organization and one which boasted the inclusion of some of the NEA's most influential and powerful members.
 49. Skaife, "An Evaluation of the Program of the National Commission for the Defense of Democracy Through Education," (Ph. D. diss., University of Maryland, 1951), 149.
 50. *Defense Bulletin* 35 (July 1950): 1.
 51. Attention to the files, correspondence, and information bulletins of the Defense Commission reveal a vast array of "red scare" organizations. They included: the American Flag Committee, the Committee for Constitutional Government, Sons of the American Revolution, Daughters of the American Revolution, School Development Council, Pro-America, Anti-Communist League of California, Fighters for Freedom, Employers Association of Chicago, We The People, Constitutional Educational League, The Committee of Ten, Catholic War Veterans, America's Future, Inc., the National Council for American Education, the National Association of Pro-America, The American Educational Association, The Conference of American Small Business Organizations, Friends of the Public Schools of America, Guardians of American Education, Facts Forum, Minute Women, National Economic Council, and The Church League of America.
 52. See, Skaife, "The Conflict Continues," *Nation's Schools* 53 (March 1954): 45; "They Oppose Progress," *Nation's Schools* 47 (January 1951): 31-33; "They Sow Distrust," *Nation's Schools* 47 (January 1951): 29; "They Want Tailored Schools," *Nation's Schools* 47 (May 1951): 35-37.
 53. See, for example, Skaife, "The Sound and The Fury," *Phi Delta Kappan* 24 (June 1953): 358; Skaife, "Groups Affecting Education," in William Van Til, ed., *Forces Affecting American Education*, (Washington D. C., 1953), 43-86; Richard Barnes Kennan, "What Are They Calling You Today?" *Childhood Education* 40 (October 1951): 53-57; Kennan, "Education—Democracy's Best Defense," *Educational Leadership* 8 (May 1951): 458; Kennan, "No Ivory Tower For You," *NEA Journal* 40 (May 1951): 317-318.
 54. The *Defense Bulletin* was first issued in December 1941. Between February 1945 and September 1955, fifty issues of the *Bulletin* were produced. Typically, it was published five or six times each year.
 55. See, *Defense Bulletin* 14 (December 1945): 6; *Defense Bulletin* 18 (September 1946): 4; *Defense Bulletin* 33 (June 1950): 8.
 56. Defense Commission, "A Study of the National Commission for the Defense of Democracy Through Education", (Washington D. C., 1959), 8.
 57. See, Skaife, "An Evaluation of the Program of the National Commission for the Defense of Democracy Through Education," 149; *Addresses and Proceedings* (1950), 325; Edgar B. Wesley, *NEA: The First Hundred Years, The Building of the Teaching Profession* (New York, 1957), 311; *Defense Bulletin* 38 (February 1951): 3; *Defense Bulletin* 41 (December 1951): 4. For specific

- details of individual conferences in, for example, Denver, Philadelphia, San Francisco, see, "Public Education in a Dangerous Era," box 1021, NEA Archives.
58. For accounts of the NCCPS see, Roy E. Larsen, "A Layman's View of the Importance of Public Education to Our Society," *The Educational Forum* 16 (May 1952): 389-395; Arthur Zilversmit, *Changing Schools: Progressive Education in Theory and Practice, 1930-1960* (Chicago, 1993), 112; Willard Goslin, "The People and Their Schools," in *Forces Affecting American Education*, ed. William Van Til, 160-166. For accounts of the NCPT see, *Defense Bulletin* 52 (November 1953): 1-2 and the address of John E. Hayes to the NEA Delegation in San Francisco in 1951, *Addresses and Proceedings* (1951), 43-46.
 59. See, the address of Frederick L. Hipp, president of the NSPRA, to the NEA delegation in 1951, *Addresses and Proceedings* (1951), 247-249.
 60. For an account of the success of "American Education Week" see, *Addresses and Proceedings* (1952), 38.
 61. *Addresses and Proceedings* (1951), 247; *Addresses and Proceedings* (1952), 283.
 62. *Addresses and Proceedings* (1954), 249.
 63. *Addresses and Proceedings* (1951), 247; *Addresses and Proceedings* (1955), 39. Commager's article, "Our Schools Have Kept Us Free," originally was published in *Life*, 16 October 1950, 46-47.
 64. The Houston controversy and the dismissal of deputy superintendent George Ebey did receive national prominence in *Time* magazine, the *Nation*, and *The Christian Century*. See, "Houston: That Word," *Time*, 27 July 1953, 51; "Ebey Story," *Nation*, 26 September 1953, 242; "School Man Fired as Controversial," *The Christian Century*, 17 August 1953, 885. However, while the Ebey debacle appeared significant, the Pasadena controversy, which occurred two years earlier, aroused considerably more attention. See, for example, David Hulburd, *This Happened in Pasadena*; Carey McWilliams, "The Enemy in Pasadena," *The Christian Century* 68 (January 1951): 11-13; "Quandary in Pasadena," *Time*, 27 November 1950, 85-87; "Pasadena Free-for-All," *Newsweek*, 27 November 1950, 75; James B. Conant, "The Superintendent Was the Target," *The New York Times Book Review*, 29 April 1951, 1, 27. John B. Sheerin, "What Was the Question at Pasadena?" *The Catholic World* 174 (October 1951): 1-5; Frank Chodorov, "Educators Should Be Warned by the Pasadena Revolt," *The Saturday Evening Post*, 14 July 1951, 10; "The Public School Crisis," *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 8 September 1951; Frederick Hechlinger, "Aftermath in Pasadena," *New York Herald Tribune*, 6, 7, 8, August 1951. In addition, box 1040 of the NEA Archives houses a collection of press clippings from newspapers all over the country. Each one indicated the importance to education of the Pasadena affair in general and the Defense Commission's report in particular.
 65. For example, David Hulburd commented that, "Mr. Goslin was the focal point of the controversy that blazed in Pasadena in the fall of 1950. But this is not the story of a personal martyrdom. It was what Willard Goslin stood for and fought against that deserves our attention. An analysis of what happened in Pasadena provides a lesson of grave importance: any school system in the country is alarmingly vulnerable today to attack from outside the local community as well as from within." *This Happened in Pasadena*, ix. See also, Zilversmit, *Changing Schools*, 103; Raywid, *The Ax-Grinders*, 162-163.
 66. See, Carleton, *Red Scare!* 168-171; National Commission for the Defense of Democracy Through Education, "The Pasadena Story: An Analysis of Some of the Forces and Factors that Injured a Superior School System" (Washington D. C., 1951) 15-16, 25. Hereafter cited as Defense Commission Report: Pasadena.
 67. See, Carleton, *Red Scare!* 221-222; Defense Commission Report: Pasadena, 11.
 68. For explicit evidence of teacher self-censorship and caution see, Defense Commission Report: Houston, 23-28.
 69. For example, the Defense Commission investigation of Houston reported "There is no reason to believe there are any disloyal or Communist teachers in the Houston school system." Defense Commission Report: Houston, 30. Similarly, no evidence of subversion was uncovered in Pasadena. Indeed, even the vehemently anti-communist California Senate Investigating Committee, noted that there was "no clear cut evidence of known subversives actually within the school system itself." "California State Senate Investigating Committee on Education," 44, box 1040, NEA Archives.
 70. The Defense Commission received many letters of praise from local educators in Pasadena. See, for example, Alfred Ludlow to Skaife, 17 January 1951; Dorothea Fry to Skaife, 5 February 1951; Robert Gilchrist to Skaife, 11 July 1951, box 1040, NEA Archives. The Defense Commission Reports in Houston and Pasadena were distributed throughout the profession and many of their recommendations readily were adopted in school districts across the nation.
 71. Alonzo B. Myers served as chair of the Commission from 1942-1946. He was former visiting professor at Yale University and George Peabody College for Teachers and chairman of the Department of Higher Education at New York University. Myers was succeeded in 1947 by Ernest

O. Melby, Dean of the School of Education at New York University. Dean Harold Benjamin of the University of Maryland enjoyed the chairmanship of the Commission in 1949 and 1950. Distinguished professors Frank Graham of the University of North Carolina and Harold C. Hand of the University of Illinois also served on the Commission from 1941-1943 and 1949-1954 respectively. Richard Barnes Kennan was Associate Secretary of the Commission from 1944-1947 and Executive Secretary from 1947-1961. Givens served as the NEA Executive Secretary from 1941-1952.

72. See, *Addresses and Proceedings*, (1941), 772-775.
73. Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 277.
74. Letters from educators who praised the Defense Commission for its protection of teachers are commonly found in the NEA archives. In particular, these letters are located in the box files which contain materials from the towns and cities in which the Defense Commission conducted investigations.
75. Many historians agree that the internal threat from Communist infiltration was minimal. See, for example, Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, 8; J. Ronald Oakley, *God's Country: America in the Fifties* (New York, 1986), 74-75. At its peak, during the US-Soviet military alliance during World War II, membership of the American Communist Party was fewer than 80,000. In 1950, Party membership dropped to 43,000, and, by the end of the fifties, amounted to no more than 5,000 members. Certainly, teachers existed who had once turned to communism in the 1930s in reaction to the troubling emergence of fascism in Europe and the devastation of the Depression years in the United States. In truth, however, the number of those committed to the communist cause in the 1950s was minuscule in comparison with the total number of teachers in the country as a whole. In the early 1950s, just over a million teachers worked in public education. Even if one accepts the inflated calculations of Bella Dodd, the once communist activist turned congressional informer, the grand total amounted to no more than 1,500 teachers. Dodd's testimony, however, noted that this figure included those "sympathetic" to communism and those who had supported the Communist Party at one time or another. Likely, therefore, even by Dodd's generous accounting, the number was significantly fewer. For an account of Dodd's influence see, Iversen, *The Communists and the Schools*, 315-318.
76. For discussion of this decision at the NEA annual conference see, *Addresses and Proceedings* (1949), 94-102. Whether or not a person could be both a responsible educator and a Communist Party member emerged as one of the burning issues of the "red scare" era. Conflicting opinions on the subject neatly were encapsulated in a debate in the *New York Times Magazine* between Sidney Hook and Alexander Meiklejohn following the dismissal of scholars at the University of Washington in 1949. See, Sidney Hook, "Should Communists Be Allowed to Teach?" *New York Times Magazine*, 27 February 1949, 7, 22-29; Alexander Meiklejohn, "Should Communists Be Allowed to Teach?" *New York Times Magazine*, 27 March 1949, 10, 64-66. See also, Sidney Hook, "What Shall We Do About Communist Teachers?" *Saturday Evening Post*, 10 September 1949, 43.
77. The Educational Policies Commission was established jointly by the NEA and the American Association of School Administrators. In addition, the Commission included representatives from the NEA Departments of Classroom Teachers, of Higher Education, of Elementary School Principals, and of Secondary School Principals. *Addresses and Proceedings* (1949), 94.
78. The resolution was accepted by a vote of 2,995 to 5. Although virtually no dissent was offered by delegates, Rose Russell, NEA member from New York argued against the proposal. See, *Addresses and Proceedings* (1949), 100.
79. *Addresses and Proceedings* (1949), 99.
80. The NEA's position stood in sharp contrast, for example, with Robert Hutchins at the University of Chicago. In 1949, the University of Chicago faced investigation by the Illinois Senate's Seditious Activities Commission. Hutchins refused to become embroiled in the witch hunt. He argued that he would not testify "concerning subversive activities at the University of Chicago because there are none." Hutchins defended the rights of educators to academic freedom. He argued that, "the University of Chicago does not believe in the un-American doctrine of guilt by association. The fact that some Communists belong to, believe in, or even dominate some of the organizations to which some of our professors belong does not show that those professors are engaged in subversive activities. All that such facts would show would be that these professors believed in some of the objects of the organizations." As cited in Ravitch, *The Troubled Crusade*, 99. Significantly, in the "red scare" era, few academics or educational organizations, including the NEA, were courageous enough publicly to share or to endorse Hutchins' views.
81. Melby further wrote, "Communist propaganda is insidious, unscrupulous, and crafty. It cannot be met through ignorance, through naive dogmatism, or fallacious reasoning. Only people who have clear understanding, who are in possession of the facts, and who know the process of reasoning characteristic of both free society and communist societies can cope with

propaganda. It is important to equip boys and girls as fully as possible to meet the argument and withstand the propaganda." Ernest O. Melby, "American Education Under Fire" (Washington D. C., 1951), 32, box 1025, NEA Archives.

82. *Addresses and Proceedings* (1949), 157.
83. *Addresses and Proceedings* (1949), 119.
84. See, for example, the opinions of teachers on the influence of the American Legion in, Defense Commission, "State of the Nation," 4-5.
85. The article that most incensed NEA leaders was Irene Corbally Kuhn, "Your Child is Their Target," *The American Legion Magazine* (June 1952): 18.
86. See, for example, *Addresses and Proceedings* (1950), 120; *Addresses and Proceedings* (1952), 234.
87. Allan M. West, *The National Education Association: The Power Base for Education* (New York, 1980), 68.
88. Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 183; The Defense Commission leadership also asserted that, although they generally disapproved of strikes, "this is not to say that strikes or other drastic action might not be justified in extreme cases where there has been gross injustice, fraud, or coercion in connection with the adjusting and signing of contracts." *Defense Bulletin* 19 (December 1946): 3.
89. *Defense Bulletin* 41 (December 1951): 7.
90. See, *Addresses and Proceedings* (1950), 320. The capitulation of the profession to loyalty measures and the reasons for it neatly were explained by Earl J. McGrath, U. S. Commissioner for Education. In his address at the NEA annual conference, he told delegates, "I understand your resolution opposing loyalty oaths." "At the same time," he continued, "I believe we should be ready and willing to sign loyalty oaths if present pressures of public opinion require them. Organized opposition to loyalty oaths places the profession in a questionable position with the public and imposes upon us a heavy burden of explanation at a time when our energies are needed to promote democratic values and practices rather than to fight a rear guard action. Refusal to sign the loyalty oaths where they are requested weakens the claims of teachers to their right to teach the full truth freely." *Addresses and Proceedings* (1949), 49.
91. See, for example, *Addresses and Proceedings* (1953), 159.
92. Skaife, "Groups Affecting Education," in *Forces Affecting American Education*, ed. Van Til, 40.
93. Iversen made the point that because of the enormous financial pressures on schools in the immediate postwar period, administrators had to win over the public and "meet every budget with cap in hand." "The result has been," Iversen contended, "a tendency toward blandness in school programs, a reluctance to antagonize legislature or donor, and a sensitivity to criticism from even the most irresponsible sources." *The Communists and the Schools*, 367.