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Alsop: We Accuse!

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WE ACCUSE! By *Joseph and Stewart Alsop*. New York: Simon and Schuster. 1955. Pp. 88. \$1.

This pamphlet by a well-known writing team is of interest to lawyers because it presents, though perhaps in biased form, some insight into the workings of the federal loyalty system, as exemplified by one *cause célèbre* of the postwar decade—the finding by the Atomic Energy Commission that Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer was a security risk and could not be given access to classified material.

The Alsops, in an expansion of an earlier article published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, criticize what they consider to be strained findings of the Personnel Security Board and the Commission itself from what they deem to be a far from black-and-white record. (This reviewer must confess that he has not perused that record which, as printed, contains more than 900 pages of testimony. One may suspect that the same statement could be made as to many persons who have entered into violent discussions about this case.)

The authors also advance the thesis that personality conflicts, principally stemming from an alleged rivalry between Dr. Oppenheimer and Admiral Strauss, the present chairman of the Commission, were responsible in large measure for the outcome, or at least for the institution, of the inquiry. It is doubtful whether such an attack serves a useful purpose. A better approach might well have been to analyze in more detail the facts from which the Board and the Commission drew their conclusions. From the lawyer's point of view cases like the Oppenheimer hearing are difficult to analyze, partly because the criteria for decision are unclear, partly because the persons who do the deciding are not judges in the familiar sense, and partly because of his lack of knowledge as to the degree of security necessary within the various government agencies.

Although the Alsops criticize the one-sided picture of an employee which is given by the present security system—since evidence of virtue is less sensational than evidence of vice, and thus weighs less heavily in the public and agency mind—they do not pinpoint the problem of alleviating the evils while retaining the safeguards.

The pamphlet is in a fairly vehement vein, but it is well-written and sufficiently restrained to merit more than casual consideration. It is a little disconcerting to find the Alsops, who among other "liberal" columnists condemn the attribution of guilt by association, in effect adopting the practice them-

selves. In discussing the proceedings before the Security Board, they impugn the motives of Roger Robb, counsel for the Board, because of his association (as legal counsel) with Fulton Lewis, Jr., a professedly anti-Oppenheimer radio commentator. Perhaps their belief from a reading of the transcript that Mr. Robb was unduly partisan in his questioning influenced this.

Since the Oppenheimer case and its repercussions in the scientific world are and will be with us, the Alsops' tract is well worth the reading.

George S. Flint, S.Ed.