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Truman, McCarthy and McCarthyism

The Battle for the Cold War Consensus

By

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This essay examines the political contest between President Harry S. Truman and Senator Joseph McCarthy (WS.), a contest which began with McCarthy’s speech in Wheeling, West Virginia and ended with the presidential election of 1952. What began as a dispute over Truman’s policies against domestic communism soon escalated into a partisan war for control over the issue of anti-communism. Truman, who was more than willing to have a showdown with Republicans on the Cold War, denounced his critics as “McCarthyites,” politicians who lied to the public and played upon its hysteria.

In his reaction to McCarthy, however, Truman engineered his own defeat. His own extreme anti-communism and his extreme partisanship placed the president in a theoretical straightjacket. His extremism prevented him from offering a clear distinction between his anti-communism and that of McCarthy. In the absence of such a distinction, Truman could neither destroy McCarthy nor retain his leadership of the issue of Cold War anti-communism.

Truman continued to wage a zero-sum game. He demanded that Congress censure McCarthy, but he refused to offer any concessions or admit any mistakes. He demanded that Congress approve of his involvement in Korea, but he refused to allow it any direct involvement. Faced by an executive branch in disarray, Congress began to develop its own policies of anti-communism and to criticize Truman’s handling of the war in Korea. Truman damned such congressional initiatives as McCarthyism.

Without allies in Congress to help him reassure a troubled public, the President made several attempts to seize the initiative unilaterally. He sought to prove that he was the nation’s fiercest anti-communist, and he sacrificed civil liberties in order to do so. The attempts were not only dishonorable, they reinforced the contradictions within his position and left him with precious few supporters.
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INTRODUCTION

President Harry S. Truman’s response to the attack upon his domestic anti-communist record made by Senator Joseph McCarthy was a spectacular failure. The two-year long contest between these two partisans transformed the theory and practice of Cold War anti-communism from a winning campaign issue for Truman into a powerful indictment of his administration. The president’s inability to counter McCarthy’s charges stemmed in large measure from the dangerous precedents he himself had set into the theory and practice of domestic anti-communism. But it was Truman’s response to McCarthy that, more than any other person or event, brought about the triumph of McCarthyism.

From the beginning, the Truman White House took a position on the Senator from Wisconsin and his charges from which it could not retreat. Given McCarthy’s perfidy and Truman’s ideological commitment to the Cold War, it made perfect sense for the president to assert that his anti-communism was rational and effective while his opponent’s was pernicious and unwarranted. Confident of victory, Truman also continued to sell the American people his own apocalyptic brand of anti-communism. The debate between Truman and McCarthy quickly degenerated into a contest over who was the most effective Cold Warrior, the more extreme
anti-communist. Burdened by the exigencies of fate and
confined by the responsibilities of high office, Truman was
no match for McCarthy when it came to the game of one-
upmanship. Even as anti-communism became a national
obsession, Truman’s leadership of it weakened.

Ignoring mounting evidence to the contrary, Truman
assumed that Congress would be forced to censure McCarthy.
Convinced of eventual victory, Truman made the most of it.
The administration praised the vigilance of its anti-
communism while condemning its critics as pernicious
political opportunists. The refusal to acknowledge the
problems within the theory and practice of the anti-
communism—in the face of events like the conviction of
Alger Hiss--opened the door for Congress to reassert its
role in national policy. Truman, never one to back down,
criticized and opposed Congressional efforts to demonstrate
their patriotism by weighing in on matters of internal or
external security. In response, Congress not only refused
to denounce McCarthy, it also ignored Presidential anti-
communist initiatives in favor of its own.

Truman’s public approval rating sank to a record low,
reflecting a widespread belief that his domestic and foreign
anti-communist policies had failed. Truman attributed this
sentiment to “McCarthyism” and swore to defeat it. His
uncompromising position had, however, already foreclosed the possibility of admitting his mistakes gracefully or of strengthening his political alliances. To beat "the McCarthyites," Truman had but one strategy: to redouble the effort against domestic communists. His attempt not only further diminished his credibility but also increased the abuse of civil liberties. Thus did Truman's presidency end not just in defeat, but in disgrace.
CHAPTER ONE

Oneuupsmanship

Though McCarthy caused a sensation overnight, his outrageous tale of a communist conspiracy within the Truman administration had not come as a bullet from the blue sky. Truman understood McCarthy's claims as another in a series of attempts by the Republican right to gain control over the issues of domestic anti-communism and the Cold War. Having also learned that McCarthy could not prove the specifics of his allegations, Truman considered a showdown with McCarthy the perfect vehicle for silencing his opponents. The president willingly extrapolated McCarthy into a partisan contest for leadership of America's anti-communist fervor. In effect, Truman validated the extreme anti-communism McCarthy embodied, and it proved a costly mistake. As the anti-communist debate became more extreme, the distinctions between the anti-communism of Truman and that of McCarthy diminished. Truman failed to see that his extreme anti-communism and partisanship were the root causes of his ineffectual policy; thus he watched helplessly as his contest with McCarthy intensified, his political position degenerated into a mass of contradictions, and the White House became isolated from both the public and Congress.

While strident anti-communism had roots stretching back
decades, the parameters of the debate between McCarthy and Truman began to take shape soon after Truman became president. In 1946, he became convinced that America had to prevent the extension of Soviet influence around the globe. Since this policy represented a fundamental departure in U.S. foreign policy sure to arouse great opposition, the proclamation of the Truman Doctrine had to be designed, as one of Truman's friends advised him, "to scare the hell out of the American people." So the president announced the Cold War in the gravest of terms. The democratic West, to prevent the totalitarian East from enslaving the world, had to combat communism across the globe. Recognizing that a program to guard against communists within America was a necessary adjunct to his foreign policy, Truman also signed Executive Order 9835 a few months later.

Executive Order 9835 widened the parameters of internal security well beyond the search for individuals and groups undertaking acts of treason or sabotage against the United States. The order authorized Attorney General Tom Clark to generate a list of organizations considered "openly communistic" or sympathetic to communism. It also created a bureaucracy to protect the security of the government by investigating the loyalty of its employees. The loyalty program and the Attorney General's list identified
individuals who had the potential to commit disloyal acts. As one scholar put it, Truman ordered Clark and Loyalty Review Board Chairman Seth Richardson to take action against dangers which were "hypothetical and remote." Employees accused of disloyalty were entitled to a hearing but they did not have the right to know the identity of the informants against them. Truman and Clark further enhanced their reputation for protecting the country from subversives by prosecuting the leadership of the Communist Party USA under the provisions of the Smith Act of 1940.

All of the president's hard work, aided by events abroad, paid off; the issue of the Cold War heated up during the presidential election of 1948. During the campaign, while most Republicans continued to criticize Truman's interventionist foreign policy, a few broke with their Party's historic isolationism. Accepting the tenets of the Truman Doctrine, a few members of the conservative wing of the GOP criticized Truman for his failure to prevent the establishment of Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe and began to investigate the problem of domestic communist subversion. Though a portent of things to come, the criticisms and investigation failed to prevent the election of a president who had formulated both the apocalyptic interpretation of the East-West struggle and the nation's response to the
threat.

Truman won an upset victory over Thomas Dewey of New York in large part because the tenets of the Cold War ideology had struck a resonant chord with Americans. The president pressed the attack by criticizing Republicans—especially conservative Republicans like Karl Mundt, Richard Nixon and Robert Taft—for their opposition to the Marshall plan and the other applications of the doctrine. Truman ridiculed the Republicans' investigation into the threat to national security poised by communists as a "red herring" and the Republicans who made it as isolationists.\(^6\)

After the presidential election, a number of events occurred that made it appear the communists were winning the Cold War, thereby increasing the number of Republicans willing to charge the State Department with treason and the White House with ineptitude. According to the Republican right, the government had abetted the Soviet Union's development of an atomic bomb as well as the communist takeover in China. For proof, they offered Secretary of State Dean Acheson's White Paper on China, a statement of policy in which the secretary had argued that Nationalist China could not be saved. Nixon, Mundt and others touted this formulation of events as the logical extrapolation of Truman's Cold War doctrine. The president, however,
considered their allegation that U.S. foreign policy had been guided by a communist conspiracy to be as preposterous as conservative Republicans representing themselves as the defenders of domestic security.

Primarily concerned with deepening American's commitment to his interventionist foreign policy, Truman made no concerted effort to articulate the limits of communism's threat to national security. In terms of foreign policy, his efforts to explain that American could not have stopped the Chinese Revolution coexisted uneasily with his insistence that the future of the world depended upon the containment of the communist menace. Nor did he limit his assessment of the communist threat to internal security. On several occasions in 1949, Truman's White House Staff informed him of the difficulties involved in defining what constituted 'disloyalty' among government employees. But Truman challenged neither the Republican right's interpretation of world events nor the dangerously broad definition of disloyalty used both by his loyalty program and Republicans alike. In the absence of such leadership, the nation remained confused and alarmed by the Cold War.

Confusion and alarm grew exponentially following the conviction of Alger Hiss in late January of 1950. Hiss,
formerly of the State Department, was reviled by Republicans as a communist spy. The trial's extended length, high drama, and visible currents of class conflict coalesced into a seminal event. Critics of the administration were quick to point out that Hiss had been a member of the American delegation at Yalta, thereby bolstering their case that the government had been led astray by communists. Worse, there seemed to be all the hallmarks of a cover-up attempt. The exposure of Hiss had been engineered by Republicans while the administration dragged its feet. Secretary of State Dean Acheson had made the administration still more vulnerable when he had publicly refused to forsake his friendship with Alger Hiss. The arrest of Klaus Fuchs, a former scientist at Los Alamos who confessed to selling atomic secrets to the Soviets, occurred just two weeks after Hiss and just a few days before McCarthy's famous speech in Wheeling, West Virginia.

Rising above the clamor of Cold War politics, the daring statements in McCarthy's speech put him at the forefront of a movement to investigate the efficacy of the administration's anti-communism. The assertion that he had a list of spies in the government, delivered at a Lincoln Day celebration on February 9, 1950 and repeated often during the next few days, would have been hard to ignore.
To make sure he picked a fight, he cabled the president on February 11 and released the telegram to the press. In it, he brazenly demanded that Truman allow Congress to inspect the files of the State Department loyalty board, which supervised investigations into the loyalty of the department's employees. "Failure on your part," warned the senator, "will label the Democratic Party the bedfellow of international communism." His temerity, given recent events, provoked a reply from the administration and produced headlines in the newspapers.

Truman's riposte, probably drafted that evening, revealed his confidence that McCarthy's claim of possessing a list of communists in government had been a rhetorical flourish that the senator would not dare repeat. Truman ridiculed him, contending that anyone who would bypass the proper authorities and make such a demand in public must be "un-American." The president's contempt for McCarthy's insolence was understandable. As he saw it, a junior senator of dubious reputation had slandered his courageous leadership. Truman never sent the telegram to McCarthy. Perhaps he discussed the problem during his daily White House staff meeting before deciding that a direct presidential response was not appropriate; it was his practice to work closely with his staff to set policy and
then allow them to develop the specifics. In any event, the job of offering the administration's first answer to the accusations fell to Under Secretary of State Jack Peurifoy.

Peurifoy expressed the administration's defiance in a State Department Bulletin released on February 13. His confidence stemmed from the errors in McCarthy's facts. After refuting the important points, he defended the integrity of his department and its loyalty program. The under secretary then demanded that the senator disclose his information to the proper authorities. Picking up one of the president's points, Peurifoy contended that anyone who had the interests of the nation at heart, any "patriotic, loyal American" who had discovered a conspiracy, would take care to prevent a "witch-hunt."

The rebuttal served only to increase the media's interest in McCarthy, though the Senator needed little help in attracting attention. In the midst of a cross-country speaking tour, McCarthy varied his allegations daily. The seriousness of his allegations kept reporters clamoring for the documents he held while he spoke. Surrounded at the Denver Airport, he rooted through his carry-on luggage before deciding that he had left his list of Communists in his other bag. The scene exceeded the bounds of credulity and made the front pages.
McCarthy's charges caught the White House Staff in transition. Charles Murphy became the White House Special Council on February 15. He and his staff assumed not only the task of formulating domestic policy, but of writing the speeches to sell it and conducting its implementation. Thus, the White House had any number of pressing concerns. They nevertheless produced an initial assessment of the McCarthy situation. Presidential Assistant Stephen J. Spingarn wrote a memorandum suggesting the position Truman should take in his upcoming press conference. Spingarn, chosen to be a member of the president's domestic policy staff because of his expertise in matters of loyalty and security, had watched loyalty investigations degenerate into acrimony and slander since 1944. His long experience with the difficulties inherent in deciding questions of loyalty, however, did not incline him to caution. Spingarn encouraged the president to blast McCarthy for jeopardizing the civil rights and professional reputations of those accused. Spingarn's memo also suggested that McCarthy be charged with disloyalty if the senator did not hand over his list to "responsible officials." The next day, reporters asked the president about the allegations.

While more temperate than his reaction a week earlier, the President staked out an absolute position. He agreed
with the Department of State that "there was not a word of truth in what the Senator said." In a speech broadcast nationwide on radio and television a few days later, he chastised the Republicans for inventing "new scare words" to precipitate a scandal and to erode public support for the New Deal and the Truman Doctrine. The jabs at McCarthy's loyalty, combined with a willingness to fit McCarthy into the larger political arena, reflected the administration's confidence that the problem could be turned to good account for the Democrats. Truman's tactic of billing McCarthy as the emblem of the GOP in order to score a political victory resembled that employed by the Republican right, which used the perceived failures of the State Department to indict the administration. Neither strategy was calculated to defuse the growing controversy. The partisan polemics captured the nation's attention, and pressure built for a resolution. In the absence of executive initiative, the issue fell to Congress a week later.

On February 20, McCarthy took the floor of the Senate to explain himself, carrying a briefcase bulging with documents. Fully protected by congressional immunity, he invented an outrageous tale of treason involving the highest levels of government. Decorum in the upper chamber gave way to acrimony. Democrats, led by Majority Leader Scott Lucas
of Pennsylvania, challenged him at every turn, delineating inconsistencies and demanding proof. McCarthy, aided and abetted by a few members of the Republican right, parried the thrusts well enough to maintain the appearance of having a case.

Recognizing that something had to be done, the Senate created a subcommittee to investigate. Known as the Tydings subcommittee after its chairman, Millard Tydings (D, Md), it was granted the power to subpoena material from the administration. McCarthy heartily concurred; without subpoena powers, he chortled, the investigation would be a "whitewash."\(^{19}\)

McCarthy's confidence probably came from the number of important allies popping up all over Washington. The China Lobby, a loose coalition of congressmen and well-connected lobbyists, publicly endorsed him and shared information with him privately. Members of the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) also lent a hand. McCarthy's found support for his charges not merely from other critics of the president, but also from members of Truman administration. FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover and Attorney General Tom Clark had stated that there were subversives in government.\(^{20}\) Hoover, considered by most American as the guardian of national security, became a close ally of
McCarthy. The FBI Director's support for McCarthy became one of the reasons Truman had to both hate and fear Hoover's role in the Second Red Scare.

Though probably aware of McCarthy's powerful supporters, Murphy, Spingarn, and their colleague George Elsey recognized that the power of subpoena caused big problems. The possibility of the Senate issuing a subpoena for files which the president had ordered closed in 1948 opened up an abiding dispute over whether Congress ultimately held control over the executive branch. In addition, the staff knew that the information in the files, given the confused nature of the standard of disloyalty, represented a grave threat. The loyalty files contained a great deal of hearsay which, if applied to an extreme definition of disloyalty, could lead to another Hiss case.

The staff tried to develop a position that would protect the White House from a congressional subpoena for its loyalty files. The subcommittee’s license was, the administration maintained, "without question an unlawful intrusion by the Senate upon the constitutional prerogatives of the Chief Executive." Executive protection of State Department files was "not arbitrary or capricious," but based on "long-standing and sound constitutional theory and practice" recognized by the judicial branch. Keeping the
files from Congress also protected the efficacy of the president's loyalty program by keeping its sources and methods a secret. In short, the White House asserted that it would have to refuse a subpoena in order to protect both the constitution from abridgement and the nation from communists.

The White House, becoming more certain with each passing day that McCarthy had no secret list, strove to keep the spotlight on the senator's untenable position. McCarthy had obtained leaked material and "recklessly repeated [it] with great injury to innocent individuals." "The repetition of these charges" was not a constructive dialogue, rather it had "given aid and comfort to the enemies of this country." Acheson and Peurifoy told the press they welcomed the coming investigation.

At the same time, the White House also realized that keeping the files closed opened itself up to charges of covering up misdeed or mistakes. It worked to avoid the impression that it intended to obstruct the congressional investigation. Elsey and Spingarn scuttled their idea of a presidential commission to study the government's Loyalty and Security program "in view of the poor circumstances right now." Days later, the newspapers revealed that McCarthy's list had been exhumed from the files of a
congressional investigation conducted in 1948. When asked whether such a damaging revelation about McCarthy would influence his decision to withhold employee records from the Tydings subcommittee, the president demurred. He would "answer that question when it comes up." A week later, Truman held meetings with Vice President Alben Barkley, Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn, House Majority Leader John McCormack and the Democrats on the subcommittee: Millard Tydings, Brian McMahon and Theodore Greene. Truman agreed secretly to open some of the files if it became necessary, though the president insisted on keeping the material restricted.

The agreement created a discrepancy between the White House's public and private position. Charles Murphy, the president's senior domestic policy advisor at the White House, advised the president to announce that the subcommittee would have access to files. After declaring his trust in the subcommittee's discretion, Murphy suggested, Truman should then characterize the present case as exceptional because part of the files, the incriminating part, had already been released. Thus, he concluded, the files could be released without endangering executive privilege. Truman should then make clear that only this one exception would be made and that congressional investigators
would see the files subject to White House restrictions. The State Department agreed with Murphy.

The strategy was discussed at the next morning's staff meeting. After listening to the proposal, Truman decided against informing the public of his intention to allow the Tydings subcommittee access to the loyalty files of employee if such access became the last alternative. Secure in the knowledge that McCarthy had no proof, Truman and Acheson felt that 'Tailgunner Joe' would soon be remanded to obscurity. And that would be the end, they predicted, of all this nonsense about communists in government. To expedite this eminent political victory, the president publicly impugned McCarthy's loyalty and motivation at a news conference just before the subcommittee convened. His staff dutifully spread the message.

Other members of the administration, however, put their own spin on the official White house line. While J. Edgar Hoover and J. Howard McGrath, Truman's new Attorney General, opposed McCarthy's demand for congressional access to employee records, they did so without condemning the man at the center of this storm. After citing their fear that a congressional review would harm innocent employees, Hoover and McGrath emphasized that their main concern was national security. The release of the files, they asserted, would
irreparably "damage..the investigative process of" the FBI. Informants had to be protected. The communists stood to learn too much if the files were released. Hoover's position, that a congressional investigation into the FBI's loyalty files threatened national security, resembled Truman's contention that McCarthy threatened national security. The sum of Truman and Hoover's position amounted to a defense of the loyalty program. McCarthy, on the other hand, argued that the administration's program had failed. Anti-communism was thus rapidly becoming a game of oneupsmanship.

Having resolved to release the files, but only if necessary, Truman stepped aside to let the State Department and the Tydings subcommittee discredit McCarthy. The Tydings subcommittee got off to a rocky start. The investigation began on March 8, just days after Judith Coplon, an employee of the Justice Department, was caught giving secrets to her Russian lover and Klaus Fuchs was sentenced to prison for selling atomic secrets to the Soviets. But as the days passed, McCarthy failed to provide the solid evidence he had promised, though he continued to issue new charges. The Democrats on the subcommittee, certain of a speedy and complete repudiation of McCarthy, frequently allowed their contempt for the Senator to show.
With adroit maneuvering, McCarthy avoided any decisive tests of his cases, leaving the newspapers filled with charges of treason and slander coming from both sides. Under Secretary Peurifoy and the State Department's legal advisor, Adrian Fisher, added to the conflagration, issuing rebuttals to McCarthy at least once a week in State Department Bulletins. The bulletins, which went well beyond careful refutation, revealed the administration's confidence that it was sure to win the coming showdown with McCarthy. They thundered against "McCarthy's resuscitation of these dead, discredited, disproven charges" and charged him with "deliberately distorting the facts." The bulletins also strove to taint McCarthy with the hues of disloyalty. One of Peurifoy's headlines read "Results of Senator McCarthy's Loyalty Charges harmful to the conduct of Foreign Relations." Openly impugning his opponent as an opportunist who sowed dissension for personal gain, the Under secretary declared that anti-communism was "too important to be left to innuendo." With great vigor, the department contrasted McCarthy's anticommunism with the administration's, which was necessary and successful. In other words, the State department, along with the White House, the Justice Department and the FBI, readily conceded the vital importance of rooting out communism. The position gave the
public the impression that the dispute between the administration and the senator was a matter of degree. The administration was not, in the words of one historian, "rising above the debate to defuse the loaded ideology of Cold War anti-Communism." The administration's position, that McCarthy was a liar and a dangerous partisan hack whose career would soon come to an abrupt end, also contributed to the Senator's increasing visibility.

After a few weeks of hearings, Senator Tydings began complaining that McCarthy had mentioned one hundred names, but had proved nothing. Undaunted, McCarthy countered by announcing on March twenty-first that he would soon reveal the name of the "top Russian espionage agent" in America, that he was prepared "to stand or fall" on this case. His bluster led to an emergency closed-door session of the subcommittee, though McCarthy quickly leaked his charges to the press.

His allegations against Owen Lattimore, a professor of Far Eastern affairs at John Hopkins University who had done some consulting work for the State Department years before, were as fantastic and insupportable as any to date. But the ruse generated enormous publicity. During the ensuing investigation, the McCarthyites tightened the connection between the story of 'betrayal' in the Far East and the
convictions of Hiss and others, touting them as the products of an administration rife with communists and communist sympathizers. Lattimore was used, in other words, to highlight the discrepancy between the Truman Doctrine and the administration's policy in China.

Rather than respond directly to McCarthy's use of his own ideology, Truman bet that McCarthy's dishonesty was too blatant to be further countenanced by Congress. It was a curious expectation to hold, given the refusal of most congressmen to get involved. Among Republicans, McCarthy had a growing number of allies, though his core supporters remained the right wing Republicans. Aside from the members of the subcommittee (Tydings, McMahon and Greene), few Democrats rose to condemn McCarthy, though most knew he had no proof. No one knew when another Alger Hiss might be uncovered, and it therefore did not pay to be perceived as a defender of communists. Moreover, the Democrats had nothing to gain by defending the executive branch's "constitutional" right to keeping the Lattimore file closed. In short, Congress did not have to choose Truman over McCarthy. In the words of historian Robert Griffith, the Lattimore case became "the lever for breaking up the bipartisan consensus which had shaped national policy since World War Two."

McCarthy, beneficiary of both an accommodating
political climate which he had not created and a stream of information and advice from Hoover and others, demanded that Truman prove that there were no communists in his administration by opening the files. By playing the role of honest patriot, McCarthy shifted the focus of the Tydings' investigation away from his charges and onto Truman's policy. Senator Tydings knew that he was losing control of the situation. He publicly requested access to government employee records in a letter to Acheson dated March 22. The request placed the onus of deflating McCarthy squarely on the White House.

Strange cross currents of opinion within the administration encouraged the White House to continue its uncompromising approach. Hoover and Attorney General McGrath counseled both Tydings and Truman against concession. None of McCarthy's cases, they told the president, merited a violation of executive privilege. Of course, Hoover was not without prejudice. The issue of domestic anti-communism had greatly enhanced the budget, reputation, and clout of the FBI. Its Director had reason to fear that releasing FBI files to Congress for examination and possible action would weaken his authority. Support for his and McGrath's position came from an unlikely source. Max Lowenthal, an unofficial but trusted advisor who worked
closely with Truman on this issue, agreed with McGrath and Hoover's conclusion. Lowenthal, known in the White House for his commitment to the principles of civil liberty, emphasized different reasons. The rumors and gossip contained in the files, he warned, would be leaked and put to use by the Republicans. His memorandum added that "Senator McCarthy and his associates will never be satisfied... [and] will claim the files were raped."

Truman decided that, above all, McCarthy must be kept away from the files. Toward that end, he ordered Hoover and McGrath to testify before the Tydings subcommittee and give the members a private look at the Lattimore file. It was perfectly logical for the president to send his department heads over to Congress in order resolve misunderstandings. But the effect of this maneuver, as later described by Lowenthal, placed the issue in the media "on a basis astronomically larger than the Lattimore story had occupied prior to this act of appeasement." After examining the files, Tydings told the media that Lattimore had been proven innocent. The other Democratic members, McMahon and Greene, remained silent. The Republicans, Henry Cabot Lodge and Bourke Hickenlooper, disagreed with Tydings' conclusion. Lowenthal concluded that the disagreement amounted to strike one for the enemies of McCarthy.
The president took a vacation to Florida at the behest of his wife, who had rarely seen him so disturbed. Describing his situation to his brother, Truman wrote "I am in the midst of the most terrible struggle any president ever had. A pathological liar from Wisconsin [McCarthy] and a block-headed undertaker from Nebraska [Senator Kenneth Wherry-R] are trying to ruin bipartisan foreign policy. Stalin never had two better allies in the Senate." These were the words of a man angered by the growing maelstrom. While the contest between McCarthy and himself was rapidly becoming a question over who was the more virulent anti-communist, Truman could not see beyond McCarthy's deceit. Giving in and handing the files over to the subcommittee at the insistence of someone as odious as Joe McCarthy violated the president's respect both for his office and for his honorable enterprise—the Cold War. Senator Tydings felt similarly abused by McCarthy and therefore did not waive his request that Truman honor their secret agreement of a month ago.

On March 29, Truman publicly refused to give the Tydings subcommittee unrestricted access to the loyalty files of government employees named by McCarthy. Citing the advice of his Attorney General and the Director of the FBI, the president reiterated the ethical, constitutional and
security reasons against opening the State Department files. But Truman also announced that the Loyalty Review Board (LRB), created by his security program, would examine all of the cases brought by McCarthy, and report directly to the White House. The president contended that the LRB was bipartisan because a Republican, Seth Richardson, ran it. As critics pointed out, however, it amounted to asking the LRB to investigate itself. The subcommittee was unimpressed and subpoenaed the files. Truman ordered the State Department to ignore the subpoena, and the White House issued several statements to reiterate its position. The subcommittee's use of the subpoena, however, diminished the White House's strategic position. Truman's refusal to allow congressional access contrasted sharply with his insistence on an all-out war against the communist menace. Congressional investigators had, after all, uncovered Alger Hiss. Aware that his refusal placed him at odds with the growing public demand for a thorough examination, Truman reached out to his opposition by appealing to their support of his foreign policy. To Republican Senator Arthur Vandenberg, Truman admitted he was "very much disturbed" by the threat the situation posed to bipartisan foreign policy. McCarthy's allegations, he complained, were not a
"real issue." Though sympathetic, Vandenberg was bedridden by ill-health and therefore unable to be of much help. But with the Senator's guidance, Truman attempted to broaden Republican support for his foreign policy by appointing two prominent, yet moderate internationalist Republicans, John Foster Dulles and John Cooper, into the foreign policy-making apparatus. The President also wrote to a friend from his days in the upper chamber, Senator Styles Bridges, and asked him to refrain from joining the McCarthyites. After several letters failed, Peurifoy set up a meeting of the president, the Secretary of State and Senator Bridges. Though these were rather halting steps, the attempt to divide the Republican Party showed promise. Bridges, the ranking Republican in the Senate after Vandenberg, agreed to refrain from attacks on the State Department and its Secretary, an agreement which lasted until Truman fired MacArthur a year later. Dulles and Henry Stimson issued a statement defending the integrity of Secretary of State Dean Acheson. Stimson, a GOP patrician, voiced his concern "over the extreme partisanship exhibited by McCarthy and other Republicans." Behind the scenes, however, congressional allies told the White House staff that the debate over internal security would not be resolved by the Tydings subcommittee "regardless of what happens to
McCarthy's charges."^4

In early spring of 1950, calls for a presidential commission as a means of resolving the conflict came from the press and several Democratic senators, including Hubert Humphrey and Millard Tydings. A few Republicans such as Senator Lodge and Representative Helen Douglas also mentioned the idea.^^ The White House was urged to create a non-partisan commission capable of rendering an "unbiased report." The proposed panel of prominent people would have access to all files. Names of possible members were recommended. But this silver cloud had a dark lining. Endorsements from, among others, Senators Nixon and McCarthy probably contributed to the administration's reluctance to create a commission. Truman and his advisors had reason to fear the consequences of such action; it might turn into another forum for their enemies. Two of Truman's closest allies in Congress, Senator Majority Leader Scott Lucas and the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Tom Connally "thought it opened charges of cover-up." The president ignored the commission idea.

The White House's effort to improve its relationship with Congress was overshadowed by Truman's appointment of Philip Jessup as Ambassador At Large on March 28. Jessup's case, one of McCarthy's favorite targets, was still under
review by the Tydings' subcommittee. Congress had delayed taking up Truman's nomination of Jessup until his case had been reviewed. The president's unilateral action amounted to an announcement that, in Truman's estimation, the purpose of the subcommittee was to find McCarthy guilty. The announcement undermined the president's relations with Congress as well as his public image. The president's endorsement of Jessup, like the Hiss case, dovetailed nicely with the McCarthyites contention that Truman had compromised national security—either because the president had been buffa loafed by subversives within the administration or because Truman was more concerned with partisan politics than the security of the nation.

The negative publicity generated by the Jessup endorsement prompted an angry outburst from Truman at a press conference two days later. His attack, rather unbecoming to his high office, sharpened his position on McCarthy. Truman labeled the Senator from Wisconsin "the greatest asset the Kremlin has." McCarthy and "certain members of the Republican Party" were "digging up that old malodorous horse isolationism." The president indicted his most prominent critics for sabotaging bipartisan foreign policy, which was "just as bad in this Cold War as it would be to shoot our soldiers in the back during a hot war."
Privately, the president hoped his remarks would put "these 'animals' on the run."81

Truman's comments marked an effort to recast his dispute with McCarthy over internal security into a debate over foreign policy. Focusing upon McCarthy's deceitful tactics and dangerous isolationism, Truman had framed the dispute between himself and McCarthy as an absolute choice of good versus evil, with the nation's survival hanging in the balance. It was a logical, if not completely accurate, summation of events. As a strategy, questioning the Senator's loyalty and motive offered Truman a chance of defeating his critic while strengthening the nation's commitment to containment. The White House staff agreed with his thesis because it emphasized Truman's foreign policy, which was popular.82 Asked for his reaction to the president's denunciation, Senator Taft accused Truman of smearing McCarthy.83 Truman wondered aloud if that were possible.84 The hearings in the Senate were equally ugly.85 Senator McCarthy thrived.

To buttress his preposterous accusations against Professor Lattimore, McCarthy arranged for Louis Budenz to testify before the subcommittee in early April. Budenz, a former editor of the Communist Party's Daily Worker who had since renounced his faith in communism, had made a
profession of testifying as a witness for the FBI against
the Communist Party since 1945. His appearance at this
crucial time had to have come about with the blessing of J.
Edgar Hoover. The former party member arrived to a
committee room packed with reporters on April 20. He did
not disappoint the audience. Budenz identified Owen
Lattimore as a communist, though he offered only hearsay as
proof.86

In the ensuing weeks, other witnesses and Lattimore's
lawyers comprehensively demolished Budenz's testimony, but
to little discernable effect. McCarthy remained at the
forefront of the ever-growing controversy, though the
nation's most prominent and respected newspapers had begun
to criticize him. The appearance of Budenz scared Senator
Tydings. The subcommittee chairman pleaded with Truman to
"re-establish the White House...as the foe of international
communism" by releasing the files and making a nationwide
speech.87

Murphy, Spingarn and Elsey agreed. "The problem," as a
White House memo formulated it, "is how to restore the
Truman administration's reputation as the foe of communists
at home and abroad, reunite people behind the foreign
policy, and take the issue away from the Republicans so they
cannot weaken the president's domestic program."88 Truman's
aides counseled him to concede the files issue. After being certified by Loyalty Review Board Chairmen Seth Richardson; the Chairman of the State Department's loyalty program, General Conrad Snow; and J. Edgar Hoover, all the files mentioned by McCarthy would be delivered to the Tydings' committee. Emphasizing the precautions that would be taken to protect the employees involved, the president would defend his decision to deliver the files "because of the unusual nature of the times." Without such a drastic measure, his staff warned, the "stock and trade" of the Republicans in the coming elections would be the accusation that there must be something in the files or administration would release them.

The White House staff had not recommended the concession on the loyalty files as a means to inspire cooperation between the administration and the Congress or as a challenge to McCarthy's extreme interpretation of anti-communism. It was a vehicle for demonstrating the president's commitment to anti-communism. The president would appear on national television to defend the loyalty program and the Republican who ran it by highlighting the vigorous prosecution of communists. The administration could then claim credit for all the spies that had been and would be caught. The staff also intended the concession as
a means to create a decisive moment within which to seize
the initiative. They advised Truman to announce the
appointment of a presidential commission to investigate the
twin problems of loyalty and internal security. The staff
argued that a commission would restore public confidence in
the administration, at which point "President Truman will
carry the ball." More important, "the [proposed]
investigating commission will bring in a ringing report
which ought to completely lift the issue out of the next
election." This attempt to spur the president to take
immediate action failed. Truman still held faith that
McCarthy "will eventually get all that is coming to him."

There was reason enough to believe that McCarthy's
house of cards would soon fall. After two months of
hearings and a stampede of allegations, McCarthy had
produced little evidence. More ex-communists testified,
some of whom agreed with his allegations against various
members of the administration, while others did not. Adding
a touch of comedy to the proceedings, one of the senator's
witnesses "blacked out" just prior to his appearance before
the Tydings subcommittee, only to awaken in another city.
Ever the showman, McCarthy simply ignored the gaff as he
hammered unremittingly upon the nation's fear of communism.
On April 20, McCarthy told the American Society of
Newspaper Editors that the files would have been opened had they been clean. Noting the Senator's uncanny ability to survive, Elsey conceded that the speech was an "impressive performance."93

Unwilling to take his staff's advice and concede the files issue, the president mounted a sustained campaign to explain and defend his policies, a campaign that lasted through April. Vice President Alben Barkley, Representative Tom Connally, Dean Acheson and General Thorpe defended Lattimore.94 Conrad Snow, a member of the GOP and Chairman of the State Department's Loyalty Review Board, defended the administration's loyalty program in a speech to Tydings Committee on April 5. The State Department reprinted and distributed Snow's speech.95 The White House also received support from the Chairman of the Loyalty Review Board, Seth Richardson. Richardson pointed out that "no cases involving espionage, treason, [or] sabotage had ever been found by the Loyalty Review Board," it had dealt only with the question of potential.96 In the meantime, White House aides tried unsuccessfully to get articles critical of McCarthy printed in the congressional record.97 A few Senate Democrats defended the embattled Secretary of State, though Acheson had few strong supporters in Congress.

Acheson did make an effort to improve his relations
with Congress, and even appeared before the Society of Newspaper Editors shortly after McCarthy. He chose to criticize the tactics of the McCarthyites rather than the man himself. Soon thereafter, he and three former Secretaries of State (Cordell Hull, James Byrnes, and George Marshall), collaborated on a denial of McCarthy's allegation that Lattimore was involved in the development of American Foreign Policy. The letter lauded Acheson's tenure and disparaged the accusations against him as "mad and vicious." The imbroglio, the former secretaries concluded, aided the Reds. The White House was encouraged by Acheson's efforts. But the Secretary had little stomach for politics, and went back to formulating policy. Under Secretary Peurifoy kept up the counterattack on McCarthy.

While the administration's spokesmen went after McCarthy directly, President Truman refused to comment directly upon the senator's conduct, preferring to deal with the larger problem of McCarthyism instead. He made a number of speeches in which he pledged himself to work with "responsible" Republicans in the pursuit of bipartisan foreign policy. But Truman would not compromise. As he made clear at time, "responsible" critics were those who sought to improve the system he had developed. Truman's
narrow definition of "responsible criticism" effectively negated his pledges of bipartisanship, as did his attempts to set the record straight on the question of who was defeating the communists.

In an address before the Federal Bar Association on April 24, the President reviewed and praised his foreign and domestic policies. He heralded the United States as the champion of freedom against tyrannical oppression. Against this grand backdrop, Truman repeated the legal and moral reasons for his refusal to yield to the Tydings' investigation. Casting himself as the preeminent anti-communist crusader, he stated that he would not open the files. The widely publicized speech also characterized his loyalty and security program as wise and effective. Angered by the ravages of McCarthyism and convinced that he was right, the president made a crucial error. Though he had only intended to bolster his anti-communist credentials to reassure a troubled nation, he had conceded the fundamental point to his enemy.

The praise of his loyalty program represented a critical error because Truman had sanctioned the program's extreme definition of disloyalty, a definition similar to McCarthy's. Truman had also implicitly endorsed the files produced by the program, files filled with hearsay. From an
ethical standpoint, the praise neglected the administration's duty to redress the legal and moral problems noted by his domestic policy staff prior to McCarthy's emergence. From a tactical standpoint, Truman's position foreclosed the opportunity to draw a meaningful distinction between his anti-communism and that of McCarthy. It also precluded the graceful admission of mistakes—though by this time most Americans feared that some had been made. Perhaps unaware of all that had been sacrificed, the White House could certainly recognize that the speeches had changed nothing. After all the speeches, Truman still needed Senator Tydings to find a hole in McCarthy's allegations and drive a truck through it.

McCarthy kept moving. As March gave way to April, he targeted William Remington, an employee at the Commerce Department who had been investigated and cleared by the LRB in 1949. The Loyalty Review Board was currently re-examining Remington's case at Truman's request. Worried lest the case lead to a further erosion of the president's credibility, Spingarn advised Murphy to blame any oversight in the Remington case on the members of the LRB. Max Lowenthal, who came to the White House almost daily to help Truman with the McCarthy problem, had more on his mind than handling the Remington problem. In late April, he advocated
a radical departure in the White House's public position.

Lowenthal advised Truman to condemn the FBI and the LRB for the same reasons he condemned the McCarthyites. According to him, McCarthy, Hoover, and other extreme 'Cold Warriors' had confused the distinction between membership in the Communist Party and actual subversives. The distinction between employees who had left-wing associations and those few who were spies "needs to be driven home in order to deflate the McCarthy operation, the Hearst press...[and] investigators in the executive and legislative branches whose appropriations and size comes from making use of public clamor." Educating the public on "the facts of life," Lowenthal promised, would remedy the problem. Regardless of the programs adopted, the government would never be 100 percent sure of the loyalty of its employees. The members of the Communist Party, he stressed, are "few in number and...in themselves constitute no danger to our nation." If the public learned this, the discovery of spies "prior to any election" would become a lot less damaging. But as long as the confusion remained, the identification of communists within government helped the McCarthyites. Criticizing McCarthy for blurring the distinction between harmless political associations and subversive
activities was part of the administration's public position.\textsuperscript{109} The White House's effort to sharpen the public's definition of loyalty, however, remained ineffectual. Attempts to distinguish liberals from communists coexisted uneasily with the dominant theme of Truman's rhetoric, the Cold War. The main reason, however, that the White House could not reveal McCarthy's ridiculous use of the word communist was that Truman refused to condemn the extremism within the administration. Under the Smith Act, the administration had tried and convicted eleven men for membership in the Communist Party. The president would not slacken his commitment to anti-communism, nor attack one of the most successful and respected practitioners of it, J. Edgar Hoover.\textsuperscript{110} Nor would Truman forsake his loyalty program, which operated on the principle of guilt by association.\textsuperscript{111} Yet the problem of what to do about McCarthy remained.

Truman convinced himself that producing the documents would dispel all of the false accusations against state department employees. As he explained to Tydings on May 4, the day Peurifoy secretly informed Tydings that the White House planned to allow the subcommittee access to the files, "McCarthy could not continue to lie and get away with it," the Senate would eventually expel him.\textsuperscript{112}
The next morning, Lowenthal protested the decision to allow congressional access. Conceding that the Senator's melodramatics were "unprecedented in recent American politics" and pernicious to the administration, the president's old friend was troubled by the implications of this "doubtful procedure." In the second of two long memorandums, he insisted that "at every stage some yielding to the McCarthy crowd or to the clamor they have produced has taken place," but concessions have only helped the "McCarthy forces." He cited as examples the Senate's decision to appoint a subcommittee to investigate, and the White House decision to send Hoover and McGrath to the subcommittee with the Lattimore file. "Giving in to prevent them from saying the administration is hiding something accomplishes nothing." Desperate to get Truman to reconsider, Lowenthal ended by asking if "there had been no yielding on point after point, would the publicity, ...the smearing, the use of this situation for political purposes, have been any worse or more damaging than it has been to date?"

But that afternoon, the administration announced that the subcommittee would have access to the eighty-one cases currently in dispute. Though a major political retreat, the administration demonstrated that it had learned a few
lessons. The White House took extreme care that none of the contents of the files could be leaked. Senators viewed the files in the executive offices without their staff and under White House supervision. The members of the subcommittee were also required to examine the files together; a month earlier, Senator Hickenlooper had inhibited the resolution of the Lattimore case by not attending the subcommittee hearings on the day Hoover showed Lattimore's file. These restrictions allowed the White House to minimize the impact upon employees and to maximize the political gain.

Administration spokesmen claimed that these files had already been shown to Congress before Truman imposed a ban in March of 1948. The explanation was neither much of a fig leaf nor entirely true. The White House knew that files contained material that had been added in the intervening period.

The concession was a pivotal event in the rivalry between Truman and McCarthy; everyone wondered if Judgement Day had finally arrived. The president figured that his disclosure of the evidence would "put McCarthy in the 'dog house' and we won't have to mention him anymore even politically."

While the files were examined, Truman took a train trip out West in an effort, he said privately, to position
himself as an effective leader of the free world and to "incidentally damn" the McCarthyites.\textsuperscript{120} He made over fifty speeches in twelve states. The magnitude of McCarthy problem had not inspired the president to be less abrasive toward Republicans or less extreme in his anti-communism. Nominally billed as a non-partisan tour, the speeches all contained warnings against the return to isolationism led by the Republican party.\textsuperscript{121} As one reporter noted, "anyone over the age of ten knows whom a Democratic president refers to when he speaks blandly of...acorn minds, prophets of gloom, the lunatic fringe...[and] die-hard reactionaries."\textsuperscript{122} Though consistent in his criticism of contradictions within the GOP, Truman was considerably less so when it came to his own position. His speeches stressed "the important steps which have been taken by the government in recent years in an effort to counter and neutralize communist activities in this country."\textsuperscript{123} At the same time, however, he stated again and again that he did not consider domestic subversion a "real issue."\textsuperscript{124}

The State Department kept up a steady drum beat of rebuttal against McCarthy's "fraudulent charges."\textsuperscript{125} Press releases from the State Department quoted from European and Eastern Bloc newspapers to support the contention that McCarthy's charges injured US foreign policy.\textsuperscript{126} Following
the line of the White House, Peurifoy's and Fisher's press statements also touted the efficacy and wisdom of the loyalty program. The official line also highlighted the fact that Republicans ran the program and that Senator Arthur Vandenberg had praised it.

Neither the vigorous speeches nor the release of the files made a discernable impact upon McCarthy's stature. True to form, he admonished the public not to expect too much; the files, he warned, "might be rifled." While the Tydings subcommittee floundered, McCarthy continued to speak all over the country, receiving awards, donations, and headlines. His rhetoric had not wavered a bit. He kept critics at bay by correlating their opposition with a softness toward communism. He continued to parade witnesses, many of whom had been on the FBI's payroll for years, before the Tydings subcommittee as corroboration for his stream of accusations.

The Republican Party acquiesced to the charade because the party had not occupied the White House since 1933, and some saw trumping the president on the issue of anti-communism as the path to power. As one prominent GOP leader explained it to columnist James Reston:

The issue [of domestic subversion] is very simple...It is now a political issue, and somebody's going to gain or lose politically before its over. It all comes down to this: are
we going to win an election or aren't we?"\textsuperscript{132}

Though Truman and his staff agreed with Republicans that McCarthyism was a "political adventure," only Elsey, Spingarn and Murphy wanted to do something about it.\textsuperscript{133} On May 10, a week after the concession on the employee files, they advised Truman to prevent more Republican victories by terminating congressional access forthwith. Something also had to be done about the subcommittee, they warned, because it had been "used by McCarthy as a vehicle for publicizing unjustified smears."\textsuperscript{134} Much was made of the fact that both Republican moderates and newspaper columnists had recognized that congressional investigation "was the wrong way to handle the business."

In another memorandum of the same day, Spingarn and Murphy pointed out that the problem was deepening. The two White House advisors most involved in the McCarthy problem, Spingarn and Murphy, voiced their concern that the government's loyalty and security program was "not in all cases being adequately scrutinized from the standpoint of encroachments on individual rights."	extsuperscript{135} The administration needed to find a balance between security and civil rights.\textsuperscript{136} Murphy and Spingarn's immediate concern was the Justice Department which had "erred on the side of excessive" by supporting House Bill #10, which would have
empowered the Attorney General to deport suspected communists.

A week later Murphy and Spingarn repeated their request to the president to reign in Attorney General McGrath. Truman should request that all Justice Department bills be cleared with the Department's Civil Rights branch. A few days later Truman, concerned about "excessive security," sent Spingarn over to talk to McGrath and clarify his position. The president said that he favored strengthening legislation against communists, but wanted the rights of the individual protected.

Murphy and Spingarn, however, considered the Justice's Department's stance as only one example of a much larger problem. On May 16, they warned Truman that "the Cold War has increased interest in internal security." Many new bills to strengthen internal security were being sponsored in Congress; executive action was needed in order to maintain a balance between liberty and security. A few days later, Spingarn, Murphy and Elsey cautioned the president that the report from the Tydings subcommittee would not effectively counter McCarthy's accusations. Truman's staff agreed with Tydings and McMahon; the subcommittee was bound to "split along Party lines, and the country will regard any conclusions which a majority of that subcommittee reaches as
political and will not be satisfied with them." The fact that most of the subcommittee's members faced re-election in the fall, they concluded, would only increase factionalism in the upper chamber. Further, the memorandum pointed out, the McCarthyites could be relied upon to continue the attack. These key members of the president's staff argued that a Presidential Commission on Internal Security and Individual Rights (PCISIR) would serve to diminish the confusion and hysteria.

Presidential Assistant Donald Dawson opposed the PCISIR proposal. Quite simply, he did not want the president to take on Congress. The Tydings subcommittee had not endorsed the proposal formally. Therefore, Dawson concluded, the subcommittee "would have to announce some conclusions prior to stepping out in favor of [the PCISIR]--and from every indication, it would seem impossible to obtain a unanimous report." Another prerequisite for replacing the subcommittee with a presidential panel was a statement from subcommittee announcing that they had examined the loyalty files and had found no evidence to support the charges of Senator McCarthy. Lodge and Hickenlooper, Dawson predicted, would certainly refuse. Their refusal would be portrayed by the McCarthyites as proof "that there are communists in the State Department."
Aside from the problems of implementing a presidential commission, Dawson feared the impression it might create in the minds of voters. Establishing a presidential panel would give the appearance that the president had no confidence in the LRB's review of the files. A panel would be interpreted as a sign of fear on Tydings' part. "It might also be interpreted," he concluded, "as lending support to the belief that the administration is seriously concerned about McCarthy's charges." Dawson's appraisal may have found favor with the president, who had often said that the charges were not a real issue, but intransigence was becoming increasingly hard for the White House to maintain.

The lead story of the *Washington Times Herald* on May 18 revealed that Senate Democrats were unwilling to accede to White House requests and insert State Department Bulletins concerning McCarthy into the Congressional Record. Soon thereafter, the White House received copies of two recent surveys of public opinion. The polls indicated 84% of Americans knew of McCarthy's charges and many approved of his efforts. The disclosure of loyalty files to the subcommittee had had little impact. The public's message registered with Chairman Tydings, who gave up and pleaded for some type of presidential action that would get him off
the hook by offering an alternative "detached from politics." According to one top aide, "the president took the position that Tydings had gotten himself into it, and now it was up to him to get out of it." According to one top aide, "the president took the position that Tydings had gotten himself into it, and now it was up to him to get out of it." For the rest of May and most of June, however, the president's top advisors on domestic issues in the White House, in the State Department, and others with close connections to Congress, developed the idea of a presidential commission in hopes of convincing the president. They had little choice. By June 8, Senator Tydings had, according to the White House, "given every indication of being in a state of panic and of lacking any backbone or courage in dealing with the situation." Calling several times daily, Tydings even requested that the president set "a date within which the subcommittee should complete its study of the files." As Truman's staff noted, setting such a condition would "solve nothing and would undoubtedly result in charges that the president was trying to bottle things up."

Murphy, who as Truman's second in command on domestic policy may have handled many of the calls from Tydings, did support Tydings' request that a special panel be grafted onto the LRB, one designed simply to review the dispositions of the 81 cases brought by McCarthy. Truman approved of
this half-step and encouraged Tydings to finish with the files soon, in order that he could then give them to the new panel. With the support of Seth Richardson, the president asked the Civil Service Commission, which appointed the LRB, to create the new panel. The proposal, however, founder. The White House had difficulty recruiting distinguished citizens willing to serve on it, and the president remained skeptical about the need for it. According to Assistant Press Secretary Eben Ayers, Truman insisted that Tydings fix the problem.

During the first half of June, the administration appeared to score much-needed victories. A Federal Grand Jury, which had been investigating a case of alleged communist subversion, found that the government had overlooked nothing in its investigation. While not a ringing endorsement, the report forced the McCarthyites to drop that particular case from their litany of allegations. More important, dissatisfaction with the reckless and unsubstantiated charges of McCarthy finally flared among moderate Republicans. On the Hill, Margaret C. Smith (R, Maine) and five other Republican senators issued a Declaration of Conscience. They categorized the tactics of the McCarthyites as malevolent, though not by name.

But these events could hardly be mistaken for a turning
point. Smith's oblique criticism of the McCarthyites met with silence on the floor on the Senate. As she later recalled, "Joe McCarthy had the Senate paralyzed with fear."^157 Moreover, Senator Smith's declaration had also reproached the administration for its handling of internal security, "its refusal to accept criticism, and its ineffective leadership."^158

Truman did not take Smith's warning about his ineffective leadership as a sign of a serious breach between himself and Congress. He choose instead to emphasize the positive. When asked about the Declaration, Truman said "he wouldn't want to make a comment as strong as that about the Republican party."^159 Privately, he told aides that Senator Smith "had trimmed [the truth] a little."^160 In other words, the president thought that Senator Smith had not gone far enough in her condemnation of McCarthy. His inability to accept criticism reflected a narrow understanding of bipartisanship. The president had not considered that he might need to offer a concession with Congress in order to isolate his most rabid critics.

Truman's aides were aware of the threat posed by a congressional reassertion of power over the implementation of domestic anti-communism and they obviously feared what effect that might have on Truman's overall credibility. On
June 14, Administrative Assistant David Bell informed Murphy that members of Congress had created a subcommittee to draft legislation with respect to disloyalty in peacetime. Because the new subcommittee, chaired by Senator Magnussen, "expects to cover about the same ground as the proposed PCISIR," Bell advised that the President act now in order to "get the spotlight" and thereby "strike a resounding blow against" congressional initiatives. Spingarn seconded the opinion, and included a draft of a presidential order with his memorandum. He also asked the president to consider coordinating his actions with Magnussen, whom Spingarn regarded as less dangerous than some other members of Congress.

On the evening of June twenty-second, Truman held a meeting to consider the PCISIR proposal. Those present included top White House aides, congressional leaders, and the heads of the government's security apparatus. All the president's aides supported the proposal. Clark Clifford, formerly Truman's Special Council, also favored the plan. Of the three Democrats on the subcommittee, two (Tydings and McMahon) supported the proposal. The third, Senator Greene, did not. The Attorney General and the Director of the FBI, with the full support of the absent LRB Chairman Seth Richardson, repeated their opposition to the PCISIR.
Vice-President Alben Barkley, Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn, and House Majority Leader Tom McCormack also opposed the plan. Greene, Barkley, and the others contended that McCarthy's momentum was diminishing, and therefore the proposal would help him revive his political fortunes by allowing him to claim that he had been right all along. Furthermore, the plan would instigate a nasty fight that would keep Congress in session and McCarthy in the spotlight.\(^{165}\) Barkley and the others advised Truman to let the subcommittee handle the problem, while publicizing the fact that McCarthy was "a constitutional liar and a political opportunist."\(^{166}\)

On that note, Senator Clinton Anderson appraised the president of a "devastating dossier" of McCarthy that, if used correctly, would "blow Senator McCarthy's whole show sky high."\(^{167}\) One of those present at the meeting, writer John Hersey, later recalled Truman made some "pithy and bitter" comments about McCarthy before replying:

> You must not ask the president of the United States to get down in the gutter with a guttersnipe. Nobody, not even the president of the United States, can approach too close to a skunk...and expect to get anything out of it except a bad smell. If you think somebody is telling a lie on you, the only answer is with the whole truth.\(^{168}\)

The president concluded the meeting at Blair House by asking everyone to "think about it some more and we'll get
together again later. He ultimately declined the advice to take action because of his optimism—an optimism born curiously from fatalism. Truman had come to view McCarthy, and the brand of politics he personified, as an aberration. His opinion had been reinforced by a "Study of Witch Hunting and Hysteria," prepared by White House Aide Kenneth Hechler, a historian on leave from Princeton University. The study linked the frantic politics of the McCarthyites to larger, cyclical trends in American history. Truman and Hechler attributed the popularity of the Republican right to the same forces that had produced such unsavory periods in American history as the Alien and Sedition Acts and the Salem Witch Trials. According to Hechler, social change, economic downturns, and international tension precipitated these periods of hysteria. At no point did Hechler illuminate the causes of the political dynamic which had elevated McCarthy into McCarthyism; it explained McCarthyism only in terms of these other periods. Hechler's study, therefore, also lacked a consideration of the president's role in creating the nation's anti-communism.

The views expressed by Hechler were not new—he had, in fact, merely expanded and codified ideas which the administration had expressed since the very beginning. But the study affirmed the president's rather convenient
fatalism. Confounded by a rhetorical stand-off after five months of denunciations and concessions, Truman resigned himself to wait until the hysteria passed, at which time the American people would see McCarthy for what he was. The president took comfort in the knowledge that he stood for what was right and he would be vindicated in the long run. He would therefore hold a steady course, between the false patriots on one side and the communists spies on the other. This sense of resignation was a far cry from his optimism of a few months ago, but he had little choice at this point.

McCarthy's blatant and crude deceit--and his apparent vulnerability to being exposed as a fraud--had encouraged the White House to respond with absolute contempt. Truman had assumed that Congress would destroy McCarthy for him. Acting almost as though Alger Hiss had not been convicted, as though China and the Soviet Union had not dashed America's hopes for the post-war world, the president attempted to use McCarthy to strengthen his position.

But the dangerous extremism of Cold War anti-communism combined with events at home and abroad to produce a great deal of public anxiety. Aware that McCarthy had struck a responsive chord with voters, Congress refused to validate Truman's anti-communism by repudiating him. After all the scorn leveled at him, McCarthy's survival reflected poorly
upon the Truman administration. In the absence of any congressional or legal decision, the issue of the Senator's veracity had devolved into a contest between Truman and McCarthy over who was the more extreme anti-communist. Having validated the brand of extreme anti-communism wielded by McCarthy, Truman could not criticize McCarthy without appearing to contradict his own position on anti-communism. Frustrated by the strategic straight-jacket in which he found himself, the president blamed cyclical patterns in American history. Much to the president's misfortune, over the next few months a series of events, events which the president's fatalism did not equip him to handle successfully, further eroded his credibility.
ENDNOTES


9. Telegram (Draft), Truman to McCarthy, undated. PSF: General File, McCarthy, Joseph folder, box 128, HSTL.


25. Memo, undated, Elsey Papers McCarthy Charges (1), Box 69, HSTL; "Memorandum for the President (Draft)," 2/27/50, Murphy Files, Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL.

27. "Memorandum for the President (Draft)," 2/27/50, Murphy Files, Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL.

28. Ibid.


32. Elsey, "Murphy Says", March 1, 1950, Elsey Papers Int. Sec. McCarthy Charges (2), box 69, HSTL.

33. "Memorandum for the President (Draft)," February 27, 1950, Murphy Files Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL.

34. Memo, Barrett and Fisher to Dawson, March 8, 1950, OF 419-K, box 1268, HSTL.


40. "Memorandum," February 24, 1950, box 22, Murphy Files Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL; McGrath to Dawson, March 22, 1950, OF-419K, box 1296, HSTL; McGrath to Truman, March 17, 1950, OF 419K, box 1296, HSTL; Ferrell, *The Diary of Eben Ayers*, pg.342.

41. PNC, March 9, 1950; Public Papers, p.195; Truman, "Memorandum to the Honorable Adrian Fisher, Legal Advisor to the State Department," 3/9/50, Murphy Files Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL.

43. Memo, Barrett and Fisher to Dawson, March 8th, 1950, OF-419K, box 1268, HSTL.

44. State Department Bulletin, "Results of Senator McCarthy's Loyalty Charges Harmful to the Conduct of Foreign Relations," March 27, 1950, Elsey Int. Sec. McCarthy Charges, box 69, HSTL.

45. Ibid.


50. Ibid., p.77.

51. Ibid., p.75.

52. Donovan, Tumultuous Years, p.166.


54. Millard E. Tydings to Dean Acheson, March 22,1950, OF-419K, box 1296, HSTL; Tydings to Truman, March 22, 1950, Elsey Papers McCarthy Charges (4), box 69, HSTL.

55. J. Howard McGrath to Truman, March 17,1950, OF-419K, box 1296, HSTL; McGrath to Dawson (Draft), March 22, 1950, OF-419K, box 1296, HSTL.


57. Ibid., pp.126, 214.

58. "Disclosure of Loyalty Files to Tydings Committee," undated, OF-419K, box 1296, HSTL.

59. McGrath to Dawson, March 22, 1950, OF-419K, box 1269, HSTL.
60."Memorandum Re: The McCarthy Business" (penciled note from Elsey attributing it to Max Lowenthal), May 5, 1950, Spingarn Papers Federal Loyalty Program (2), box 35, HSTL.


63.Telegram, McCarthy to Truman, March 23, 1950, OF 419-K, box 1268, HSTL.


65.Press Release, March 28, 1950, Elsey Papers Int. Sec. McCarthy Charges (2), box 69, HSTL; Seth Richardson to Truman, April 5, 1950, OF 419-K, box 1269, HSTL.

66.Richardson to President Truman, April 5, 1950, OF-419K, box 1269, HSTL.


70.Truman to Bridges, March 26,1950; Bridges to Truman, March 29,1950; Truman to Bridges, April 3, 1950; All in OF 419-K, box 1296, HSTL.


74.Charles Maylon, "Memorandum for Mr. Murphy," March 28,1950, Murphy Files Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL.

75.Athan Theoharris, "The Rhetoric of Politics: Foreign Policy, Internal Security, and Domestic Politics in the Truman Era, 1945-

76. Maylon, "Memorandum for Mr. Murphy," March 28, 1950, Murphy Files Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL.


79. PNC, March 30, 1950, Public Papers, p.234.


81. Donovan, Tumultuous Years, p.167.

82. "Memorandum for the President," April 12, 1950, OF-419K, box 1269, HSTL.


84. PNC, April 13, 1950, Public Papers, p.252.


87. Tydings, "Memorandum for the President", April 12, 1950, OF-419K, HSTL.

88. "Memorandum for the President," April 12, 1950, OF-419, box 1269, HSTL.

89. Ibid.

90. "Memorandum for the President," April 12, 1950, OF-419K, box 1269, HSTL.

91. Truman to Mrs. Eleanor Lattimore Andrews, April 17, 1950, PSF: Personal File, "A" Folder, Box 305; As quoted in Donovan, Tumultuous Years, p.170.


93. Elsey, Memo, April 26, 1950, Elsey Int. Sec. McCarthy Charges (3), box 70, HSTL.
94. New York Times April 14, p.1; April 24, p.4; April 16, p.1; April 23, p.1; April 25, p.16; April 29, April 30, 1950, sec.4, p.1.


97. Elsey, "Memorandum for Mr. Spingarn," April 24, 1950, Elsey Papers Int. Sec. McCarthy Charges(3), box 70, HSTL.

98. Press Release, April 23, 1950, Elsey Papers Int. Sec. McCarthy Charges(3), box 70, HSTL.


100. Elsey, "Memorandum," April 26, 1950, Elsey Papers Int. Sec. McCarthy Charges(3), box 70, HSTL.


106. Spingarn, "Memorandum for Mr. Murphy," April 27, 1950, Murphy Files Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL.

107. "A Few Suggestions For Your Consideration On the Subject of Tactics of the Present," undated(After April 25, 1950), Spingarn
Paper, Nat’l Def. Int. Sec. And Ind. Rts. (2), box 31, HSTL.

108.Ibid.


110.Ferrell, The Diary of Eben Ayers, p.348; Elsey, "Memorandum for Mr. Murphy, Mr. Spingarn, Mr. Bell," June 16, 1950, Spingarn Papers Loyalty Commission and Civil Rights (1), box 36, HSTL

111.Ferrell, The Diary of Eben Ayers, pg.348; Reeves, The Life and Times, p.283.

112.McCullough, Truman, pg.770; Fried, Men Against McCarthy, pg.79.

113.Lowenthal, "Memorandum for Mr. Connelly," May 5, 1950, Murphy Files Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL.

114.Ibid.

115.Ibid.


117.Lowenthal, "Memorandum for Mr. Connelly," May 5, 1950, Murphy Files Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL.

118.Memo, Murphy to Dawson, May 8, 1950; Memo, Dawson to Murphy, May 8, 1950; All in OF-419K, box 1269, HSTL.


121. Alonzo Hamby, Beyond the New Deal: Harry S. Truman and American Liberalism, (New York: Columbia University, 1973), pg.349; Elsey, Draft 5/24/50, Elsey Papers Int. Sec. McCarthy Charges(4), box 70, HSTL.

122.Hamby, Beyond the New Deal, p.349.


126. SD Information Memorandum #78, May 25, 1950, Elsey Papers Int. Sec. McCarthy Charges (2), box 69, HSTL; Press Release, May 8, 1950; SD Bulletin May 20, 1950; Press Release June 12, 1950; All in Box 70, Elsey Papers Int. Sec. McCarthy Charges (4), box 70, HSTL; See also: SD Press Releases No. 395/April 23, 1950; No. 446/May 2, 1950; No. 491/May 12, 1950; No. 529/May 20, 1950.

127. SD Press Release, May 20, 1950, Elsey Papers Int. Sec. Witch Hunting, box 70, HSTL.


130. Ibid.


133. "Re: The Possible Republican Complaints Against the Safeguards on their access to the Loyalty Files," May 10, 1950, Elsey Papers Int. Sec. McCarthy Charges (3), box 70, HSTL.

134. Ibid.


136. Ibid.

137. Murphy and Spingarn to Truman, May 16, 1950, OF-2750, box 1715, HSTL.

138. Truman to McGrath, May 19, 1950, OF-2750, box 1715, HSTL.

139. Murphy and Spingarn to Truman, May 16, 1950, OF-2750, box 1715, HSTL.


142. Ibid.


144. Elsey, "Memorandum for Mr. Spingarn," May 24, 1950, Elsey Papers Int. Sec. McCarthy Charges, box 70, HSTL.


149. Ferrell, The Diary of Eben Ayers, p.350-351.

150. Ibid; Tydings to Truman, June 5, 1950, OF-419K, box 1269, HSTL.

151. Ibid.

152. Murphy, "Memorandum for the President," June 5, 1950, OF-419K, box 1269, HSTL.

153. Truman to Tydings, Draft letter, June 5, 1950, OF-419K, box 1269, HSTL.


155. Fried, Men Against McCarthy, pp.76-77.

156. Reeves, The Life and Times, p.297.

157. Ibid.

158. Ibid.

159. PNC, June 1, 1950, Public Papers, p.451.


161. David Bell, "Memorandum for Mr. Murphy," June 14, 1950, OF-2750, box 1715, HSTL; Bell, "Memorandum for Mr. Murphy" June 23,
1950, Elsey Papers Int. Sec. McCarthy Charges (4), box 70, HSTL.

162. Spingarn, "Memorandum for Mr. Murphy," June 19, 1950, Murphy Files Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL.

163. Spingarn, "Memorandum for the Files," June 23, 1950, Murphy Files Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL.

164. Richardson to Dawson, June 26, 1950, OF-419K, HSTL.

165. Spingarn, Oral History, p.131, HSTL.

166. Spingarn, "Memorandum of the Pros and Cons on the Proposal to Establish a Commission on Internal Security and Individual Rights," June 26, 1950, Murphy Files Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL.


168. Ibid.

169. Spingarn, Oral History, p.131, HSTL.


Despite the tumult of the spring of 1950, Truman had decided to await events. He did not have to wait long. In the early hours of June 24, Truman received word that North Korea had invaded the Republic of South Korea. The strength of the nation's commitment to the Cold War left little doubt over America's reaction. As the White House well knew, the public could be counted on to support American intervention in the Korean War; the war thus gave the president what he had longed for during months filled with Joe McCarthy: the initiative. Truman misused it. He made no attempt to remove the war from his contest against the McCarthyites. Rather, Truman considered the war, like the congressional anti-communist initiatives and the off-year elections, as either a victory for himself or McCarthy. His credibility, hinged as it was upon the exigencies of war, was gone by December of 1950.

Within hours of receiving the news that North Korea had invaded the Republic of South Korea, the White House began to prepare a military campaign. The United States would defend South Korea from an invasion that Truman and his advisors assumed was financed by and planned in Beijing and Moscow. Truman's decision to intervene was an unequivocal
affirmation of the administration's commitment to the
universalist principles articulated in the Truman Doctrine. Communism could not be allowed to spread.

American involvement in Korea was a popular move in the short term. The House of Representatives, including the Republican right, overwhelmingly supported the decision. While also generally supportive, the Senate was concerned by the president's refusal to ask for a declaration of war. As one of the president's most powerful rivals, Senator Robert Taft, observed, Truman had made "no pretense of bipartisanship on the decision." Congress received a statement on the war from the president nearly a month later. Even then, Truman did not seek its formal approval. Such unilateral executive policy was not likely to rejuvenate bipartisan foreign policy.

The president maintained that asking Congress for a declaration of war would weaken the executive branch by limiting executive prerogatives. He acted unilaterally, therefore, to protect the executive branch's constitutional right to formulate foreign policy. Truman certainly had just cause to mistrust the Senate. Had his conception of presidential authority been a bit less extreme, however, he might have found a way to get congressional approval without endangering executive prerogatives. The Republican right
would have found it as hard to oppose military intervention. They had long criticized Truman for neglecting Asia. The president certainly missed an opportunity to create a spirit of both cooperation with Congress, and of bipartisanship. His extreme ideas of presidential leadership and of anti-communism, combined with his optimism about the war's affect upon McCarthyism, drove him to make decisive foreign policy rather than broker domestic compromise. By his own hand then, Korea became Harry Truman's war. A great deal of his political fate hung on its outcome.

Truman clearly anticipated that his intervention in Korea would bring immediate political benefits. The president and his congressional allies knew that committing troops demonstrated resolve, thereby answering the Republican right's charges that the administration lacked the courage to stand up to the communists, and that Asia had been forsaken in the implementation of the doctrine of containment. Truman and his supporters assumed that the United States could win in South Korea and that this would give him an advantage in his battle of one-upmanship with McCarthy.

Some of president's domestic political staff, however, disagreed with the prevailing White House interpretation.
Over the next few months, Spingarn, along with Murphy and Elsey (spurred on by Spingarn's incessant memorandums), campaigned against the notion "that the Korean situation has driven McCarthy off the front pages and we can therefore forget about the [PCISIR] proposal." "The outbreak of war in Korea" they predicted, "can only serve to deepen the tensions which exist and the opportunities to play them for selfish purposes." The staff did agree, however, that the war had improved their strategic political situation and that the White House should therefore launch an offensive.

Murphy, Elsey and Spingarn warned Truman that the opportunity to take the initiative against the McCarthyites would end soon. "It seems to us that...the best time to set up...a [PCISIR] commission is while McCarthy and company are not on the front pages since at such a time it does not so much create the appearance that such action has been forced by Senator McCarthy and his charges." They reminded the president that they had warned him to take action in 1949, during a similar lull in the partisan battle over the issue. Since then, a lot of the administration's precious time had been spent on the problem. The issue of internal security, they warned, would come back again. Even if the Tydings' report were to pierce McCarthy's armor, an event which they
did not consider likely, someone would rise to take his place.

Looking toward the upcoming release of the Tydings' report and beyond, Spingarn, Murphy, and Elsey clearly saw storm clouds gathering. These aides warned that if the Senate subcommittee failed to condemn McCarthy, the McCarthyites would control Congress. They pointed out that "even responsible people" like Senator Brian McMahon had endorsed the latest Senate investigation into government employment of sexual perverts. Most of all, the staff feared that the Republican right would coerce the upper chamber into passing more internal security legislation. On July 11, they alerted Truman to the fact that the Republican Policy Committee had put the Mundt-Nixon bill, a Republican-sponsored anti-subversive initiative, on its "must list."^\textsuperscript{11} The bill would establish a Subversive Activities Control Board with jurisdiction over all Communist or "communist infiltrated" organizations.^\textsuperscript{12} To prevent the Republican initiative from gathering momentum, Spingarn and Murphy advised the president to announce the commission before the Tydings' investigation self-destructed.^\textsuperscript{13}

Spingarn saw some hope for compromise. He informed his colleagues that Senator Magnussen intended to supplant the
Republican initiatives with his own bill. While the president's security expert called Magnussen's bill a "concentration camp" bill, and "probably worse than the Mundt-Nixon bill," Spingarn nevertheless thought the White House could use the Senator's help in defeating the Republican's bill.\textsuperscript{14} If nothing else, he recommended that the White House help Magnussen draft a less odious bill. But the White House did not become deeply involved in planning a strategy with congressional allies, despite Magnussen's willingness to cooperate. Spingarn told the Magnussen's staff "to do some [research] before they legislated, rather than vice versa."\textsuperscript{15} The president made no grand gesture of working with Congress, and the events predicted by the White House aides came to pass.

Deference to the tradition of wartime unity may have held McCarthy in check for a short time, but his connection of the war with domestic anti-communism was inevitable. While most of the GOP leadership waited until the wave of patriotism broke, McCarthy wasted little time. On July 12, he sent Truman a telegram. Korea, the Senator thundered, was "proof that this nation had been betrayed" by Acheson and the others who had sabotaged the loyalty program.\textsuperscript{16} McCarthy could have been worried that the Tydings report,
due to be released soon, would unmask him; thus, his quickness to use the Korean War as an issue might have been considered a preemptive political strike. If it was, it worked.

Having garnered the front page with Korea, McCarthy claimed that the Tydings subcommittee had not examined the complete files. As proof, he cited a letter from J. Edgar Hoover to Senate investigators informing them that the FBI was in "no position to make statements concerning the completeness or incompleteness of the State Department files." It was a damaging charge, given Hoover's stature. The FBI director waited months before he confirmed the State Department's statement that the FBI had been given a complete copy of the files in dispute. In the meantime, McCarthy squabbled with the Tydings subcommittee and the State Department over the condition of the employee records.

As the Tydings subcommittee concluded, it became clear that the Democrats had failed to work out a modus vivendi with the subcommittee's moderate Republican, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge. The investigation divided along party lines when the Democratic members (Tydings, McMahon, and Greene) suggested drafting a working paper. Lodge and Hickenlooper
objected; they were not ready to issue a preliminary report. On July 17, the Democrats filed a majority report which accused McCarthy of perpetrating a "willful hoax."

The report immediately sparked a bitter fight in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the parent committee of the Tydings' investigation. The debate over the verdict became Democrat versus Republican, not subcommittee versus McCarthy. Senator Taft labeled the proceedings "political" and "insulting." Lodge and Hickenlooper filed a minority report that disputed the Democrats' conclusions. Senator Smith, and the others who had declared the tactics of McCarthy unconscionable just a month before, supported their Party. The majority report made it out of the parent committee on a straight party-line vote. It proved to be the last demonstration of Democratic Party unity on the issue of internal security till 1954.

McCarthy's efforts to defuse the investigation's report on the veracity of his charges were greatly enhanced by J. Edgar Hoover. The FBI Director's silence on the issue of the files, like the party line vote on the report, helped McCarthy create plausible doubts about the veracity and intent of the majority report. The story of the beleaguered subcommittee's majority report also shared the front page of
the New York Times with news of a new spy. Julius Rosenberg had been arrested and charged with conspiracy to commit espionage. The timing of the arrest reeked of foul play, but the White House dared not criticize the domain of J. Edgar Hoover. Shortly thereafter, Rosenberg's wife and a co-conspirator were arrested.²⁴

Though Rosenberg had nothing to do with the present administration, the arrest of a man who had sold nuclear secrets to the Soviets muted the impact of the subcommittee's report.²⁵ The conclusions of the Tydings subcommittee brought neither harm to McCarthy nor relief for the administration. A Gallup poll in July showed continued support for McCarthy.²⁶ Thousands of letters poured into his office daily, as his reputation continued to increase into the fall of 1950.²⁷ The Rosenbergs remained in the public eye for a long time, serving as constant reminders of danger. Their presence certainly made it more difficult for Truman to convince Americans that there was no basis for McCarthy's charges. When asked about McCarthy in press conferences, he had "no comment."²⁸

Spingarn refused to give up. In memo after memo, he pressed the case for immediate action. "I hate to be in the position of the boy who cried 'wolf' too often," he wrote
on July 20, but the failure of the Senate investigation had proven that "the eclipse of McCarthy is temporary."\textsuperscript{29} Seconded by Murphy, Spingarn outlined what he saw as the next contest with the McCarthyites, the congressional initiatives. Truman had publicly threatened to veto any version of the Mundt-Nixon Bill because its provisions were unconstitutional, pernicious, and unnecessary. His aides told him the veto, while courageous, would be extremely unpopular unless accompanied by dramatic executive action. Congress would override the veto unless the White House earned the nation's confidence. Truman's aides also warned that a "serious deterioration in the present international situation" might make it harder for him to lead Congress on the issue. Without positive gain in Korea, Spingarn even saw a "distinct possibility" that Magnussen's alternative bill would be subsumed by the Mundt-Nixon bill.\textsuperscript{30}

The White House's opposition to the Republican bills was motivated at least in part by the desire to protect the Bill of Rights from the ravages of the Red Scare. The president and his staff recognized that the congressional initiatives, most notably the Mundt-Nixon bill, represented drastic and often unconstitutional measures to strengthen the war against domestic subversives. But concern for civil
liberties did not provoke the White House to address the dangerous extremism within the theory and practice of the Cold War. In short, Truman and his staff opposed the Subversive Activities Control Board without conceding its similarity to the loyalty program. Given that the operative principles were the same, the White House's opposition was inconsistent. More important, it was not credible. Even while he continued to push for a presidential investigation into internal security as a way to forestall the Congress, Spingarn came up with alternatives. He encouraged the president to issue a message to Congress discussing the whole question and reiterating the need for balance. The proposed message would stress that the nation already had effective laws, such as the Smith Act. Spingarn also floated the idea of presidential support for some "decent" laws in order to defeat the worst of the bills; in other words, to work with Magnussen. Truman's advisors clearly understood that passage of Mundt-Nixon or other Republican bills would be perceived as another victory of the Republican right.

Murphy and Spingarn made an effort to prevent other congressional investigations into internal security from embroiling themselves in the loyalty files issue. They
also attempted to protect civil liberties by bridling the zealous Justice Department. Armed with a letter from Truman, Spingarn extracted from Attorney General McGrath a promise to withdraw his department's support for the Hobbes Bill, a bill designed to strengthen the government's ability to deport suspected communists. But McGrath, like J. Edgar Hoover, continued to support this and other anti-Communist legislation. The Hobbes bill passed in mid July. In the last hours, several congressmen complained that they were unaware that the administration opposed the bill. Spingarn blamed the Attorney General.

Later that month, the President met with his domestic policy team to discuss the public's concern with internal security. Murphy asked for guidance on the upcoming bills. "The president said," according to one observer, "that the situation in this respect was the worst it had been since the Alien and Sedition acts of 1798, that a lot of people on the Hill should know better but had been stampeded into running with their tails between their legs." Truman reiterated his commitment to the Bill of Rights, and his intention to veto the legislation. Having taken what he considered the high road, the president approved his staff's suggestion that a presidential message to Congress be
drafted "as a basis for further discussion." Over the next few days, Truman relented somewhat, as Spingarn pressed his case for executive action among the president's most trusted advisors. Under pressure from his staff and a number of Senators to defeat the Republican legislative agenda by creating a commission, Truman promised to study Spingarn's most recent memorandum.

The draft of the Presidential message, prepared by Spingarn with help from the entire staff on July 23, revealed that the White House's appraisal of the problem had not altered, even if its members disagreed on solutions. It all began with the threat. The national commitment to containment protected the U.S. and other free nations from the horrors of communist totalitarianism, which were described in graphic detail. President Truman, however, would protect America's internal security in a manner consistent with the Bill of Rights. The draft defended the loyalty program for its balancing security of civil liberties, though it conceded the need for mild reforms. The draft message then condemned those who sought to "enact a new set of Alien and Sedition laws." Moreover, it blamed the "super patriots and the seekers of partisan or selfish advantage" for playing on the people's fears. To combat
such pernicious influences, the president would establish a Commission on Internal Security and Individual Rights would be established.\textsuperscript{43}

Truman sent Congress his message on internal security on August 8th. He proposed moderate reforms in his loyalty program and the federal law, but he did not concede much. Praising his record, he cited the number of communists that had been convicted and even took credit for the new powers accorded McGrath by immigration law—an act Truman had asked McGrath to oppose.\textsuperscript{44} Then he defended his opposition to the Mundt-Nixon bill (which had become known as the McCarran bill), using many of the themes he had used against McCarthy. Now, however, Truman was criticizing a proposal popular in Congress. Sponsorship of the Republican Mundt-Nixon bill had been taken over by a powerful Democrat in the Senate, Pat McCarran of Nevada.

Truman had chosen to accuse Republicans, not Democrats, of endangering the nation with their wild charges, and their "sedition bills."\textsuperscript{45} The McCarran bill would harm not only civil liberties, he predicted, but would also help communists agents in the country. Truman's explanation of how his opponent's bill would help communists was rather complicated, but the intent of the criticism was obvious.
Truman still hoped to establish himself as the pre-eminent anti-communist. He did not mention the presidential commission in his message; the reason was never recorded.

Truman's message to Congress amounted to branding all of his critics as McCarthyites. It was a mistake for Truman to set himself against the public's desire for more investigations and the Congress's concomitant desire to participate in the most powerful issue of the day. Without a clear distinction between its anti-communism and that of McCarthy, the White House's opposition to congressional initiatives must have appeared to the public as the fruit of bitter partisanship, not concern for national well-being. Truman's low popularity, along with the lack of a clear victory in Korea, made a majority in Congress refuse to endorse Truman's anti-communism. As it developed, the Democrats in Congress, not the vocal Republican right, threatened to hand the president a serious defeat. Judging by his message to Congress, then, Truman considered the battle against McCarthy as a better arena in which to restore his reputation than the alternative of dealing with the abuses of civil liberties by his own party. He failed to appreciate, however, that labeling a mass desertion of his own party as McCarthyism left him no room to maneuver.
Though the president continued to proclaim that he was "not alarmed by the recent anti-communist hysteria," he recognized that he needed to prove something.\textsuperscript{46} Truman and his staff lobbied hard in August and September, distributing copies of "Witch Hunting and Hysteria in the United States" to the Democratic National Committee and its congressional candidates, as well as to selected journalists, commentators, and editors.\textsuperscript{47} While his staff used the study to prepare speeches, the president himself sent copies directly to prominent Democrats and the editor of the \textit{New York Times}.\textsuperscript{48} "The Republicans," Truman added in a covering letter, "have usually profited by these waves of hysteria at the time, but have lost in the long run...this stage we are in now is of Republican manufacture and it will burn surely." As for the McCarthyites, he told one reporter, they were "beneath contempt."\textsuperscript{49}

Truman also replaced Lowenthal with Murphy and Spingarn as his primary congressional liaison on the issue.\textsuperscript{50} The replacement of Max Lowenthal, whose criticism of J. Edgar Hoover's application of anti-communism amounted to a criticism of Truman's own, signaled the president's commitment to anti-communism and his lack of concern for civil liberties. Spingarn and Murphy dutifully contacted,
among others, the staff of the Senate Democratic Policy Committee and colleagues at the State Department in order to draft bills that represented the kinds of reforms outlined in the presidential message. Given that the purpose of drafting the bill was to defeat a measure popular in Congress, however, the "reforms" of the internal security laws involved strengthening them.\textsuperscript{51} Truman thought he could win by being a stronger anti-communist than his opponents. Spingarn even wrote to the J. Edgar Hoover, decrying the "unholy mess." "Needless to say," he added, "a statement by you [Hoover] in support of [the Democratic initiative]... would carry great weight."\textsuperscript{52} Apparently, the request fell on deaf ears. Not inclined to do Truman any favors, Hoover continued to issue dire warnings about communism and subversion.\textsuperscript{53}

Anti-communist hysteria continued to grow in August and September, months which witnessed highly publicized investigations into Hollywood and the broadcasting industry. The clamor for more internal security legislation continued unabated. Attorney General McGrath designated more organizations as communist.\textsuperscript{54} The Loyalty Review Board told its agency heads to "adjudicate cases faster" because there were more on the way.\textsuperscript{55} Communists continued to be
arrested, arraigned, tried and convicted. Rather than challenge the president directly, the McCarthyites instead chose to level their most outrageous accusations at the Secretary of State, Dean Acheson. As Acheson's popularity plummeted, Truman felt compelled to proclaim that he would not fire his secretary of state. To his wife, the president admitted that he had to fire the Secretary of Defense, Louis Johnson, partly because Johnson had "intrigued in scandalous fashion against" Acheson by passing administration secrets to the McCarthyites. Truman also let Acheson know that the Secretary of State could "fire anyone" he mistrusted--though he did not specify whether he meant suspected communists or suspected McCarthyites.

Standing firm against the hysteria, the president also reiterated his promise to veto the impending congressional action. Warnings that the situation required action, not intransigence, came to Truman from many sources. Early in September, Senator Magnussen and other allies of the administration in Congress sponsored a bill in an attempt to supplant the McCarran Act. Following the old adage that "you can't beat something with nothing," Spingarn advised the president to support the efforts of Democrats on the Hill. On the other hand, a few moderate Republicans told
top White House advisors privately that a presidential commission might be enough to block the McCarran bill. On September 19 Spingarn recorded that, after being told of Senate support for the proposed panel, the president "was favorably disposed...if it would help sustain the [impending] veto."\(^{62}\)

The president's nod of approval forced his staff to re-examine the PCISIR proposal. In mid-September, Administrative Assistant David Bell wrote Murphy about preparations for the PCISIR.\(^{63}\) He informed Murphy that the original plan was now "obsolete." The reporting date of the proposed panel needed adjustment. The current plan, which specified July or August of 1951, might well "cramp the commission for time." On the other hand, if the commission reported in late November or December of 1951, the commission could well "become a political issue for the 1952 campaign." While the report might help the Democrats, "the pitch of the draft statement (and I believe the correct pitch) is taking this stuff out of politics."\(^{64}\) To avoid making the PCISIR a political ploy, Bell advised immediate action. Concerned about the panel's chances for success, he also floated the idea of appointing J. Edgar Hoover to it.

The hour of the congressional vote on the McCarran
Bill drew near. The bill appeared certain to pass. Instead of unilaterally announcing a presidential panel, Truman decided to take a half-step. He backed the anti-communist bill presented by his allies in the Senate, the Magnussen bill. In so doing, he went from opposing all congressional action to favoring that sponsored by his allies. The position lacked credibility because of its obvious partisanship. The flip-flop also contradicted his prior insistence that current laws and procedures met the challenge. The White House was in an untenable situation. As historian Athan Theoharris surmised, Truman could not simultaneously contend that the nation was in danger and oppose the McCarran Act.

The passage of the Internal Security Act of 1950, known as the McCarran Act, cost the president a great deal of political clout. Leading Congressional Democrats had not done much to block its passage and advised the president to sign it. Truman refused to sign what he deemed a "draconian" law, citing his commitment to the Constitution. On September 22, Congress overrode his veto. Compounding the injury, the bill sponsored by Magnussen had been subsumed into the McCarran Act. Congress' reassertion of influence in the debate over domestic security was, as
historian Alonzo Hamby concluded, considered by most contemporaries as an important victory for the opponents of the administration.\textsuperscript{68}

One challenge yet remained in 1950, the congressional elections of 1950. "The people," Truman predicted, "understand the Republican approach to the election and they are not going to be fooled."\textsuperscript{69} In other words, Truman hoped that the people would force Congress to behave.

Administrative Assistant David Lloyd set out the campaign themes of 1950 in an effort to guide the Party's national committee. While they amounted to little more than new variations on old themes, his suggestions were implemented nonetheless. "The political objective," as defined by Lloyd, was "to drive the isolationists out of Congress--an objective which for the most part, with only a few exceptions--would drive out the chief opponents of our domestic program as well." He recommended handling "the Red Scare by pointing out the political objectives of the ring leaders of the smear campaign, [and] tying this in with the attack on our bipartisan foreign policy." Lloyd argued that making isolationism the main issue "would take the administration out of a defensive position." "Better to attack isolationists," he concluded, "than Republicans."\textsuperscript{70}
Just as Lloyd expected, the Republican Party's election platform in 1950 emphasized the war against communism, though of course they framed it differently. The GOP made the most of the administration's ineffectiveness in handling the war in Korea and the battle against domestic subversion.\textsuperscript{71} McCarthy maintained a high profile during the election, making over thirty major speeches in fifteen states. The Senator drew large, enthusiastic crowds. As usual, he distilled Republican themes into their crudest essence. He blamed the war in Korea on "the Kremlin and those who sabotaged rearming, including Acheson and the president, if you please."\textsuperscript{72}

The accusation that he had held back militarily in Korea was one criticism Truman thought he could fix. A scant week before the election, the president met with General Douglas MacArthur, the commander of US forces in Korea, at Wake Island. The White House steadfastly maintained that the visit was a military necessity, and therefore not intended to inspire positive headlines.\textsuperscript{73} While on Wake, Truman assented to General MacArthur's demand that he be allowed to carry the fight to the communists across the 38th parallel on September 29. Moving beyond containment in Korea was a popular idea, but one fraught
with peril. The Chinese government had stated that a United Nations takeover of North Korea was unacceptable. At home, the prospect of total victory raised public expectations. The White House certainly had congressional support to take the step. But then, Truman had not asked for it.

With the nation engaged in a war, the president limited himself to one major campaign address, televised on November 4. While continuing to warn of the threat the Soviets posed to the United States, Truman announced that "the coming victory in Korea would be the greatest step toward peace in my lifetime." Again he reviewed the record to support his contention that his administration had done more than his opponents to defeat the communists. To underscore the bipartisan nature of his foreign policy, he pointed to the fact that Republicans held important posts in the State Department and the Loyalty Program. At which point a member of the audience called out "Give'em hell, Harry!" "I'm going to," Truman replied.

Truman's speech expanded the ranks of the McCarthyites to include all Republicans. The GOP had opposed "every great progressive measure...in the last 17 years." They were isolationists playing partisan politics, and they had to be stopped. Realizing that the charge of isolationism
might not stick to a Party hell-bent on the war against communism, Truman appealed to the same sense of national crisis that his opponents used. The crazy lies of the McCarthyites, who claimed the Democrats were soft on communism, endangered the nation by weakening national unity. In his own words, "the Republicans...had been willing...to undermine their own government at a time of great international peril," by manipulating the communist issue beyond "all sense of proportion, all sense of restraint, all sense of patriotic decency." He concluded by predicting that the nation would not be fooled by their "mudslinging."

Events in Korea did not strengthen Truman's position. The Chinese entered the war and, as the election approached, the United Nations forces in Korea were beaten back once again. Despite the administration's troubles, the Democratic Party held on to its majority in both houses.

According to the post-election analysis of Kenneth Hechler, the Chinese victories just before the election "made it look like the onset of WWIII," which frightened voters into accepting "the scapegoat suggested by McCarthy and his smear crew." Hechler, like most politicians and political commentators, attributed a great deal of electoral
influence to McCarthy and the "ism" that bore his name.\textsuperscript{81} The Wisconsin Senator's reputation had been enhanced by the defeat of Senators Millard Tydings in Maryland and Scott Lucas in Illinois. McCarthy had singled out these two Democratic senators as his main enemies during the election, and had campaigned on behalf of their Republican opponents. The "spectacular nature of those Senate contests," Hechler noted, "overshadowed the real progress which the Democratic Party made in 1950."\textsuperscript{82} Breaking down the returns state by state, Hechler highlighted the Democratic victories won in the face of "vicious smear campaigns." More important, he recognized that other problems, such as divisions within statewide Democratic organizations, had been "as important as the smear campaign."\textsuperscript{83} Historians have confirmed and deepened Hechler's suspicions about the meaning of the election results; Richard Fried considered Senator McCarthy "a master at nothing so much as identifying himself with the political dividends."\textsuperscript{84} Hechler did not see what Fried later would. The president's personal historian concluded that "unquestionably, the returns in many areas...represented a temporary triumph for the tactics of the smear campaign."\textsuperscript{85}

Hechler's analysis confirmed the president's own
assessment, that the election represented a victory for McCarthy. Truman blamed himself for not hitting McCarthy hard enough. He also blamed Democratic candidates for lacking "the nerve to fight fire with fire." "In the states where the [Democrats'] majority was increased in the off-year," the president complained, "the candidates supported the Democratic program and called McCarthy what he is—a liar and a crook." The fact, however, that "McCarthyism...seemed to have an effect on the voter" greatly depressed Truman, and he drank heavily the night the returns came in.

In late November, the Chinese army broke through UN lines, and the situation grew desperate. Truman exacerbated the tense crisis by intimating in a press conference that the atomic bomb might be used. Behind closed doors, the president contemplated the effect of sending more soldiers to South Korea would have on his political fortunes at a staff meeting on December 28. Increasing the military commitment meant a message to Congress, perhaps a declaration of national emergency. Worst of all, Truman knew that the entry of China into the war would force him to renounce publicly the idea of liberating North Korea. Realizing that the limitation would be unpopular, he lashed
out, accusing the McCarthyites of encouraging the Eastern Bloc to be more aggressive. The remark betrayed Truman's fury at the prospect of McCarthy's reaction to limited war aims.

Truman understood how the war in Korea, along with the election and the McCarran Act, had led to his downfall, but not why. The main reason these events had hurt him so badly was that he had framed each of these events as if it were part of a contest between himself and McCarthy. Truman had declared that those who criticized his handling of the Korean war were McCarthyites. He had declared that those who supported the McCarran Act were McCarthyites. He had characterized the congressional elections of 1950 as a referendum on the McCarthyites. And he blamed his political problems, which by December of 1950 were large, on McCarthyism, a blend of unscrupulous politician and a hysterical public.

But McCarthyism was not some mystical force. He had made war unilaterally; he suffered the consequences of Korea alone. The Rosenberg Case had also injured the president's credibility because Truman, after helping to engineer the Red Scare, had insisted the McCarthy was a liar--there were no communists in government. Given Truman's ineffective
leadership on the issue of anti-communism, Congress choose to get involved and the voters gave at least some credence to Republican red-baiters during the election.
ENDNOTES


2. Ibid., p.221.

3. Ibid., p.224.


5. Murphy, Elsey and Spingarn, "Memorandum for the President," July 11, 1950, Spingarn Chronological File July-August 1950, box 13, HSTL.

6. Elsey, Oral History, pg.361, HSTL.


8. Ibid.

9. Spingarn, "Memorandum of the Pro's and Con's...," June 26, 1950, Murphy Files Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL.

10. Ibid.


15. Ibid.

16. McCarthy to Truman, June 12, 1950, OF-20, box 109, HSTL.
17. McCarthy to Truman, July 17, 1950, OF-20, box 37, HSTL.

18. SD Press Release, May 20, 1950, Box 70, Elsey Papers Int. Sec. Witch Hunting, box 70, HSTL; Reeves, The Life and Times of Joe McCarthy, pg. 313.


20. Fried, Men Against McCarthy, p. 86.


26. Fried, Men Against McCarthy, p. 89.


29. Spingarn, "Memorandum for Messrs Murphy, Dawson and Elsey," July 20, 1950, Murphy Files Loyalty, box 28, HSTL.


33. "Memorandum," June 29, 1950, Murphy Files Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL.

34. Spingarn, Oral History, pg. 781, HSTL.
35. Ibid., pg. 782.


37. Ibid.


39. Ibid.


42. Spingarn, "CSM," July 23, 1950, Murphy Files Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL.

43. Spingarn, "To the Congress of the United States (draft 7/23/50)," Murphy Files Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL; ----, "CSM," 7/23/50, Murphy Files Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL.


45. Ibid.

46. Donovan, Tumultuous Years, p.166.

47. Elsey, "Memorandum for the President," August 18, 1950, Elsey Papers Int. Sec. Witch Hunting, box 70, HSTL.

48. Truman to Barkley, McCormack, Rayburn and Lucas, August 8, 1950, OF-2750B, box 1716, HSTL; Donovan, Tumultuous Years, p.166.

49. PNC, August 17, 1950, Public Papers, pg. 600.
50. Spingarn, "Memorandum for the Files on Int. Sec. and Ind. Rts.,” August 11, 1950, Murphy Files Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL.

51. Ibid.


54. Memo, August 24, 1950, OF-252K, box 872, HSTL.


56. PNC, September 14, 1950, Public Papers, pg.634.

57. Ferrell, Off the Record, p.189.

58. Truman, "My Dear Mr. Secretary," September 6, 1950, Spingarn Papers Nat’l Def. Int. Sec. and Ind. Rts.(1), box 31, HSTL.

59. PNC, September 7, 1950, Public Papers, pg.620.


61. Henry C. Lodge to Truman, September 14, 1950; Helen G. Douglas to Truman, September 27, 1950; All in OF-2750C, box 1716, HSTL.


63. David Bell, "Memorandum for Mr. Murphy," September 14, 1950 Murphy Files Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL.

64. Ibid.


67. Griffith, *The Politics of Fear*, p. 120.


70. David Lloyd, "Memorandum for Mr. Murphy," September 21, 1950, Murphy Papers "David Lloyd," box 10, HSTL.


73. Murphy, Oral History, p. 192, HSTL.


75. Murphy, Oral History, pg. 189, HSTL.


77. Ibid.

78. Ibid.


83. Ibid.


After a year filled with bitter defeat, Truman spent most of 1951 trying to create a vehicle to do what he damned the McCarthyites for doing—using the Cold War hysteria for political gain. In January, he established the President's Commission on Internal Security and Individual Rights. He created it, he said, to examine the government's domestic security programs in a non-partisan atmosphere and so strike a balance between the imperatives of national security and civil liberty. Neither the public, the media, nor Congress responded with enthusiasm, however. Truman's attempt to establish a commission could only be considered an attempt to re-establish his credibility at the expense of his critics. And so it was. During the past year, the objectives of the PCISIR had degenerated along with the president's fortunes, even as its license had been cheapened by half-steps. When Congress blocked the initiative, Truman revised the loyalty and security program by executive order. The new standard of disloyalty directed the administrators of the loyalty program to use as extreme a definition of disloyalty as that put forth by McCarthy. The new standard, like the PCISIR, was an attempt to sacrifice civil liberties
in order to inoculate the administration against further criticism. Truman spent 1951 trying to beat McCarthy using McCarthyism, and it led to his ruin.

First raised in 1948 by civil libertarians within the administration concerned by Truman's loyalty program, the concept of a presidential commission had been considered by the White House staff at various times in the summer and fall of 1949. The interest of then Special Council Clark Clifford and his staff, which included Murphy, Elsey, and Spingarn, had been promoted by alarming trends in the nation. There had been scattered, spontaneous outbursts of anti-communism and anti-communist sentiment in the general public. In June 1949, the Senate, conservative Republicans hav
and Admiral Souers of the National Security Council. They supported the panel idea because it was time for a reassessment of the government's loyalty and security apparatus. All current government employees had been checked. The loyalty boards of the various agencies would soon be checking applicants and "such new loyalty charges as may be leveled against incumbents already cleared." In addition, the Chairman of the Loyalty Review Board, Seth Richardson, had requested that the White House give the program permanent legal status.\textsuperscript{5}

The White House staff had also intended the panel to provide better guidelines to Richardson and the administrators of the loyalty program. Charles Murphy, then an Administrative Assistant, had alerted the president to the fact that the "sensitive agencies" (the Department of Defense, Atomic Energy Commission, State Department and Central Intelligence Agency), were dismissing employees for security rather than loyalty grounds.\textsuperscript{6} Disloyalty, the agency heads had told Murphy, was too hard to prove. Murphy had requested that the proposed commission examine this practice.\textsuperscript{7}

The request amounted to an attempt to distinguish between security risks--employees whose personal habits or lifestyle left them open to blackmail by communists, and
loyalty risks--those who were susceptible to the
machinations of communists because of their beliefs. Had it
been acted upon, Murphy's request for an codification of the
loyalty standard might have alerted Truman to the enormous
confusion created by attempts to define disloyalty. On the
other hand, the proposal might also have led to a more
intense anti-civil libertarian policy. Regardless of where
the PCISIR came down on the question of disloyalty, however,
the development of a clear standard might have saved the
administration from the worst abuses of McCarthy by removing
the confusion within which he thrived. But no action was
taken. A few weeks later McCarthy appeared, and the matter
of internal security became the purview of the Tydings'
investigation.

It only took a month of watching Tydings for the some
on the staff to renew their recommendation for a proactive
policy. The situation looked grim. Truman had tried to
help Tydings by announcing that the Loyalty Review Board
would investigate the disputed cases. Though the
president's LRB initiative had no effect on the controversy,
Murphy and Spingarn still had high hopes for the PCISIR
proposal. They advised Truman to help himself by taking
action. Though still couched in terms of balancing
security with liberty, the proposed PCISIR had already been
directed toward the new threat: the failure of the Tydings committee. Truman choose instead to release the files to the subcommittee. Murphy and Spingarn again waited a few weeks to ascertain the effect of the files. In late May, they renewed their support for a panel.⁹

At this point, their colleague, Administrative Assistant Don Dawson, raised some concerns about the proposal he had once supported. The situation had changed, he argued, because McCarthy had sown so much doubt and confusion.

Taking Dawson's concerns into consideration, Murphy and Spingarn sought to broker a deal with the Tydings subcommittee that would give the PCISIR full accreditation.¹⁰ If the members of the subcommittee would "cease firing while the Richardson board completes its consideration of these cases," the White House would direct the LRB to finish its examination of the complete files of those state department employees still under attack, and report its finding directly to the Tydings subcommittee. The members of the subcommittee would then submit a interim report stating "that the subcommittee has examined the files sufficiently to determine that they are the same loyalty files which were furnished several congressional commissions during the Republican 80th Congress and that those
commissions did not find any basis for action at that time.\textsuperscript{11} The subcommittee's interim report would then be taken up by the president's appointees. Murphy and Spingarn's effort to write the subcommittee's report amounted to a request that the Republicans on the Tydings subcommittee abdicate their authority over the issue of internal security in favor of Truman. The White House operated on the assumption that curbing the excesses of the anti-communist hysteria and re-establishing Truman's leadership of the Cold War just happened to be one and the same. Senators Lodge and Hickenlooper, however, refused to abandon their influence in the most powerful issue of the day. Their refusal to abdicate authority was a portent not fully appreciated by the White House.

By spring, the Democratic members of the subcommittee had become ardent supporters of presidential action. Threatened by McCarthy's success at making them look inept, Senator's Tydings and McMahon defined the panel as an investigation of the State Department and the loyalty program.\textsuperscript{12} Spingarn, however, rejected their narrow approach.\textsuperscript{13} As far as he and Murphy were concerned, the intent of PCISIR remained to provide a more general relief from the hysteria.\textsuperscript{14} Distinguished citizens "of the elder statesman variety" would be appointed to a committee led by
a prominent Republican.¹⁵ They would be charged with the task of determining the procedures needed to protect national security while safeguarding civil liberties. Their purview, therefore, should contain not only review of government's loyalty and security programs, but also the formulation of a "national policy with respect to internal security legislation."¹⁶ Only a committee of distinguished citizens from both parties, argued the president's advisors, could sufficiently command the trust of the people to settle the issue.

The White House staff's proposal recognized that elder statesmen untainted by the controversy could achieve what the White House had not—a clear definition of words like "loyalty," and "communist." Truman's aides were also certain that such a committee would not endorse McCarthy's definitions. The problem unstated in Murphy's and Spingarn's assessment was that many government employees had committed various political indiscretions in their youth. The solution they offered addressed this by having a few trusted individuals convince the public that almost all of these past associations were harmless.

Of course the immediate political benefits of the PCISIR were not lost on men burdened by the practical realities of running the country. In early summer of 1950,
the staff's biggest concerns were Republican congressional initiatives, particularly "the current version of the Mundt-Nixon bill," and the upcoming congressional elections.\textsuperscript{17} The staff proposed the PCISIR be instructed to issue an interim report by October, 1950--just before the congressional elections.\textsuperscript{18}

The sudden start of a shooting war against foreign communists strengthened the staff's commitment to the idea. The war represented a perfect pretext for establishing a PCISIR; it had not only served "to deepen the tensions which exist," the war would also silence the McCarthyites for at least a short period.\textsuperscript{19} Establishing a panel, therefore, would be considered by the public as the act of a strong leader who had the interests of the nation at heart, not as a partisan maneuver against McCarthy.\textsuperscript{20} Spingarn and Murphy, in short, encouraged Truman to use the Korea war as a means of beating the McCarthyites.

The staff was not so foolhardy as to expect the panel simply to validate administration policy.\textsuperscript{21} Concerned about the effect of the war, they urged the president to endow the panel with unrestricted access and to resist attempts to confine the investigation "behind the bars of 'secrecy,' 'security,' and 'administrative (or legal) embarrassment.'"\textsuperscript{22} They believed that the administration
had to accept some criticism, but that the concession would be worthwhile if it lead to a more cautious debate, as well as a widespread understanding that the loyalty program could never be infallible.

By mid-summer, then, Spingarn and Murphy and Elsey had fully articulated both their perception of McCarthyism and their answer to it. Both perception and answer were shaped by contempt for McCarthyism, and a commitment to anti-communism. They believed that re-establishing the president as the nation's preeminent anti-communist and reigning in McCarthyism were one and the same thing. The various incarnations of their proposals, therefore, had always aimed at getting a duly-authorized, credible organization to expose McCarthy and demonstrate "responsible" anti-communism. Murphy and Spingarn's strategy was flawed because, during these past few months, the White House itself had helped transform the Cold War consensus into McCarthyism. Their appreciation of the forces producing McCarthyism lacked one essential element: a recognition of the administration's culpability for the creation of an ideology so imbued with extremism.

The lack of recognition prevented the White House from offering a clear, practical distinction between the administration's anti-communism and that of McCarthy. While
putting the finishing touches of the PCISIR proposal in the summer of 1950, Spingarn explicitly rejected one columnist's suggestion that the committee examine the whole question of internal security. In his words, he did not want a charter so broad that the cases are "lost in a corner." In short, the distinguished citizens on the panel would not be asked to fundamentally reassess the nature of the communist threat. For the administration, the logic was elementary. The nature of the communist threat required the utmost vigilance. Beyond that, maintaining anti-communist fervor within the nation was critical to the stability of US foreign policy. The fundamentals represented, however, a slippery slope. Truman and his staff slipped, condemning the hysteria—which they blamed on the Republican right—without recognizing the role that the Truman Doctrine and the loyalty program had in generating these fears.

Privately, at least, Truman and his top aides condemned the zealotry of the administrators of the nation's domestic security apparatus. Spingarn, Murphy, and Elsey had long considered the FBI Director one of "those who seek careers by persecuting others." Hoover, however, was hardly the only member of the administration who had demonstrated extremism. The staff's memo's from the summer of 1950, replete with oblique condemnations of "those who confuses the
public as to the nature and size of the problem," suggested that they placed some blame upon other members of the domestic security bureaucracy. In other words, the extreme anti-communism practiced by the Attorney General, the Chairman of the LRB, as well as National Security Advisor Sidney Sours had come to the White House's attention. The private condemnations of extreme cold warriors within the administration lacked any appreciation of the fact that Richardson and the other administrators of the loyalty program operated under presidential directives.

By the end of 1950, the White House's public condemnation of those who confused liberals with communists approached hyperbole. As he developed the PCISIR in light of the off-year election results, Spingarn asked J. Edgar Hoover, "as a leading expert in the field,...go on record...[instead of] "staying in the background when the going gets tough." Hoover was approached despite his reactionary view of security and his animosity toward the administration. The suggestion that Hoover's cooperation be solicited pointed up the White House's abandonment of principle for the sake of political position. The PCISIR had become an act of vengeance upon the Republican Party. Soon after the election, Murphy gave the president another detailed memorandum on the PCISIR proposal. This memo did...
not mention the goal of the panel striking a balance between liberty and security. Instead, Truman's top White House domestic advisor assumed that exposing Republican deceit and reducing public hysteria were one and the same.

He began by conceding that the elections left the White House in a weak position. More important, the GOP certainly considered it an effective issue, and therefore could be "expected to play it very hard for the next two years." It was thus necessary to "effectively counter-act such political charges." Because the PCISIR proposal could not be attacked as partisan, he continued, "its judgement would carry great public weight and be a firm reliance for Democratic candidates in '52." Murphy emphasized that the panel should be created before Congress reconvened. While conceding that such unilateral action would not silence Republican criticisms, he claimed it would effectively answer them. As he saw it, the nation supported the government's security program, but McCarthyism had made them uneasy. A panel "designed to give them the truth," he promised, would be considered "a statesman-like step." "The real truth of the matter," Special Council declared, was that "the appointment and reports of such a commission will help to show up the Republicans as unpatriotic politicians, ready to undermine their government to gain votes..."
Murphy also listed several important White House political objectives that would be achieved by such action. "The findings of the commission would undoubtedly strongly endorse the effectiveness of the President's loyalty program." Not only would the proposal deflate any new Republican investigations, the commission, Murphy promised, it "would be bound to recommend repeal or substantial overhaul of the McCarran Act."^32

Presidential Assistant David Bell concurred with Murphy's assessment. He and David Lloyd, Richard Neustadt and Donald Hansen had become actively involved in the issue with the abrupt removal of Stephen Spingarn who, as Murphy later wrote, "just couldn't keep his mouth shut."^33 Bell's memorandum to the president, also of November 14, illustrated the extent of the White House's self-serving confusion. Bell fumed that "internal security had been injected into partisan politics, where it had no place," even as he and Murphy worked out a way to use the PCISIR to their political advantage.^34

As November wore on, the White House staff chose likely candidates for their proposed commission.^35 Truman, however, remained reluctant to take an action. Pressed by Murphy and Chief of Staff Matt Connally at a staff meeting on November 20, "the president expressed opposition to [the
PCISIR proposal] as he felt it would be an admission that the government's program is wrong and that, he said, he could not concede." Instead, the president indicated a willingness to "deliver a radio address, covering the whole thing and pointing out the lies that have been told about it." Only a few days later, however, Truman realized the futility of more speeches and began searching for a moderate, respected Republican to lead his commission.

Truman wrote Herbert Hoover on November 25, 1950, outlining his proposal and requesting the former president chair the commission. Truman's staff made sure the letter contained nothing that the Republicans could use. Hoover refused the next day. Truman appealed to the former president again. Hoover advised Truman to allow congress full access to the files, so that they might do a complete examination. The president, however, was in no mood to follow this advice.

Truman wrote in his diary at the end of November, lamenting the fact that the new Congress had "more morons than patriots in it." He considered those Senators, whether from the Republican right or the Southern Democrats, who opposed his ambitious foreign policy as "Stalin's...helpers," though none could be as useful to the Soviet President as McCarthy. Truman regarded his problems
as unique in American history:

I suppose that presidents in the past have had a hostile congress--but they were frankly of the opposition. This one--the 81st--happens to be of my own party on the surface...There are liars, trimmers, and pussyfooters on both sides of the aisle in the Senate and the House. I'm sorry. I wish I had straight out opposition and loyal support. I guess its too much to ask for.41

As for McCarthy, he was still creating a storm, albeit as much legal as legislative. During the course of the next two years, he was in court either suing or being sued for libel, all while under investigation by the Senate for his actions during the congressional elections of 1950. Despite generating a great deal of derogatory information about the senator, the various initiatives aimed at McCarthy produced more months of partisan bickering but no clear resolution.42 After all, the last few months had left him in a strong situation, so politicians felt some trepidation about taking him on and little necessity to back Truman.

National politics remained bitter in December of 1950 and January of 1951 as McCarthyism gathered momentum. Senate conformation of the administration's nomination of Anna Rosenberg to the Defense Department stalled because of the baseless accusations by the Republican right. The President had her file sent over to Senate, congressional investigators did their homework, and her accusers were defeated.43 The McCarthyites simply readjusted the battle
lines, demanding the development of closer ties to Chang Kai Chek and the dismissal of Secretary of State Acheson. A Gallup poll showed Americans held a low opinion of the Secretary of State.\textsuperscript{44} Truman defended him, proclaiming that if the "enemies of liberty and Christianity" were to take over the country the next day, Acheson would be "one of the first, if not the first, to be shot."\textsuperscript{45} In defiance of Truman, the new Congress debated U.S. foreign policy, especially the Korean War. Reverses in Korea compelled the President to declare a State of Emergency. In his State of the Union Address, the President once again sounded the alarm against the Soviet menace and once again sought to rally the people to his banner. But his popularity continued to fall.\textsuperscript{46}

Near the end of January, Truman announced the creation of a Presidential Commission on Internal Security and Individual Rights (PCISIR). Admiral Chester A. Nimitz chaired the select panel of citizens from various sectors of society.\textsuperscript{47} Their task was to review all existing loyalty and security policies, and suggest ways of improving the program's balance of security and liberty.\textsuperscript{48} Truman also said that he intended the panel to remove the issue of internal security from partisan politics.\textsuperscript{49} In the weeks following the announcement, his staff made an effort to
ensure that "the Nimitz Commission and the White House...be divorced in every possible way." Years later, Truman contended that he had made it "clear that [he] would not stand for the intrusion of partisan politics." The White House's claim of non-partisanship was as disingenuous, however, as its tone of outraged moralism. In his press conference on the PCISIR, Truman repeated his assertion that the Republicans were damaging the national interest by politicizing the issue of internal security. The president then delineated the parameters of internal security as though security hinged upon the loyalty of every one of the government's over two million employees—placing forest rangers and post men on the same level as policy analysts and diplomats. Inherent in the Nimitz commission's license, then, was an overestimation of the problem of subversion. In granting the license, the president intended to enervate criticism by demonstrating his anti-communism. Instead, the mandate created another host for the germs of McCarthyism. McCarthy and his cohorts responded in predictable fashion to this challenge, redoubling their assault on the administration's anti-subversion program.

The McCarthyites' incessant attacks upon the nation's internal security policy, along with Truman's admission that
his program needed revision, produced a chain of events disastrous for the White House. Truman's attempt to use the PCISIR to demonstrate his steadfast anti-communism by strengthening the government’s program placed a great deal of pressure upon the loyalty program’s top administrator, the Republican Chairman of the Loyalty Review Board, Hiriam Bingham. Bingham, after serving the state of Connecticut as both senator and governor, had succeeded Seth Richardson as the chairman of the LRB in early 1951. As early as 1949, Richardson had requested that a new loyalty standard be adopted. Bingham, surely alarmed at prospect of being criticized by the PCISIR, renewed the request. Presidential authorization of a more stringent loyalty standard, Bingham promised Truman, would allow him to demonstrate the administration’s commitment to defending America. The president referred the matter to the Nimitz Commission. He then called upon Congress to increase the budgets of the FBI and the loyalty program.

On April 11, the President gave an address on national television to explain his policy in Korea and his reasons for relieving General Douglas MacArthur of command in the Pacific. Soon after, General MacArthur returned home a national hero. As Americans honored their removed warrior, their opinion of their head of state sank. Firing
MacArthur also hurt President Truman because the general, like the war he was fighting, was bound up in the issue of anti-communism.

The irony of fate was quite painful. MacArthur had championed the cause of total victory over the communists, a strategy perfectly in line with the Republican right and also, it may have seemed to a bewildered public, a logical extension of the Truman Doctrine. Truman explained MacArthur's dismissal in terms of the president's constitutional obligation to remove field commanders who rejected his policy. The goal of restoring a "lasting peace" in Korea, he asserted, required the US to settle for reestablishing the 38th parallel. To bolster support for his war, the president repeated that the "communists in the Kremlin are engaged in a monstrous conspiracy to stamp out freedom around the world." It proved a tough sale, defining the war's objectives in limited terms while simultaneously casting the Cold War in apocalyptic language.

Truman's critics interpreted the release of MacArthur as another example of Truman's irresolute commitment to the nation's security. McCarthy accused Truman of making the decision while drunk and concluded "that son of a bitch should be impeached." The allegations further isolated the president by diminishing his ability to reassure voters.
of his sound judgment. The jury in Ethel and Julius Rosenberg's trial, meantime, recommended the death penalty.

In the wake of the MacArthur bombshell and the other reverses for the administration, a majority in Congress refused to follow the president. On April 30, 1951, the Judiciary Committee rejected a bill that would have provided the Nimitz Commission with an exemption from a federal conflict of interest statute. The chairman of the judiciary committee, Senator Pat McCarran (D, Nevada), had been the successful sponsor of the Internal Security Act. McCarran felt no compulsion to cooperate with Truman. Without the exemption, which was normally a mere technicality, the PCISIR proposal was dead in the water. The Senate deferred to McCarran. Internal security was now in the hands of Congress.

Truman understood the rejection in terms of "McCarthyism." But the rise of Senator McCarran temporarily side-lined McCarthy as well. Though McCarran was a Democrat, the White House obviously did not fully appreciate the prevailing attitude in Congress toward more presidential initiatives. Truman grumbled that he needed to develop "some leverage" against Senator McCarran.

The Judiciary chairman's blockade encouraged the extreme anti-communists within the administration. During
its short period of operations, the Nimitz commission had taken as its first order of business an amendment to the government loyalty program's standard of dismissal. The panel never commented officially upon the amendment, but its interest lent credibility to those who supported a stricter definition of disloyalty. Having argued for a similar proposal since 1949, and now worried that the PCISIR might criticize their administration of the government's loyalty program, both the Loyalty Review Board and the Justice Department renewed their request for a standard of disloyalty freed from the restraints imposed by American jurisprudence. The Civil Service Commission and the State Department agreed, and suggested implementing the new standard even before the PCISIR began, citing "backlogs" in the program created by government employees who assumed a new standard would be implemented.

In late April, when it became clear that the PCISIR would be stillborn, Truman gave in. He wrote Nimitz to convey his understanding of Nimitz's reluctance to offer recommendations, given that the PCISIR had not been approved by Congress. But Truman, however, had decided not to wait. On April 28 he signed Executive Order 10241 implementing a new loyalty standard. Henceforth, a government employee would be dismissed if "reasonable
grounds" existed for doubting his or her loyalty. First formulated in February, it had been drafted by McGrath. The new standard would soon have a profound effect on Truman's war against McCarthyism.

Despite having preempted Nimitz by ordering the adoption of a new standard, Truman still wanted a report from the panel. During the spring and summer, he and his staff tried to break McCarran's strangle hold on the PCISIR. Truman wrote a letter to McCarran which outlined why Congress should grant committee members legal exemptions. The letter was released to the public to expose McCarran's specious objections to the PCISIR (whose members were beginning to resign). More efforts to expose McCarran followed, but the Judiciary Chairman remained obdurate.

Clearly alarmed by the PCISIR's slow asphyxiation, Truman wrote Murphy that "the intention of the Nimitz Commission" had been to "stop the unAmerican activities of the loyalty boards." Despairing, the president gave the task of reviewing the "acute" problems of internal security program to the National Security Council. He expressed his concern that the lack of a uniform loyalty standard had, among other things, led to abuses of civil liberties. This concern had led him to ask the NSC for recommendations to
improve the standards and procedures of the program. The president neglected to explain the connection between his desire to restrict the loyalty boards and his approval of a plan to remove employees on the basis of remote possibilities.\textsuperscript{77}

Concerned by the fact that other congressmen, particularly Pat McCarran, were generating the headlines, and facing the prospect of becoming redundant, McCarthy launched himself once again onto the front page in late June by accusing General George C. Marshall of involvement in an "immense communist conspiracy."\textsuperscript{78} The allegation, made against one of the nation's most trusted and respected public figures, nauseated congressmen on both sides of the isle.\textsuperscript{79} But there was little to do; the rules of the Senate prevented a libel suit.

Outraged by the libel of someone he considered "the greatest living American," Truman made McCarthy's allegations against Marshall the centerpiece of his efforts to discredit his enemies.\textsuperscript{80} Truman warned citizens that the hysteria generated by politicians had taken root, often referring to a recent poll showing that most Americans would not endorse the principles embodied in the Declaration of Independence. At a major speech in late July, Truman damned those who use "the big lie for personal public and partisan
advantage, heedless of the damage they do to the country.\textsuperscript{81}
McCarthy demanded and received free air time to reply in kind.\textsuperscript{82}

The administration countered with high-profile rhetorical contributions from, among others, Secretary of Labor Maurice J. Tobin and Conrad Snow, chairman of the State Department's LRB.\textsuperscript{83} J. Howard McGrath made an effort to calm fears and increase support for the president.\textsuperscript{84} Truman met with the leaders of the Wisconsin Democratic Party, mapping out the plan to defeat McCarthy in the election of 1952.\textsuperscript{85} The administration's effort was matched to some extent by a few allies on the Hill, notably Senator's Kefauver, Lehman, and Benton.\textsuperscript{86} With a great deal of persistence and some luck, Senator Benton kept a Senate subcommittee's attention on investigating all the allegations about McCarthy, especially his role in Maryland's congressional election of 1950. White House staffers helped by providing information on McCarthy.\textsuperscript{87} But Benton could not turn the attention of his peers away from anti-communism and toward McCarthy's unproven allegations.

Frustration set in during the summer of 1951. George Elsey fumed at the waning vigor among members of the executive branch. The State Department's responses to
McCarthy, he complained, arrived "too little too late." Next came White House Press Secretary Joseph Short, who had told the State Department to "lay off" responding to McCarthy. Elsey reminded his boss, Murphy, that a "forceful, direct rebuttal" to McCarthy and McCarthyism was the only way, that "the 'be quiet and he will go away' approach" had been tried and had failed.

Yet the White House's influence in Congress had waned to the point where, in late September, Truman's nomination of Philip Jessup as a delegate to the United Nations was held up by the baseless charges of the administration's opponents. McCarthy was the first to testify at Jessup's confirmation hearings, repeating allegations so dated that the State Department had issued a full rebuttal months before. Fully appraised, the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, William J. Fulbright, made McCarthy look foolish. Enough opposition to Jessup remained, however, for the Senate subcommittee handling the matter to vote 3-2 against recommending his nomination. Democrats in Congress held over the nomination. Privately, friends on the Hill cautioned the president against picking a fight with Congress over Jessup's confirmation.

Truman was in no mood for compromise. Concerned that congressional investigations were releasing far too much
classified material, Truman extended the scope of the government's security classification, thereby decreasing the amount of information released by the executive branch. The extended classification forced the White House into the position of denying "that this decision would result in censorship, the concealing of mistakes, or the denial of legitimate information to the public." Its attempt to "protect the nation" placed the administration in the unenviable position of disparaging McCarthy's defense of freedom of information as irresponsible.

By October, the White House knew the Jessup nomination had become mired in the anti-communist controversy and therefore faced defeat without a "drastic stroke, such as Eisenhower or H. Hoover supporting Jessup [sic]." Truman, however, could not accept the loss of a gifted public servant because of "charges bordering on fraud." When Congress recessed, Truman gave Jessup an interim appointment. Neither the installation of Jessup nor the extension of security classification improved Truman's popularity. Moreover, these actions were hardly designed to foster a spirit of bipartisanship. The president justified his actions on the grounds that McCarthyism, like "Hitlerism," was a "form of bacteriological warfare against the minds and souls of men."
The PCISIR, however, could not be established by executive fiat, though as late as October 1, Truman asked Nimitz to produce a report by January of 1952. In a detailed memorandum a few days later, George Elsey counseled the president to discontinue efforts to establish the presidential commission. Elsey advised that Nimitz and the others, most of whom had already made the request, should be allowed to resign. The resignations should be delayed, however, until the president named Seth Richardson as his Special Assistant on Loyalty and Security Matters. The recommendations by the NSC, a subcommittee of which was currently conducting a review of loyalty policy, would be given to Special Assistant Richardson. Admiral Nimitz agreed with Elsey's plan, but with an interesting twist.

In tendering his resignation, Nimitz told Truman that there was "considerably less need for an inquiry of this sort," in part because the commission was sure to become embroiled in partisanship as the elections approached. But Nimitz also pointed out that there was little to be done given that the new loyalty standard had been implemented, the problem had been given to the NSC, and the administration had continued its prosecution of communist party leaders. In listing all the administration's initiatives, Nimitz seemed to ask 'What could the PCISIR do
that has not been done?' The commission had been preempted by its creator. In his scramble to gild his reputation, Truman had emptied the PCISIR of content, making it impossible to justify its existence. The president accepted the resignations of the members of the Nimitz Commission on October 26, 1951, six months after they had been tendered. Pointing an angry finger at the entire Congress, the president expressed his disappointment at its unwillingness to do what he considered right. Truman "had hoped," he wrote to Nimitz, "that the Congress would be so anxious as I am to make sure that the Bill of Rights is not undermined in our eagerness to stamp out subversive activities" by "making a non-partisan and honest study of the government's loyalty and security program." Thus, with an election year just around the corner, the president had to give up his attempt to have a distinguished group of Americans certify that the president had pursued a rational, effective anti-communist program. Unilateral executive action, in particular the Korean war and the PCISIR, had failed to redeem his tarnished image. Executive actions also precluded the kind of concessions that the president would have had to have made in order to isolate McCarthy from Congress. Truman blamed his problems, as well as the nation's ills, first on McCarthy, then the
McCarthyites, then the Republicans, and then Congress. By damning his critics for unleashing the pervasive hysteria, the president had increased the public's perception of his impotence. Having become an "ism," McCarthy's name appeared everywhere.

In a desperate attempt to construct a base from which to challenge McCarthy directly, Truman had strengthened the standard of disloyalty under which the government's security program operated. It was strange that the president could still hope to restore his reputation by endorsing extreme anti-communism. For the past two years, McCarthy had used extreme anti-communism to denigrate presidential leadership. At least one of the administrative assistants, Donald Dawson, doubted that Truman would receive credit should the new standard enable the LRB to find more disloyal employees within the government. Dawson recognized that the new standard contradicted two years of assertions that no loyalty reforms were needed and that the program could not be strengthened without jeopardizing civil liberties. If Dawson also recognized that Executive Order 10241 was an attempt to use McCarthyism to defeat McCarthy, he did not say so.
ENDNOTES

1. Elsey, "Memorandum for Mr. Clifford," September 29, 1949, Elsey Papers Int. Sec. 9835, box 69, HSTL.


4. Murphy, "Memorandum for the President (draft 1/12/50)," Elsey Papers Int. Sec. 9835, box 69, HSTL.

5. Elsey, "Memorandum for Mr. Spingarn," January 9, 1950, Elsey Papers Int. Sec. 9835, box 69, HSTL.

6. Murphy, "Memorandum for the President (Draft 1/12/50)," Elsey Papers Int. Sec. 9835, box 69, HSTL.

7. Ibid.

8. "Memorandum for the President," April 12, 1950, OF-419, box 1269, HSTL.


11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.


15. Spingarn, "Memorandum of the Pros and Cons...," June 26, 1950, Murphy Files Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Spingarn, "Memorandum of the Pro's and Con's...," June 26, 1950, Murphy Files Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL.

20. Spingarn's June 26 memorandum was attached to the July 11, 1950, "Memorandum for the President," by Murphy, Elsey and Spingarn.

21. Spingarn, "Memorandum of the Pros and Cons...," June 26, 1950, Murphy Files Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL.

22. Ibid.


24. Spingarn, "Memorandum of the Pro's and Con's...," June 26, 1950, Murphy Files Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL; Powers, Secrecy and Power, pp.276, 306; Spingarn, "To All White House Staff, Subject: J. Edgar Hoover's Article in the U.S. News and World Report, Issue of June 23, 1950 (pp.11-13)," June 28, 1950, Spingarn Papers Nat'l Def. and Ind. Rts. (2), Box 31, HSTL.

25. Ibid.

26. Sidney Souers, "Memorandum for Mr. Elsey," September 29, 1950, Elsey Papers Int. Sec. 9835, box 69, HSTL; McGrath to Dawson, December 23, 1949, OF-252I, HSTL; Richardson to Dawson, June 26, 1950, OF-419K, HSTL.

27. "Suggestions for Members of the Nimitz Commission (Draft 11/14/50)," Murphy Files Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL.


29. Murphy, "Memorandum for the President, Draft 11/15/50," Murphy Files, Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.


34. Bell, "Memorandum for Mr. Murphy," November 23, 1950, Elsey Papers Nimitz Commission, box 70, HSTL.

35. "Tentative List," 11/28/50, Murphy Files Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL.


37. Truman to Herbert Hoover, November 25, 1950; Hoover to Truman, November 26, 1950; Truman to Hoover, December 7, 1950; all in OF 2750 A, HSTL.

38. "Mr. Murphy," November 30, 1950, Murphy Files Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL.


40. Ferrell, *Off the Record*, p. 201.


44. Reeves, *The Life and Times*, p. 348.


47. Truman to Chester A. Nimitz, January 4, 1951; Nimitz to Truman, January 9, 1951; Executive Order 10207, January 23, 1951; all in OF 2750A, HSTL.

48. "Outline for the President's Use at Opening Meeting of the PCISIR," Elsey Papers Nimitz Commission, box 70, HSTL.


56. Press Release, March 14, 1951, Box 82, OF-10 ('50-'51), box 82, HSTL.


65. "Mr. Neustadt," April 4, 1951, Elsey Int. Sec. Nimitz Commission, box 70, HSTL.


67. Peyton Ford to Murphy, April 20, 1951, OF-252K (January-April 1951), box 973, HSTL; Roger Ramspeck to Truman, April 16, 1951, OF-252K (January-April 1951), box 973, HSTL.
68. Truman to Nimitz, April 27, 1951, OF-252K (January-April 1951), box 973, HSTL.

69. Donovan, Tumultuous Years, p. 366

70. Truman to Nimitz, April 27, 1951, OF-252K (January-April 1951), box 973, HSTL.


72. Truman to McCarran, May 12, 1951, OF-252K (May-December 1951), box 873, HSTL.


74. Abraham J. Harris, "Memorandum for the Honorable Charles S. Murphy, Special Council to the President," June 5, 1951, Murphy Files Int. Sec., box 22, HSTL; McCarran to Truman, May 26, 1951; Truman to Francis Biddle, July 14, 1951; Biddle to Truman, July 16, 1951; Draft, July 27, 1951; All in OF-2750A (Oct '51-'53), box 1716, HSTL.

75. Truman to Murphy, May 24, 1951, OF-2750A, box 1716, HSTL.

76. Truman to Mr. James S. Lay, Jr., July 14, 1951, Elsey Papers Int. Sec. Nimitz Commission, box 70, HSTL; Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, p. 288.


81. Ibid.

82. Fried, Men Against McCarthy, p.176.

83. Ibid., p.175.

84. "Address by Attorney General J. Howard McGrath," January 31, 1951, OF-10 ('50-'51), box 82, HSTL.


89. Elsey, "Memo for Mr. Murphy," August 24, 1951, Elsey Papers Int. Sec. McCarthy Charges(4), box 70, HSTL.


92. Ibid.

93. Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, p.452.


95. Ibid.

96. Hechler, "Memorandum for Mr. Murphy," October 13, 1951, Murphy Papers "Ken W. Hechler," box 9, HSTL.


99. Truman, "Dear Mr. Comstock," October 18, 1951, PPF 5866, box 37, HSTL.

100. Truman to Nimitz, October 1, 1951, OF-2750A (Oct. '51-'53), box 1716, HSTL.

101. Elsey, "Memorandum for the President [Draft]," October 5, 1951; Elsey to Spingarn, October 8, 1951; All in Spingarn Papers Loyalty Commission Civil Rights (1), box 36, HSTL.

102. Ibid.

103. Ibid.

105. Truman to Nimitz, October 26, 1951, As quoted in Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, p. 287.

106. Dawson to Murphy, December 5, 1951, Murphy Files May-December 1951, box 873, HSTL.
1952 proved a most difficult year for Truman. He began the year with an unusually low public approval rating. The latter half of 1951 had not brought victory in Korea, but another round of administration employees being released by the loyalty boards. The stalemate in Korea and the release of more employees highlighted the contradiction between the theory and the practice of Truman’s anti-communism. The election year had barely begun when Truman’s staff told him that he had, for the time being, no chance of defeating the McCarthyites. His aides also informed him that his domestic program against communism had damaged the lives of many innocent government employees. Angry and frustrated, Truman campaigned against McCarthyism in a manner that nearly matched McCarthy in hypocrisy and self-serving partisanship.

The final destruction of Truman's political position began with the implementation of the Executive Order 10241. The new standard authorized the release of any employee about whom reasonable doubt existed as to his or her loyalty. Directing its implementation, LRB Chairman Hiriam Bingham instructed the agency review boards to reevaluate all previous cases in which employees had been cleared on
appeal. During the fall of 1951, board members wielded that power with zeal. The new standard generated a wave of press coverage about hearings, perjury, and resignations.

The most important of those cases ended in December of 1951. John Stuart Service, a foreign service officer with the state department, had been one of McCarthy's favorite targets during the previous two years. Questions about Service had first arisen in 1945. He had been suspended by Richardson, then reinstated by Acheson. Since then, Service had endured five more investigations, but had been cleared as recently as July, 1951. The new loyalty standard, however, sealed his fate.

In December, Acheson approved Bingham's request that Service be retired prematurely from the Foreign Service. Appearing alongside the cases of Ester Brunauer, William Remington and others, the dismissal of Service vindicated McCarthy, provided legitimacy for congressional investigations, and further weakened the administration's--especially Dean Acheson's--credibility. The situation spurred the Secretary of State, ever the reluctant politician, into a bold move. In early January, 1952, the State Department released a letter from the Secretary of State to the President. In it, Acheson placed the review board's irrational zealotry into stark relief.
Acheson expressed his confusion and alarm at the Loyalty Review Board's recommendation of the release of John C. Vincent, another well-known state department officer. Chairman Bingham had informed Acheson that the board's recommendation had been reached "without accepting or rejecting" either the testimony of Louis Budenz or the findings of prior investigations. Bingham had added that while he had neither "accepted or rejected these factors, [he had] taken them into account." Acheson was "unable to determine" what Bingham meant by this.\(^5\)

Acheson also condemned those who labeled the critics of anti-communist policies as communist sympathizers. Vouching for John Vincent's character, he defended the right to criticize United State policy. Foreign Service Officers had to be allowed to assess the situation as they saw fit, he contended, for the good of the country, if nothing else. While Acheson had the authority to reject Bingham's recommendation, he declined to do so. Instead, he asked the president for permission to appoint a respected judge to examine the evidence. The president agreed.\(^6\) John Vincent was eventually cleared, only to be suspended a year later by the Eisenhower administration.

Judging by the angry public reaction Acheson's statement generated, it was a little late for him to defend
the administration's position by defending the principle of honest criticism. He had, however, publicly rebuked the officers of Truman's own program in terms heretofore reserved for congressmen. Acheson had, in essence, abandoned hope that the Truman Administration could restore its reputation by praising the stringency of its program. In so doing, he had stood up for the rights of the accused. However ineffective, it was an honorable position. What he could not do, of course, was criticize Truman's new loyalty standard. The new standard certainly muddled the clarity of Acheson's position, as the State Department took the position that the LRB had not found Vincent guilty of disloyalty; the board had found reasonable doubt.

Acheson was not alone in his disgust with officials of the loyalty program. Within a few days of his letter, the president received a similar evaluation from his domestic policy staff. Following the acceptance of George Elsey's request for reassignment, the task of developing a response to domestic political problems had fallen to Donald Hansen, Richard Neustadt and James Loeb. The three administrative assistants collaborated on a scathing critique. Angered by the attacks on Service and Vincent, they accused the LRB officials and the Attorney General of betrayal.

In their private memorandum, Hansen and the others
attributed the new standard to the insistence of all the other executive branch bodies concerned, beginning with the commission that had created the loyalty program back in 1948 and stretching through the Nimitz commission. Truman had adopted the standard because the FBI, the Attorney General, the LRB, the Nimitz Commission, and even the Civil Service Commission had complained that lack of a clear standard had created "confusion" and "backlogs" in the system. Before adopting it, however, the White House had sent the matter to the Justice Department for an evaluation of the proposal's impact on civil liberties. The Attorney General had replied that the new standard would not effect the cases of the Justice Department loyalty board, and recommended passage.\textsuperscript{11}

The President, according to his staff, had acted in good faith. They contended, however, that "the Loyalty Review Board, its staff, and the lower loyalty boards have little idea of what 'reasonable doubt' means as a standard."\textsuperscript{12} Angry at the board for violating the spirit of the new standard, the staff was also outraged by the duplicity of J. Howard McGrath. The Attorney General had seen to it that the "first cases reopened by the [Justice] department under the new standard were the McCarthy cases."

McGrath clearly had violated the letter of the
president's request. At this stage of the game, however, the staff had little reason to be shocked. The Attorney General had rarely missed an opportunity to enhance his image as a vigorous anti-communist, and had resisted White House efforts to reign him in during the debate leading up to the McCarran Act. Hansen did not, however, record just what the president had hoped to be accomplished by setting the standard at reasonable doubt, other than to produce more dismissals. Like McGrath, Hoover and Bingham had long records of anti-communist zealotry. Blaming the administrators of the government's security apparatus, however, suited Murphy and his staff. Although they agreed with Acheson's condemnation of Bingham, McGrath and Hoover, the White House did not agree with the Secretary of State's strategy. When Hansen wrote that "foes of Senator McCarthy have real cause for alarm" in light of the Service case and others, he was referring to the adverse political implications. Even though he and the other members of the staff considered the loyalty program "a monster," the staff conceded that "they had the tiger by the tail and there wasn't much they could do about it."

"As to the loyalty program," the administrative assistants advised Truman "quite coldly that no White House action should be taken pending any developments which would
make such action... desirable, and timely from a public relations standpoint."^'' The staff rejected the establishment of a commission to study the standard because it "may be interpreted in many quarters as indicative of administration vacillation, confusion, and indecision." The staff also advised the president not to revoke it unilaterally. In the wake of the John Service case, "]revocation] would be interpreted most unfavorably." The president could also expect the officials of the loyalty program to oppose amending the oath. The men he had appointed to run the loyalty program, Truman had just been told, believed the nature of the times necessitated the strongest measures. Truman's aides quite obviously did not share this belief.

The assessment of both the White House staff and the Secretary of State conveyed a sense of having been victimized by an overwrought loyalty program, a hysterical public, and an evil opponent. These forces had caused the degeneration of the president's loyalty and security policy into a hopeless mess, one which simultaneously infringed upon the civil liberties of government employees while marring his personal credibility. Having been told that he had no other options, Truman decided not to repudiate McGrath, Bingham, or Hoover.
Truman squared his shoulders and went on. In his State of the Union Address delivered in January of 1952, the President made it perfectly clear that his primary concern was preserving the national commitment to the war in Korea and the principles of the Truman Doctrine. He drew the conflict between East and West in apocalyptic terms. The United States, which had had "one Pearl Harbor," had to gird itself for "saving the basic moral and spiritual values of our civilization" from the world wide communist movement.  

Truman must have known that he did not need to sell Americans on the Cold War. The president invoked the image of Pearl Harbor because he wanted to rebuild his credibility by separating his foreign policy, for which there was public support, from his domestic anti-communism, which was held in such contempt. To highlight his aggressive foreign policy in the face of Republican isolationism, then, Truman began the election year as many others did, identifying grave threats to the Republic.

McCarthy, who excelled at identifying enemies, must have relished the election. Bearing no responsibility for the nation's anti-communism either at home or abroad, Truman's chief critic had little problem in taking a more extreme position than the president. McCarthy's campaign exemplified the fact that those out of power can always be
more radical than those confined by responsibility. As usual, he went out of his way to tweak Truman's nose directly and personally. Such was the situation in February of 1952 that the Senator could openly dismiss the President as "a puppet on the strings being pulled by the Achesons, [and the] Lattimores." McCarthy even called the State Department's LRB Chairman, Conrad Snow, a "befuddled old fool who doesn't know enough to come in out of the rain."

The worst part of McCarthy's rhetoric, in terms of Truman's political future, was that so many others echoed it. With an election approaching and the powerful issue of anti-communism within easy reach, Congress contained many critics of Truman's anti-communist record. The White House could only look on and despair as Congress pushed forward with a huge number of investigations in 1952. Investigating subcommittees in both chambers of Congress searched for communists in schools, unions, and the United Nations. All of these Congressional investigations further diminished the administration's political position because Truman had labeled all congressional involvement in anti-communism as McCarthyism. The White House well knew that these investigations would focus on the administration's "failures" in stopping the communists. More congressional
investigations also meant more congressional requests for files, which again put the White House on the defensive. It had little choice but to condemn congressional requests for files as "irresponsible."\(^{24}\) Truman proclaimed it his "solemn duty to resist demands for fishing expeditions into his private files."\(^{25}\) He tried to keep the loyalty files, especially the State Department Loyalty files, out of the hands of congressional committees.\(^{26}\) He again cast doubt on the veracity of the testimony contained in those files.\(^{27}\) But in the wake of the new standard of disloyalty, Truman's defiance could be as easily attributed to fear as to principle.

The administration's last hope for a congressional censure of McCarthy, the Senate's investigation of McCarthy's role in the congressional elections of 1950 chaired by Senator Gillette, had faded considerably in the past few months. By mid-February, the White House staff had realized that, aided by the uneasy silence of his peers and the raucous support of his fans, McCarthy had succeeded yet again in characterizing the investigation as a partisan attack upon him.\(^{28}\)

With little reason to hope for improvement in the battlefields of Korea or Congress, the president knew his time was up. In early March, he announced that he would
step down at the end of his term. Later, Truman claimed that he had made the decision not to run months before this point, that he had served his country enough. His decision, however, followed a second-place finish to Senator Estes Kefauver in the New Hampshire Democratic primary, a death knell to an incumbent president. Even if he had made the decision earlier, waiting until after the primary to announce his decision called into question his motive. Irrespective of his own candidacy, however, Truman considered the upcoming election as a referendum on his tenure and beliefs. Having withdrawn from the race, the president intended to win in the court of public opinion. A large part of his campaign for vindication involved denouncing McCarthyism. For his part, McCarthy emphasized his recent successes and therefore ran against Truman.

Truman's staff had prepared an analysis of the role of both McCarthy and McCarthyism upon the presidential election of 1952 a full year in advance, in February 1951. The memorandum was entitled "Meeting the Challenges of McCarthyism." Devoted entirely to the individual (not the ism), the memo resembled the energetic 'get-McCarthy' plan that Truman had piously rejected in June of 1950. Getting McCarthy was "not just a matter of framing the argument correctly," but of exposing and disgracing Joe McCarthy.
The disgrace of McCarthy, Truman and his staff believed, would bring triumph over the forces of McCarthyism. While the memo cautioned that a concerted assault on an individual senator, if mishandled, might "make a martyr of the object," it neglected to mention the means by which he would be exposed.  

Over a year later, the staff was still searching for an effective method of convincing voters of Joe McCarthy's deceit. In April of 1952, Donald Hansen and Martin J. Friedman drafted two replies to some of McCarthy's statements and sent them along with a cover letter to Special Council Murphy. Both drafts denounced the man as a liar "motivated by political and personal malice," whose patriotism was as dangerous as it was phony. Hansen's suggestions, however, proceeded "on the theory that each of Senator's McCarthy's charges should be cited and demolished." Friedman, on the other hand, denied the need for defense against specific charges, but focused on the senator's "dishonest and slanted technique." Hansen objected to his colleague's approach, for it amounted to "little more than name calling and does not effectively rebut McCarthy." Friedman liked Hansen's ideas, but recommended his own, because the first draft carried "with it the risk of inviting a hearing, which in view of the
current composition of the [Gillette] subcommittee might well turn into a smear-fest."

Though it had long held doubts about the Gillette subcommittee's future, the White House also knew that it contained Congress's most vociferous anti-McCarthyite, Senator Benton. As advised by Murphy, Truman met with congressional leaders in May to voice his concern "that the [Gillette] subcommittee is being urged to choke off further investigation into McCarthy's financial situation."\(^{33}\) Truman urged the subcommittee to keep going because its investigation into McCarthy's financial dealings with the Lustron Company, had "been widely published and are having good effect."\(^{34}\) Truman's assistants dug into McCarthy's past and passed the product on to their allies in Congress.\(^{35}\) Ken Hechler found out that the injury McCarthy claimed was a "war wound" from a "strafing mission" had resulted from "a unit initiation right."\(^{36}\) But the effort to build the subcommittee into an effective instrument failed. Its effort to investigate McCarthy was dismissed by the Republicans as a predictable election tactic.\(^{37}\) The Gillette subcommittee lurched into the summer of 1952, then disintegrated entirely in the autumn.

The lack of congressional cooperation stemmed in part from Truman's lack of success in Korea. While trying to
encourage the Benton subcommittee, Truman also demanded that Congress finance his interventionist foreign policy and extend the War Powers Act, which enlarged the president's authority. 38 "To win the Cold War," he asserted, "Congress must give what we ask." 39

Without allies in Congress willing to help him destroy McCarthy and having decided against more unilateral action, Truman set out on the campaign trail to present the public with a clear choice. 40 He campaigned hard. His high profile made others within his Party nervous, though many agreed with his position. 41 "Mystified" by Adlai Stevenson's desire to distance himself from "the president he hoped to succeed," Truman got on the stump and expressed himself with great passion. 42

He liked to begin his stump speeches with the positive results of the Roosevelt-Truman years. He declared that his policies had "given every man better opportunities." 43 He enjoyed blaming the Republicans for the Great Depression and "celebrating the advances for working people" since then. 44 He warned the public that the Republicans would wipe out these advances. 45 As far as he was concerned, Truman owned the issue of domestic economics. But then he had to turn to the issues that plagued him.

As usual, Truman framed the issue of anti-communism in
terms of foreign policy. His feverish rhetoric about the fight against worldwide communism, his strongest suit, never slackened. "The world had learned the lessons of Czechoslovakia," he declared, "that communism means conquest, oppression, and slavery." It was the only position for him to take, given that he had committed U.S. forces in Korea. But Truman had other reasons for asserting that "the very existence of the country is at stake" in Korea. He believed that his strong stand in Korea answered those who claimed he was soft on communism.

For Republicans to brand him soft on communism, Truman concluded, was "what we might call the 'white is black' strategy." He had, he asserted, the most impressive anti-communist record. He ran down the long list of his initiatives against communism then took a moment to locate the spots on his opponents' record: "Ask them how they voted on the Marshall plan." The president's anti-communism, retorted Republicans, had produced only bloody stalemate. It irritated the president no end that the Republicans were free to attack the war in Korea from both sides. While conservatives and McCarthyites argued for the expansion of the conflict into China and the use of nuclear weapons, others advocated abandoning the war. Not content just to explain why both sides were wrong, Truman predicted that "if
war comes [to the United States]...these loud talkers would be the first to run for the bomb shelters." After calling them cowards, he impugned their patriotism.

As he had stated several times over the past two years, Truman maintained that the issues of national security "are not--and must not become--questions of party politics." In other words, the principles at stake in Korea were inviolate. Americans had a patriotic duty to support the war in order to end it quickly and successfully. The Republicans' "campaign of phony propaganda" weakened the war effort; their campaign therefore amounted to partisanship at the expense of national security. This line of reasoning had little chance of damaging the Republicans, however. Korea had long since become a political issue, in large part because Truman had assumed full responsibility for it. So he tried another tack. He accused the Republicans of being all the more insidious because they were isolationists who would scrap the Truman Doctrine upon election. Isolationism, Truman contended, would lead to a Third World War. Whether or not he actually convinced anyone that the Republicans would retreat in Korea, the fact remained that the meat of the conflict between Truman and the McCarthyites was domestic communism. And his apocalyptic rhetoric about the global Cold War contradicted the president's contention
that the McCarthyites had overblown the issue of internal security.

In the final months of the campaign, Truman could not discuss the Republicans' position on internal security without becoming bitter. He excoriated the GOP for sanctioning the use of the "technique of the big lie." A technique that had been "developed by the communists and perfected by Hitler." The big lie consisted of two parts. First, its practitioners made an assertion about their opponent "which is frightening and horrible and so extreme that nobody could believe that a decent person would make it if it were not true." Then they repeated it over and over, "ignoring all proof to the contrary." The big lie portion of his stump speeches was Truman's response to McCarthy's charge that his administration was shot through with communists. Devoid of references to the touchstones of McCarthyism (Hiss, China, the Rosenbergs, Service), Truman's diatribes failed to cover the entire domestic political landscape.

The campaign diatribes also included a section on the Republican presidential nominee. Truman and his staff agreed that McCarthy's dishonesty made General Dwight D. Eisenhower vulnerable. Truman blasted Eisenhower for being "a prisoner of the isolationist Republicans."
president considered the Eisenhower-McCarthy handshake a seminal event, one which embodied all that the Republicans had become. He believed that Eisenhower had condoned McCarthy's vilification of George C. Marshall and that, as Murphy later recounted, "made Truman as mad as anything I know[,] ever." One of the most respected figures of the era, Marshall had also been Ike's "great benefactor." Time and again, Truman tarred Ike with Joe.

For contrast, the president maintained that his Party's commitment to honest politics and civil liberties made it far superior to its opponent. He implicated McCarthy in the illegal and unethical shenanigans of Maryland's congressional elections two years before. The White House had long considered McCarthy's role in the defeat of Senator Tydings a good issue. Truman challenged the voters of both Maryland and Wisconsin to elect better senators. He issued the latter challenge in Milwaukee, as the president cranked up his Party's machinery in the enemy's own backyard.

Truman's final charge against McCarthyism was that it represented "a determined effort to snuff out the Bill of Rights." His opponents confused "innocent persons with communists," and were therefore responsible for injustice as well for "muddying the waters and making the real communists
harder to detect." It was vital that Americans stand up for civil liberties. Underscoring the point, Truman reminded voters that he had vetoed a congressional immigration initiative that went too far.

The veto, however, was an isolated occurrence. The Attorney General continued to violate constitutional guarantees of due process by adding more names to the list of subversive organizations. Just months before the election, the Justice Department also renewed its prosecution of the leadership of the American Communist Party. Truman bragged about his commitment to the prosecutions, unaware that his comments attested to the similarity between himself and McCarthy. Then Truman gave his loyalty program one last bit of direction.

When he established the new loyalty standard in early 1951, the president had asked the Civil Service Committee to report to him on internal security. The CSC finally presented its report in the summer of 1952. It recommended enlarging the scope of the LRB, which would henceforth investigate all employees, not just those in sensitive agencies; this became the order of the day. The other, structural, recommendations languished for four months before receiving presidential approval. Years later, Truman cited the reorganization as an example of his
commitment to "protecting the good name of applicants and employees." But the CSC's report had not addressed the problem of defining disloyalty. It had extended the reach of the LRB. Given that some White House staff members considered the loyalty program a monster, Truman's characterization of the reorganization was obviously disingenuous.

The sins of omission were just as bad. During the election, Truman, Murphy and Hansen deliberately ignored the severe problems in the loyalty program which they had acknowledged in January. On two occasions, the president praised his loyalty program and the FBI for being firm barriers against sabotage. The administration provided the press with statistics documenting the stringency of the loyalty program. Aside from Acheson's lone outburst against Bingham, the disgust of some of Truman's staff at the loyalty program never found a public voice. But then, the president's confusion ran deep. When Seth Richardson, former head of the LRB and a sponsor of the new loyalty standard, wrote to thank Truman for "affording me opportunities to engage in important non-partisan public service, free from any suggestion of political motive," Truman responded with warm praise.

McCarthy thoroughly enjoyed the election, striking a
high profile, confident that leaders of the Republican Party would attribute a share of the party's success to him. His easy victory in the Wisconsin primary assured this result. While polishing his image, the early victory also allowed him to campaign more toward the national audience than the citizens of Wisconsin. Always eager to challenge his critics, he adopted the campaign slogan "America loves him for the enemies he's made." Some of the juicy material for his speeches came from, at one time or another, members of the Justice Department, the FBI, and even the Loyalty Review Board. Failing this, McCarthy resorted to outright fabrication.

In October, McCarthy gave a speech on television, holding in his hand "photostatic copies of the Daily Worker." The Senator claimed that the Communist Party had endorsed Stevenson as the lesser of two evils, although this was untrue. He often referred to the Democratic candidate as "Alger Stevenson," pretending to have confused Stevenson's first name with that of Alger Hiss, a man convicted of perjury but reviled as a communist spy. Even years later, former White House staff members could still hear McCarthy saying "Oh, pardon me, Adlai..." Whether or not the Senator's bombshells, delivered in a soft monotone, were of great influence in the solid Republican victory of
1952, Truman thought so. He complained to his staff that they had been defeated by "bald demagoguery." He had campaigned as a personal vendetta against Joe McCarthy, McCarthyism, and the Republican Party. He counted his enemies' victory as "one of the great tragedies of our time" because he considered the issue of anti-communism as the central issue. He faulted Stevenson for not hitting McCarthy hard enough. He never forgave Eisenhower for failing, in the president's estimation, to condemn McCarthy. The fact that Truman was less angry at Senator Pat McCarran than at McCarthy marked Truman's fixation on Republicans—not the Democratic majority in Congress—as the source of his troubles. The passage of time did not dim Truman's anger at their criminal abuse of power. In his autobiography years later, Truman vented his disgust over and over again at the McCarthyites for "engaging in narrow partisan appeals and [for] preying upon the false hopes of a nation in crisis."

Truman lived to see McCarthy's fall into disgrace, but it took awhile. The 83rd Congress (1953-54) held a record high fifty-one investigations into communism. After the election, President Eisenhower's Attorney General, Herbert Brownell, subpoenaed Truman to testify at a hearing into loyalty policy. Truman cited executive privilege and
refused the summons. J. Edgar Hoover, who had done so much to aid the Senator during Truman's tenure and remained a close friend of Mr. and Mrs. Joe McCarthy, was quite willing to condemn Truman before the new Attorney General. Unlike his friend from Wisconsin, Hoover remained at the center of American politics for many years. Joe McCarthy rode the wave of anti-communism, in his unusually reckless way, until his charges against the US Army two years later led to his condemnation by the Senate. But the future held more for Truman than the demise of McCarthy. He lived long enough to see the Truman Doctrine take its place alongside Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal as the foundation of the next several administrations, Republican and Democrat alike. He had left a legacy of ideas, but not of leadership.

What the passage of time never brought was an admission from the president of some responsibility for the ravages of McCarthyism. He realized, he said, that "if I had yielded to the clamor by agreeing to a reckless dismissal of the people under fire, I could have silenced many critics." But, Truman maintained, he had been guided by principle. He offered no comment on the fact that Bingham and McGrath operated upon his principles. Years later, he claimed that he never understood why, "when the government expels a few of its undesirable employees, it should...in all decency be
used to agitate doubts about all the people in government.\textsuperscript{98} He attributed the ephemeral victory of McCarthyism to the cycles of hysteria in America.\textsuperscript{99}

Yet Truman had spent his last year in office re-enforcing the contradictions within his position. While deriding his opponents for blowing the issue out of proportion, he had spoken of another Pearl Harbor and had strengthened the loyalty standard. He had praised a program that he knew to be inimical to civil liberties. During the final months, he had increased the scope of the program. In sum, he had lost control of the Cold War consensus because he was a McCarthyite who opposed McCarthyism. His credibility had disintegrated under the weight of the contradiction. Without a frank recognition of his culpability, Truman also never had the honor due those who admit their mistakes.
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6. Ibid.
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70. Truman, "Address at the Kiel Auditorium in St. Louis," November 1, 1952, Public Papers, p.1042.


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82. Fried, *Men Against McCarthy*, p. 239.
83. Spingarn, Oral History, p. 258, HSTL.
84. Reeves, *The Life and Times*, p. 326.
89. Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, p. 284.
90. Murphy, Oral History, p. 379, HSTL.
92. Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, p. 287
96. Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, p. 286.
CONCLUSION

Truman blamed his defeat on McCarthyism, which he defined as a mixture of national hysteria and evil partisanship. To some extent, he was right. Joe McCarthy demonstrated a unique talent for exploiting the public’s fear of communism. But McCarthy only used anti-communism, he had not created it. And McCarthy’s use of the issue, as an indictment of the administration, was successful mostly because of the response he elicited from Truman.

Truman had good reason for condemning McCarthy without condemning extreme anti-communism. He believed that McCarthy was vulnerable. More important, Truman believed that taking a hardline stand against communists had helped his career and would do so again. But most of all, he championed the tenets of extreme anti-communism because he believed that America’s survival depended upon defeating communists at home and abroad. Truman’s problems sprang then, at least in part, from his own Cold War demagoguery, which left him little theoretical room within which to condemn McCarthy.

The lack of an ethical—or a clear—distinction between McCarthy and Truman, however, was not the sole instrument by which McCarthy transformed anti-communism into a damning indictment of the administration. Truman’s problems were
also a function of his refusal to understand McCarthy in terms of normal political dynamics. According to the president, McCarthy had lied, and his lie obviated the policy debate between Republican and Democrat, between President and Congress, that normally accompanied powerful issues like national security. But in the wake of events like the conviction of Alger Hiss and the war in Korea, the Cold War became much too compelling an issue to expect so many politicians not to burnish their anti-communist credentials. Tactically, the president needed to start acting “presidential,” by allowing Congress to share some of the glory (and to shoulder some of the responsibility) for the Cold War. Truman chose instead to extrapolate his battle with McCarthy into a war against all critics. Thus was “McCarthyism,” and its victory, mostly Truman’s own fault.
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