

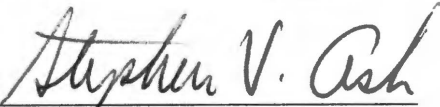
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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Aaron D. Purcell entitled "White Collar Radicals: New Deal Labor and Red Scare Communists in the Tennessee Valley Authority, 1935-1955." I have examined the final paper copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in History.

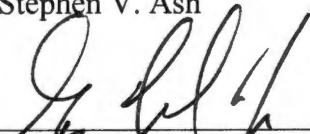


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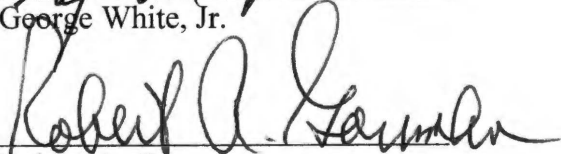
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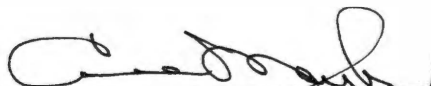


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Accepted for the Council:



Vice Chancellor and Dean of Graduate Studies

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WHITE COLLAR RADICALS:
NEW DEAL LABOR AND RED SCARE COMMUNISTS
IN THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY, 1935-1955

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Aaron D. Purcell
May 2006

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my son Samuel Sullivan Purcell. His arrival on October 4, 2005 marked my new understanding of the past, present, and future.

I hope I can inspire him as much as he has already inspired me.

Acknowledgments

A focused study of individuals during a sweeping period of change requires extensive research into primary sources. Even a lengthy list of archivists, librarians, and reference specialists would hardly scratch the surface of those who helped with this project. For brevity's sake, a few key institutions and individuals deserve mention.

First and foremost, as this dissertation focuses on individuals, cooperation from family members proved necessary. Support came from the descendants, family, and friends of John Frantz, Howard Bridgman, Mabel Mansfield, Muriel Mather, Katherine Egri, Henry Hart, Burton Zien, and David Stone Martin. I hope this dissertation answers some of their questions and attempts to create closure. Encouragement from my own family became just as important. For five years, my wife Laura supported a project that seemed to have no end in sight. Her editing, questions, and suggestions improved my prose, while her patience inspired me to keep working long hours. Our son Sam arrived near the end of the project and I look forward to telling him about my adventures in tracking down TVA communists.

Archivists at the National Archives and Records Administration (in Atlanta, Washington, D.C, and College Park, Maryland) helped facilitate access to federal records. NARA archivists William Davis, Rodney Ross, and Fred Romanski will be pleased to learn that my dissertation is now complete. For nearly four years, they tirelessly located records and walked me through the process of de-classification. While submitting over one-hundred Freedom of Information Act requests, Gloria Ralph-McKissic in the FBI FOIPA Division and Brent Evitt in the Department of Justice's

Office of Information and Privacy shared their knowledge and recommendations of the sometimes tedious task of requesting government information. University archivists and special collections staff at a number of institutions earned their stripes by providing fast, effective answers to research queries. Staff at public and state libraries also helped locate obituaries, articles, and contacts at other institutions.

Scholarship is not possible without institutional support and the University of Tennessee should be applauded for allowing a full-time employee to undertake such as research project. The University of Tennessee Libraries provided generous financial assistance for research travel, and great flexibility in finding time to digest the massive results and begin writing. Encouragement from colleagues, especially those in the Special Collections Library, made the path much smoother. The University of Tennessee's History Department also provided funding to support research travel, as well as exhibited encouragement for a part-time student.

I would like to thank the members of my dissertation committee for agreeing to such a research endeavor. Although a Civil War specialist, Professor Stephen V. Ash's recent work inspired the approach to this dissertation. Encouragement from Professors George White, Jr. and Robert A. Gorman also marked each step of this project. However, without the direction and enthusiasm from Professor William Bruce Wheeler, this study would never have been possible. From the beginning, Professor Wheeler recognized the great potential of this dissertation and took a chance with a graduate student studying a period of history far apart from his own specialty. I just hope the written story is as interesting as the story I have been telling him for the past five years.

Abstract

This dissertation follows the lives of fifteen former TVA employees, focusing on their 1930s activities and the subsequent 1940s and 1950s investigations into their perceived radical deeds. Collectively referred to in this dissertation as the “Knoxville Fifteen,” this group includes Mabel Abercrombie, Forrest Benson, Bernard “Buck” Borah, Howard Bridgman, Katherine “Kit” Buckles, Christine Eversole, John Frantz, Howard Frazier, Henry Hart, Elizabeth Winston McConnell, David Stone Martin, William Remington, Muriel Speare, Merwin Todd, and Burton Zien. As binding criteria for the group, these fifteen individuals worked for TVA during the 1930s, had not reached 35 years of age, held low-level administrative positions, had some college education, had an interest in labor organizing, would later be accused of being members of the Communist Party, and garnered substantial attention from the FBI.

The “Knoxville Fifteen” represents an important group of New Deal thinkers. During the 1930s, their activities as part of the Popular Front movement were largely ignored and dismissed as youthful indiscretions, but anti-communist campaigns of the McCarthy Era quickly caught up with this small group. By 1955, anti-communist investigators had accused all fifteen of being communists. While reconstructing the lives and activities of the “Knoxville Fifteen,” this dissertation argues three key points. First, a small group of 1930s TVA radicals commanded the government’s attention because they were easy targets during the McCarthy Era. Despite the passage of time, the anti-communist sentiment of the 1950s made innocuous actions of the 1930s not only relevant, but worthy of punishment. Second, the culmination of 1950s government

investigations into 1930s radicals symbolized the agency's break with its idealistic origins. During multiple anti-communist investigations of TVA, agency leaders successfully defended its past, while moving the agency forward as a government-owned electric power company. Finally, the CP activities of 1930s TVA employees were important not because of their radical nature, but because the government invested massive amounts of time, energy, and resources into investigating a small group of largely harmless intellectuals. Their stories offer important modern day lessons on individual freedoms, civil liberties, government authority, and the power of propaganda.

Preface

I have sometimes wondered whether under the Freedom of Information Act we could see what the FBI had in their records about us. It was very, very interesting, and very “small potatoes.”¹

Richard O. Niehoff, 1983

As University Archivist at the University of Tennessee, one of my job responsibilities is to monitor eBay.com for items that would fit within the collection areas for the Special Collections Library. In late October 2001, I discovered an item on eBay listed as a handwritten 1934-1936 TVA worker's diary by Howard Bridgman. The head of Special Collections was not interested in bidding because of funding limitations, so I was given permission to attempt to acquire the item for myself. I usually avoid the archival dilemma of collecting what my employer collects, but I did not want to see this item slip away.² The simple description gave few content hints, other than the diarist was a TVA employee who recorded sixty-five pages (approximately 13,000 words) on subjects such as labor relations, union activities, and the displacement of farmers.³

After only a few bids, on November 7, 2001, I successfully purchased the diary. Two weeks later, the small book arrived in Knoxville. With the expectation that the diary

¹ Niehoff worked in the TVA Training Division as a mid-level administrator during the 1930s and amassed a considerable FBI file. Quote from, “Oral History Interview with Richard O. Niehoff, [transcript]” 27 September 1983, 56, Tennessee Valley Authority Oral History Collection, TVA Employee Series, TVA Technical Library, Knoxville, Tennessee.

² See, Society of American Archivists, “A Code of Ethics for Archivists With Commentary,” at: http://www.archivists.org/governance/handbook/app_ethics.asp; and Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), “ACRL Code of Ethics for Special Collections Librarians,” at: http://www.rbms.nd.edu/standards/code_of_ethics.shtml, both consulted 12 January 2006.

³ eBay.com description, “TVA, 1934-1936 Worker Diary,” in author's possession, 5 November 2001.

would be a good editing project with publication potential in a local or regional history journal, I began reading and transcribing. However, Bridgman's diary offered more significant information and brought new connections to light. During the first few months of his TVA experience, Bridgman recorded important events in TVA's history, such as the opening of Norris Dam⁴ and the decision in the George Ashwander⁵ case against the agency, while documenting the sometimes mundane details of working in TVA's mailroom. But Bridgman's discussion of the southern labor movement, the Communist Party, and the Highlander Folk School⁶ proved to be the most interesting. Having completed a master's thesis on TVA's early leadership, I hoped to use Bridgman's experiences to explore the activities of the agency's entry-level employees during the same period.⁷

After transcribing the diary, I unearthed startling details on Bridgman's post-TVA tenure, which confirmed that he and other TVA employees had joined the Communist Party while in Knoxville. Bridgman participated in several 1950s House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) hearings related to his 1930s TVA activities. I quickly discovered that Bridgman's involvement with HUAC represented only a small part of the

⁴ On March 4, 1936, the gates at Norris Dam closed. The first dam in the TVA system, named after Senator George W. Norris, brought flood control, electricity, and recreational opportunities to isolated areas on the upper-Clinch River, just 25 miles northeast of Knoxville. See, Michael J. McDonald and John Muldowny, *TVA and the Dispossessed: The Resettlement of Population in the Norris Dam Area* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982).

⁵ In February 1936, the Supreme Court in an 8-1 decision ruled that TVA could generate and sell power at Wilson Dam, near Muscle Shoals, Alabama. The decision was a significant victory for the New Deal. *George Ashwander et al. v. Tennessee Valley Authority*, 297 U.S. 288 (1936).

⁶ Myles Horton founded the Highlander School in 1932 as an adult education center. John Glen, *Highlander: No Ordinary School*, 2nd edition (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 23.

⁷ Aaron D. Purcell, "Building Dams, Burning Bridges: Conflicting Philosophies on the Tennessee Valley Authority Board, 1933-1939" (M.A. thesis, University of Louisville, 1996).

story. Beginning in the late-1930s and until the mid-1950s, government investigators launched inquiries into charges of communism within TVA. A small group of confirmed 1930s TVA communists, which included Bridgman, stood at the center of the investigations, but the larger issue of TVA as a radical New Deal agency surfaced and resurfaced.

A literature review demonstrates an absence of work on assessments of TVA's idealistic past. Secondary works on TVA offer nothing on Bridgman's testimony and little on the series of official investigations into the radical nature of the agency. Other historical works on the New Deal, the McCarthy Era, and the Cold War provide limited discussions of postwar anti-communist investigations of New Deal agencies. Only a handful of scholars, including Gary May and Kenneth O'Reilly, acknowledge the investigations into TVA, but their works were not focused on the agency or those particular inquiries.⁸ A study of TVA's alleged communist roots and how the agency fared during the McCarthy Era is not only possible but also long overdue. An examination of communism within the early TVA has modern day implications for understanding the mechanisms of government investigations, issues of free speech and questioning the status quo.

With the acquisition of the Howard Bridgman diary, which I have since donated to the University of Tennessee's Special Collections Library, I opened a new door into an

⁸ Kenneth O'Reilly, *Hoover and the Un-Americans: The FBI, HUAC, and the Red Menace* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983); Gary May, *Un-American Activities: The Trials of William Remington* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

ignored part of TVA's early history.⁹ The diary revealed seemingly unconnected people, events, and untapped sources on the charges and investigations of communism within TVA's first decade. Focused on the issue of TVA communism, I re-examined TVA collections at the University of Tennessee and other familiar archives and discovered a wealth of information on the investigations. Bridgman's short missive served as a roadmap to a much larger story—a story far more interesting and historically significant than the “small potatoes” that Richard Niehoff had predicted in 1983.

Accessing government records, some of which are still restricted, on a largely unexplored topic proved challenging. Armed with names from Bridgman's diary and printed testimony, I placed over one-hundred Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests to a number of government agencies. The success rate for finding files through FOIA averaged as follows: 1 out of 5 for names, 1 out of 4 for subject files, and 1 out of 3 for numbered files. The most common reply to a request was that no pertinent records were listed in automated and manual indices. First appeals to these replies yielded few matches and second appeals for an advanced cross-reference search produced few if any records and further delayed the process. Although files ranged from one page to over 9,000, regardless of length the average turn-around time for a successful FOIA request was about 6 months. Deciphering completed files was difficult, as heavy redacting for security or personal privacy reasons often rendered the files incoherent and unusable. But sometimes seemingly useless files provided new names and file numbers for the next round of FOIA requests. The most disheartening responses to FOIA requests were letters

⁹ Howard A. Bridgman Diary, 1936, MS 2698, Special Collections Library, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee.

explaining that records which may have been pertinent to my request had been destroyed as part of records management practices. Some of these destroyed files were cited in the footnotes and bibliographies of secondary works, files which are now irretrievable and therefore unusable.¹⁰ A similar problem of destroyed records emerged when requesting personnel records for former TVA employees. In the 1970s a massive fire at the National Archives and Records Administration's (NARA) St. Louis facility destroyed thousands of personnel files. For this project only about ten percent of the files requested for 1930s TVA workers could be located.

NARA also holds a wealth of files related to 1940s and 1950s communist investigations. For this project, government loyalty files held the most information. Much like the FOIA process, there is no publicly available index for these files; one must simply provide names and have an archivist search the list. This is to ensure personal privacy; if an individual is on the list, the requester must provide proof of death and expect several weeks for declassification review.¹¹ Other important NARA sources, held by the Center for Legislative Archives, include HUAC hearing transcripts, many which had just emerged from their fifty-year restrictions. These and other untapped primary sources make a study of communism within TVA much more possible than it would have been even ten years ago. Further, since the end of the Cold War secondary scholarship

¹⁰ Numerous FBI files cited in Gary May's *Un-American Activities* are now officially missing or destroyed.

¹¹ Only a handful of historians have utilized loyalty files, the most recent being, Landon R.Y. Storrs, "Red Scare Politics and the Suppression of Popular Front Feminism: The Loyalty Investigation of Mary Dublin Keyserling," *The Journal of American History* 90 (September 2003): 491-524.

on the McCarthy Era, the FBI, and relations with the Soviets has opened up once closed areas of historical research.

The Internet played a crucial role in developing this dissertation. The ability to search for individuals, their papers, their families, and their contact information accelerated the research process. Instead of searching through the microfilm of newspaper obituary notices, the searchable online Social Security Death Index makes proving the passing of individuals a very reasonable procedure.¹² The ability to quickly verify vital information online, made filing FOIA requests much simpler. Finally, the purchase of the Bridgman diary, through eBay.com, would not have been possible without the Internet. Without the Bridgman diary this project would not, and possibly could not, have materialized.

After examining thousands of pages of government records, numerous printed hearings, and dozens of manuscript collections related to TVA communism, a list of over thirty names emerged. Closer examination of the social networks of these young TVA employees brought the list down to twenty names. From that short list, several common traits further narrowed the list to fifteen individuals. As binding criteria for the group, these fifteen individuals worked for TVA during the 1930s, had not reached 35 years of age, held low-level administrative positions such as clerk or a stenographer, had some level of college or professional education, had an interest in labor organizing, would later be accused of being members of the Communist Party, and garnered substantial attention from the FBI. Collectively referred to in this dissertation as the “Knoxville Fifteen,” this

¹² See, <http://ssdi.genealogy.rootsweb.com/>

group includes Mabel Abercrombie, Forrest Benson, Bernard “Buck” Borah, Howard Bridgman, Katherine “Kit” Buckles, Christine Eversole, John Frantz, Howard Frazier, Henry Hart, Elizabeth Winston McConnell, David Stone Martin, William Remington, Muriel Speare, Merwin Todd, and Burton Zien.¹³ The living members of the group, Henry Hart and Mabel Abercrombie Mansfield, agreed to interviews and provided valuable details on their TVA experiences.

This dissertation follows the lives of the “Knoxville Fifteen,” focusing on their 1930s activities and the subsequent 1940s and 1950s investigations into their perceived radical deeds. Instead of reviewing TVA’s top leadership, this project focuses on those at the entry-level—the young idealistic mailroom workers who came to Knoxville searching for themselves and answers to the nation’s economic woes. Within this small group of 1930s TVA employees, some espoused radical principles while others were harmless intellectuals, but together they represent an important group of thinkers in the early TVA and other New Deal agencies. During the 1930s, their activities as part of the Popular Front movement were largely ignored and dismissed as youthful indiscretions, but anti-communist campaigns of the McCarthy Era quickly caught up with this small group. By pressuring these individuals to cooperate and talk, government investigators hoped to connect the Reds in TVA’s mailroom with the Reds in TVA’s boardroom. By 1955, all fifteen had been accused of being communists by government investigators or other witnesses. Reconstructing the experiences of a handful of entry-level TVA employees from the 1930s through the 1950s reveals the larger issues of communism within TVA,

¹³ Several of the fifteen married more than once, making last names ever-changing. Throughout this dissertation married names will be used to reflect the actual name during that period, while maiden names may be used when referring to the unmarried individual during the 1930s.

New Deal reform, the domestic effects of Cold War foreign policy, and the government's hunt for subversives during the McCarthy Era.

While reconstructing the lives and activities of the "Knoxville Fifteen," this dissertation argues three key points. First, a small group of 1930s TVA radicals commanded the government's attention because they were easy targets and had little chance against the anti-communist forces of the McCarthy Era. Their activities represented many of the fears of Cold War America. The group's perceived advocacy of black enfranchisement, southern unionization, communist governance, redistribution of wealth, industrial education, and intellectualism clashed with everything postwar America stood for. The forces of McCarthyism were so strong that Red Hunters (even those of questionable character) needed no proof behind their charges. Despite the passage of time, the anti-communist sentiment of the 1950s made innocuous actions of the 1930s not only relevant, but also worthy of punishment.

Second, the culmination of 1950s government investigations into 1930s radicals symbolized the agency's break with its idealistic origins. Beginning in the 1930s, TVA leaders focused the agency on electric power production and industrial development in the Tennessee Valley. But an interest in social and regional planning, as first envisioned by TVA board chairman Arthur Morgan, remained part of the agency's mission. This component of the early TVA attracted many young idealists to the agency. A handful of these employees became the focus of anti-communist investigations. During these numerous investigations, TVA became the larger target. As one result of these investigations, TVA leaders such as David Lilienthal and Gordon Clapp successfully

defended its past, while moving the agency forward as a government-owned electric power company. By the mid-1950s, TVA had shed its radical roots and ranks.

Finally, the CP activities of 1930s TVA employees were significant not because of their radical nature, but because the government invested massive amounts of time, energy, and resources into investigating a small group of largely harmless intellectuals. Further, although this dissertation confirms that William Remington did indeed join the CP while in Knoxville, his more than 9,000 page FBI file and numerous investigations into his TVA tenure and colleagues were never justified on the broad grounds of protecting democracy and establishing loyalty. This last argument also has modern day implications, as the Cold War mechanisms and investigative tactics are currently being used to target those suspected of terrorism or anti-American behavior.

The opening chapter surveys TVA through the first seventy-five years of historiographical debate, with a focus on the changing and emerging interpretations of the New Deal and the McCarthy Era. A review of the secondary literature establishes a framework for understanding the quandary of many New Deal idealists caught in the McCarthy Era. This chapter demonstrates the need for a scholarly study of the anti-communist investigations of TVA and the agency's radical roots.

The second chapter chronicles the pre-TVA years of fifteen individuals who arrived in Knoxville during the 1930s to work for the infant TVA. This chapter discusses their coming to Knoxville, the ideological baggage they brought with them, their motivations, and concludes with their first day of work for TVA. It argues that the collective origins, work experience, education, and ideological influences of each

individual formed the motivational basis for the 1930s radical activities of the “Knoxville Fifteen.”

Chapter three reconstructs the 1930s TVA activities of the “Knoxville Fifteen.” As mailroom workers, stenographers, researcher aids, and legal clerks, these fifteen self-proclaimed radicals registered a unique TVA tenure. Their organizing activities—including involvement in a white-collar TVA union, participation in strikes, promotion of the Popular Front movement, fundraising for the Spanish Civil War, and participation in the Communist Party—represent an important and neglected component of the agency’s early history. Their personal relationships, where they lived, what they did after work, and their interactions with other individuals also reveal much about the 1930s TVA and Knoxville. This chapter argues that the brief 1930s legacies of the “Knoxville Fifteen” formed the basis for a series of subsequent anti-communist government investigations into TVA.

By the end of World War II, only one of the “Knoxville Fifteen” remained with TVA and nearly all had renounced their affiliations with the Communist Party. The fourth chapter documents this important wartime period, which featured the dissolution of the group and the first investigations into their 1930s activities. Mobilization for war intensified the government’s efforts to seek and control internal subversives. Although an extensive congressional investigation of TVA in 1938 yielded no evidence of TVA radicals, two years later HUAC held hearings on the issue. The 1940 hearings produced evidence that a small group of TVA communists did exist during the 1930s, but the committee determined that their activities were largely youthful indiscretions. This chapter argues that by the end of World War II, the “Knoxville Fifteen” no longer existed

and each individual had little expectation of further government investigation into his/her 1930s activities.

The fifth chapter examines two postwar congressional confirmation hearings which brought national attention to the “Knoxville Fifteen.” In 1946, President Truman nominated David Lilienthal as the first chairman of the newly created Atomic Energy Commission (AEC). At the time, Lilienthal was the chairman of TVA’s board of directors. To fill Lilienthal’s post, Truman recommended that Gordon Clapp assume the role as the chairman of the TVA board. Tennessee Senator Kenneth McKellar (D), a long-time TVA foe, emerged as the most active opponent of these appointments. He went to great lengths to prove that Lilienthal, Clapp, and many of their TVA colleagues were communists. These two investigations attempted to connect the Reds in the mailroom with the Reds in TVA’s boardroom. This chapter argues that postwar anti-communist fear and Cold War politics resurrected government inquiries into former TVA radicals.

The sixth chapter covers the last set of government investigations of TVA communists, from the late 1940s until the mid-1950s. During this period, the issue of communism in the 1930s TVA was the main topic of several loyalty hearings, another HUAC inquiry, and the trials of William Remington. In the process, the FBI collected a voluminous amount of material on each of the “Knoxville Fifteen,” and by 1954 nearly all had participated in at least one of the inquiries. This chapter focuses on these investigations, the results of the findings, and how each of the former-TVA witnesses reacted during the most intense period of government inquiry into their past lives. While reconstructing their lives and trials, the sixth chapter argues that the “Knoxville Fifteen”

had little chance against the anti-communist forces of the McCarthy Era. In addition to being easy targets, their 1930s activities including the perceived advocacy of black enfranchisement, southern unionization, communist governance, redistribution of wealth, industrial education, and overthrow of the government represented many of the fears of Cold War America. Further, chapter six establishes that with more advanced legal and investigative mechanisms in place, during the 1950s the government could better prosecute individuals from TVA's radical past.

This seventh and final chapter brings the stories of the primary participants up to the present. When possible, it follows each of the primary individuals after the Remington trials with particular focus on the long-term or short-term effects of their testimony or involvement. Some individuals looked back at the 1930s as the best times in their lives and the 1950s as the worst times in their lives. Their postscripts are an important facet of this story. The chapter returns to the purchase of the Howard Bridgman diary on eBay.com, the events after transcribing the diary, and the oral history interviews with the surviving primary TVA individuals, Henry Hart and Mabel Abercrombie Mansfield. Understanding the perceptions and misconceptions of the McCarthy Era provides insights into modern day investigations of those suspected of un-American activities.

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Chapter 1

A Wide and Deep River

In early June 1933, just a few days before accepting an appointment to the Tennessee Valley Authority's first board of directors, David Lilienthal summarized his thoughts on the new agency. Lilienthal wrote in his journal that when creating TVA, President Roosevelt "had in mind two things—the necessity of employing men rather than keeping them on some form of dole for which no useful work was performed, and second, the necessity of enriching the community life of that part of the country." Lilienthal also added that TVA would "improve the economic and social conditions of the valley, irrespective of whether the improvement would pay in dollars and cents." As the Depression lumbered through the decade, this first idealistic vision of TVA gave way to a more practical approach to rebuilding the Tennessee Valley. Lilienthal's leadership lay at the heart of this important transition.¹

During the 1930s, Lilienthal and his fellow board members Arthur Morgan and Harcourt Morgan sculpted TVA's mission and vision. While Arthur Morgan focused on engineering tasks and regional planning and Harcourt Morgan established navigation and agricultural goals, Lilienthal launched the agency's electric power program. This three-prong mission created an economic, legal, and engineering infrastructure to modernize the Tennessee Valley. By the mid-1930s, Lilienthal's electric power program had supplanted the social designs supported by Arthur Morgan. Lilienthal's vision for TVA

¹ Quotes from David Lilienthal, *The Journals of David E. Lilienthal* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1964), I:36.

revolved around generating power, stimulating economic and industrial growth, and using the residual income to support and expand its territory. His pragmatic approach to government ownership of electric power resources proved to be more successful than Arthur Morgan's plans to embrace and preserve the pre-existing social, economic, and industrial conditions. Decades after Lilienthal's departure from TVA, his vision for the agency remains.²

Throughout the agency's nearly seventy-five year history, scholars have written extensively on the agency's mission, vision, effectiveness, successes, and failures. Studies of TVA have focused on the agency's political, economic, social, environmental, and administrative challenges and developments. The result is a complicated picture of an agency still trying to define and envision itself into the future.

Historiographical shifts since the 1930s have greatly affected the course of TVA scholarship. Political, social, and economic events during the second half of the twentieth century influenced several generations of scholars. Their interpretations, questions, and revisions debunked seemingly established historical precedents. Studies of the Depression and the McCarthy Era have revised our understanding of New Deal agencies such as TVA. And the debate continues as new approaches to TVA's complex legacy emerge. This chapter explores the agency through the first seventy-five years of historiographical debate, with a focus on the changing and emerging interpretations of the New Deal and the McCarthy Era.

² Aaron D. Purcell, "Power to the People: David Lilienthal Finds TVA's Electric Power Policy, 1933," *The Journal of East Tennessee History* 70 (1998): 91-92.

On March 4, 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt took the oath of the office of the presidency and the next month introduced the Tennessee Valley Authority Act to Congress. In the 1920s, Nebraska Senator George Norris (R) first proposed a plan to build a series of dams to control flooding, provide navigation, generate electric power, and stimulate industrial development on the Tennessee River. But in the 1930s, Roosevelt championed a much expanded version of Norris's plan and once in the White House he made TVA a top priority. On May 18, 1933, Congress passed the TVA Act by a wide margin, and later that same day Roosevelt signed the measure into law. Congress appropriated \$50 million for TVA and gave it comprehensive powers for owning, developing, and operating hydroelectric resources in the economically depressed Tennessee Valley.³

Roosevelt's administration designed TVA to be governed by a three-member board of directors. In 1933, Roosevelt appointed three individuals with diverse backgrounds and experiences to head the massive task before them. As board chairman and chief engineer, Roosevelt appointed engineer, educator, and moralist Arthur Morgan. In addition to directing some seventy-five land reclamation and flood control projects for municipal, state, and federal governments, Morgan also had served as president of Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio. On the advice of Felix Frankfurter, Roosevelt added electric power expert David Lilienthal, a young, politically connected "New Dealer," to TVA's board. Lilienthal began his career as a lawyer with an interest in

³ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "A Suggestion to Create the Tennessee Valley Authority," in Samuel Rosenman, comp., *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt* (New York: Random House, 1938), 2:122; Louis B. Wehle, *Hidden Threads of History: Wilson Through Roosevelt* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1953), 157; Aaron D. Purcell, "Undermining the TVA: George Berry, David Lilienthal, and Arthur Morgan," *The Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 57 (Fall 1998): 170-71.

public utility law, a position which by 1931 led him to a membership on the Wisconsin Public Service Commission. Finally, to connect TVA with the proposed operating region, Roosevelt selected southern agricultural expert Harcourt Morgan to be the final member of the board. The second Morgan (no relation to Arthur Morgan) had previously worked as a professor of entomology at Louisiana State University in the 1890s, and once at the University of Tennessee served as director of the agricultural experiment station, dean of the College of Agriculture, and beginning in 1919 as the president of the university.⁴

Roosevelt's three directors had different expectations for TVA. Arthur Morgan believed that TVA should not only be an engineering project but should also be concerned with social, economic, and regional planning. Both Roosevelt and Morgan agreed that the agency could and must become a dramatic and conclusive demonstration, on an unprecedented scale, of what multipurpose regional planning could achieve in the way of harmony between man and nature. Morgan was also a moralist, who called for a changed American character which stressed personal honesty and openness. He insisted on a moral revolution, based on his late nineteenth-century Christian ideals, as a prelude to a social revolution. Morgan's firm ethical principles also fashioned a strong distaste for governmental favoritism and partisan politics, which he believed severely damaged the course of government.⁵

⁴ Aaron D. Purcell, "Suppressed Currents: The 'Fool Report' and the Early Tennessee Valley Authority," *The Journal of East Tennessee History* 74 (2002): 71-72; C. Herman Pritchett, *The Tennessee Valley Authority: A Study in Public Administration* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1943), 147-151; Jonathan Daniels, "Three Men in a Valley," *New Republic* 96 (17 August 1938): 35

⁵ Arthur Morgan, *The Making of the TVA* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1974), 6-7; Kenneth S. Davis, *FDR: Into the Storm, 1937-1940* (New York: Random House, 1993), 166; Roy Talbert, Jr.,

Harcourt Morgan also took great interest in the harmony between man and nature. His philosophy, called the “Common Mooring,” placed humans as an equal part of nature. But when humans received undue attention, natural and ecological disaster resulted. To tackle the agricultural problems in the South—eroded hillsides, depleted topsoil, and uncontrolled flooding—Morgan believed that TVA’s broad program of unified resource development would restore the balance and integrate natural and human resources. But unlike Arthur Morgan’s approach to social and economic development, Harcourt Morgan believed that changing farming practices and local acceptance of a government agency would be a slow process, achieved through careful publicity, planning, and education.⁶

At age 34 and the youngest member of the TVA’s first board of directors, David Lilienthal proved to have the most pragmatic vision for TVA. Through electric power production and sales, Lilienthal saw the potential of TVA to establish public control of power throughout the South. He well understood the need for greater local control, freer municipal management, and less reliance on bureaucratic direction in the utility business. Lilienthal knew that the region was economically stagnant, but at the same time that local prejudices and attitudes had to be respected. But Lilienthal believed that these attitudes would slowly change as cheaply produced electricity would raise the region’s standard of

“Arthur E. Morgan's Social Philosophy and the Tennessee Valley Authority,” *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 41 (1969): 119.

⁶ Thomas K. McCraw, *TVA and the Power Fight: 1933-1939* (New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1971), 40-41; Harcourt A. Morgan, “Tentative Definition of the Common Mooring,” 1, folder 1, box 3 Common Mooring Materials, Harcourt Alexander Morgan Papers, 1905-1950, MS 522, Special Collections Library, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee [hereinafter Harcourt Morgan Papers, UT Special Collections]; Ellis F. Hartford, *Our Common Mooring* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1941).

living, stimulate industrial development, and encourage local industries. Similar to Arthur Morgan, Lilienthal held a passion for progressivism and social reform. However, Lilienthal knew how the political system operated and carefully considered the strengths of his opposition, while Morgan did not.⁷

The backgrounds and philosophies of the three directors created a unique mix on the first TVA board. Arthur Morgan's ideas for social and moral uplift quickly clashed with Lilienthal's pragmatic plans for the Tennessee Valley. From the first board meeting, Morgan and Lilienthal disagreed over the issue of what to do with the private power companies already in the region. By 1934, Lilienthal's approach, which favored competition, trumped Morgan's plans for cooperation and co-existence with private power companies. More politically adept and in touch with the times, Lilienthal quickly gained Roosevelt's favor. The rift over power policy resulted in a lengthy board "feud" which led to Arthur Morgan's dismissal in 1938. Thereafter, David Lilienthal assumed the lead role in crafting TVA's vision and leading the agency through World War II.⁸

In the early 1940s, the first significant assessments of TVA began to appear. Largely written by contemporaries from the agency's own ranks, these works took a sympathetic and forward-looking approach. An early look at the agency, C. Herman Pritchett's *TVA: A Study in Public Administration* (1943), evaluated the agency's first ten years. A former TVA employee, Pritchett wrote about the agency as a symbol, a tool,

⁷ Thomas K. McCraw, *Morgan Versus Lilienthal: The Feud Within the TVA* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1970), 23; Anthony, Coelho, "David Eli Lilienthal: Pragmatic Liberal at the Crossroads" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Brown University, 1973), 16.

⁸ Aaron D. Purcell, "Building Dams, Burning Bridges: Conflicting Philosophies on the Tennessee Valley Authority Board, 1933-1939" (M.A. thesis, University of Louisville, 1996), 314-18; idem, "Power to the People," 108.

and as a promise for the future. Pritchett believed that the engineering successes of TVA symbolized “man in control of his environment and directing his destiny.” The unique administrative components of TVA, Pritchett claimed, highlighted the best the New Deal agencies had to offer. Finally, Pritchett envisioned TVA as an administrative model for other government agencies to emulate. Pritchett’s most interesting comments related to 1930s charges that TVA was actually a large-scale socialization project. He defended TVA’s approach to rebuilding the valley, calling it a design created by the uncertain times of the depression. Writing during the early part of World War II, Pritchett hinted that TVA’s model could be used in the postwar world to rebuild shattered regions.⁹

One year later, TVA chairman David Lilienthal heralded TVA as the answer to the complexities of the postwar world in his *TVA: Democracy on the March* (1944). Connecting public ownership to democracy and free enterprise, Lilienthal argued that TVA represented a model of decentralization which gave economic power back to the people. Lilienthal’s conception of TVA as a harbinger of postwar democracy proved so powerful that he literally eliminated Arthur Morgan’s 1930s TVA leadership and vision from later analyses of the agency. Inexpensive Pocket Books editions of his book, issued to soldiers during World War II, spread Lilienthal’s TVA rhetoric across the globe.¹⁰

At the same time, World War II brought government investigations of domestic subversives. In the name of American security, the Dies Committee conducted numerous

⁹ C. Herman Pritchett, *The Tennessee Valley Authority: A Study in Public Administration* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1943) quote 314, 313-24.

¹⁰ David E. Lilienthal, *TVA: Democracy On the March* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1944), 139-40; Howard Segal, “Down in the Valley: David Lilienthal’s *TVA: Democracy on the March*,” *American Scholar* 64 (1 June 1995): 424.

inquiries, including a 1940 investigation of TVA communists. The first scholarly treatment of the committee appeared in 1945. August Raymond Ogden's *The Dies Committee* argued that the Dies Committee was neither an ideal nor a desired means of exposing subversive activities. Ogden believed that the Dies Committee used improper and undemocratic investigative methods to hunt for disloyal Americans. As a solution, Ogden recommended the creation of a joint standing committee to tackle the difficult issue of investigating subversive Americans. As World War II ended and the Cold War began, the successor investigative body, the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), began its own anti-communist crusade.¹¹

A second wave of TVA studies appeared just after World War II. These writers questioned the structure and principles of the agency. Agrarian author Donald Davidson found that the damage to the land, people, and traditions of the affected areas offset the benefits of TVA's flood control and electric power system. In the second volume of *The Tennessee* in the America's Rivers Series (1948), Davidson explained the effects of the loss, saying, "these harms, inflicted upon a sizable and innocent minority, weighed less in the TVA scales than the benefits that would accrue, in terms of industrial and social engineering, to the nearby or the distant majority who sacrificed only tax money."¹²

¹¹ August Raymond Ogden, *The Dies Committee: A Study of the Special House Committee for the Investigation of Un-American Activities, 1938-1944* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1945), v, 296-98.

¹² Donald Davidson, *The Tennessee, Volume II, The New River: Civil War to TVA* (New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1948), 237-38; William Wade Drumright, "A River For War, A Watershed to Change: The Tennessee Valley Authority During World War II" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 2005), 18-19.

Echoing Davidson's criticisms, in 1949 sociologist Philip Selznick took aim at TVA's vision and administration. In *TVA and the Grass Roots*, Selznick criticized TVA for overpowering its rural constituents with bureaucracy, and called the agency devoid of purpose. In particular, Selznick believed that TVA sided with large conservative agricultural interests, who were hostile to the poor black and white farmers that TVA had pledged to protect. Instead of finding participatory democracy at the grass roots as Lilienthal had claimed, Selznick found that Lilienthal used his powerful tongue and pen to conceal the reality of TVA's cooptation in the region. In scholarly circles, Selznick's study remained an accepted treatment of TVA for several decades, while the general public embraced Lilienthal's *Democracy on the March*.¹³

The 1950s brought significant expansions and contractions of American society. At the same time as the Civil Rights Movement began, the Cold War clamped down on individual freedoms. The politics and culture of the early Cold War, which included anti-communist rhetoric, the specter of McCarthyism, and defining national loyalty overshadowed many historical studies. As HUAC investigated former New Dealers, intellectuals, and academics, the first studies of that committee emerged. A product of its time, Robert Carr's *The House Committee on Un-American Activities* (1952) explained how HUAC helped maintain national security and repel communist influence. However,

¹³ Philip Selznick, *TVA and the Grass Roots: A Study in the Sociology of Formal Organization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949), 262-66; Drumright, "A River For War," 19; Segal, "Down in the Valley," 426.

Carr asserted that HUAC brought to the surface the difficult balance between national security and personal privacy.¹⁴

Within the context of the 1950s, historians from two schools of thought produced the first assessments of the New Deal, which both included discussions of TVA. First, the consensus or neo-conservative historians upheld American history as a stable and homogeneous development, with only brief periods of conflict. In *The Age of Reform* (1955), Richard Hofstadter argued that the New Deal had no connection to past reform movements. Hofstadter believed the New Deal was a unique response to a unique situation and not part of the American liberal tradition. Instead, the New Deal side-stepped the Progressive reformers' crusades to return government to the people, and expanded the federal government to counter an economic emergency. In the process, a reversal of philosophies for conservatives and liberals occurred. Hofstadter argued that conservatives became more focused on the morality of political decisions, while liberals responded to urgent practical realities. On the whole, Hofstadter found that New Deal reforms failed to have long-term goals and only responded to individual pressures and situations.¹⁵

At the same time, historians from the Progressive school of thought viewed the nation's past as a struggle between liberalism and conservatism and the people against

¹⁴ Robert K. Carr, *The House Committee on Un-American Activities, 1945-1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952), viii-x.

¹⁵ Eric Foner, ed., *The New American History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 136; Gerald N. Grob and George Athan Billias, eds., *Interpretations of American History: Patterns and Perspectives, Volume II: Since 1877*, 5th edition (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 13-14, 292-96; Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to FDR* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 302-4, 310-12, 316-18.

vested interests. Historians such as Henry Steele Commager and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. viewed the New Deal as a continuation of past reform efforts. In his three-volume study of the New Deal, *The Age of Roosevelt* (1957-1960), Schlesinger argued that the New Deal represented another phase in the cycles of liberal reform and conservative consolidation. With a clear link to the reformers of the Progressive Era, historians such as Schlesinger found great reason to celebrate the New Deal while acknowledging its limitations. Schlesinger pointed to TVA as an example of positive and forward-thinking reform.¹⁶

During the tumultuous 1960s, political, social, and racial upheavals redefined America. In the midst of John F. Kennedy's "New Frontier" and Lyndon B. Johnson's "Great Society," scholars again re-examined the New Deal. William Leuchtenburg's *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal* (1963) represented a new direction for New Deal studies and remains a landmark work. He argued that the New Deal saved capitalism rather than destroyed it. But Leuchtenburg recognized the successes of the New Deal, while noting its shortcomings. He contended that Roosevelt re-created the modern presidency by making the Executive branch the center of the federal government. Leuchtenburg believed that New Deal reforms placed the oversight of the nation's economy in the hands of the federal government while helping to ease a national crisis. However, he called the New Deal a half-way revolution which left many problems unsolved and created new perplexing situations. In particular, Leuchtenburg took issue

¹⁶ Grob and Billias, *Interpretations of American History*, 288-91; Foner, *New American History*, 134; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Roosevelt: The Crisis of the Old Order* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957), xi; idem, *The Age of Roosevelt: The Coming of the New Deal* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1959); idem, *The Age of Roosevelt: The Politics of Upheaval* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1960).

with Roosevelt's failure to end the Depression before 1940, the absence of industrial economic reform, undefined parameters of the welfare state, the inability to distribute government relief, and unaddressed racial issues.¹⁷

Following Leuchtenburg's groundbreaking book, many 1960s scholars found the New Deal devoid of a reform philosophy, unable to address social problems, committed to the salvation of corporate capitalism, and indifferent to participatory democracy. Paul Conkin's *The New Deal* (1967) offered mixed results of the New Deal. Conkin criticized Roosevelt as a shallow and superficial leader who created many new problems with the New Deal. However, Conkin also asserted that without the New Deal the 1930s could have been a much more difficult decade. Conkin concluded that the New Deal was a short-term failure, but it did initiate changes that brought long-term successes.¹⁸

Even with the dramatic political and social changes of the 1960s, domestic anti-communist rhetoric remained strong. Within this climate during the 1960s the first assessments of the McCarthy Era appeared. In 1966, Earl Latham's *The Communist Controversy in Washington* (1966) described the complex political struggles of the early 1950s. Latham argued that after World War II the communist issue became a complex clash of attitudes and predilections, of dispositions and predispositions. He explored the partisan nature of determining policies on communism and found that the issue pitted

¹⁷ William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 327, 335-37, 346-47; Foner, *New American History*, 143.

¹⁸ Jerold S. Auerbach, "New Deal, Old Deal, or Raw Deal: Some Thoughts on New Left Historiography" *The Journal of Southern History* 35 (February 1969): 19-20; Paul K. Conkin, *The New Deal* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1967), 104-6; Foner, *New American History*, 144; Grob and Billias, *Interpretations of American History*, 297-98.

politicians against one another, and the government often fighting against itself.¹⁹ Two years later, Walter Goodman's *The Committee* argued that conservatives used HUAC to enact pressure on liberals who did not agree with the policies of Cold War anti-communism.²⁰

By the 1970s, increased access to government information through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson in 1966) led to new works on the McCarthy Era and its origins. In *Seeds of Repression* (1971), Athan Theoharis argued that McCarthyism developed because of the changed political climate that came with the intensification of the Cold War and Truman's loss of credibility. He found that McCarthyism was no mere aberration, but a strong political movement in touch with the concerns of the Cold War.²¹

The next year, Richard Freeland's *The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism* (1972) traced the emotional, political, and ideological foundations of the period dominated by Senator Joseph McCarthy. Freeland argued that by 1948 the nation and government had fully embraced a Cold War consensus of anti-communist thought. International events during the next two years, including the Soviets' explosion of an atomic weapon, the conquest of China by Mao Zedong, and the outbreak of the Korean War, Freeland believed, triggered McCarthyism and the search for domestic subversives.

¹⁹ Earl Latham, *The Communist Controversy in Washington: From the New Deal to McCarthy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 3-4.

²⁰ Walter Goodman, *The Committee: The Extraordinary Career of the House Committee on Un-American Activities* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968), xiii-xiv, 493-94.

²¹ Athan Theoharis, *Seeds of Repression: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of McCarthyism* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1971), ix.

The 1950 revelations that Alger Hiss had given classified documents to the Soviet Union served as the beginning of an ideological campaign of domestic anti-communism.

Freeland argued that President Harry Truman took a tougher stance against communism abroad than at home. With this slight domestic weakness, by 1950 McCarthy and other political opponents began using propaganda to gain power and discredit the administration.²²

During the 1970s, as TVA approached forty and its aging first generation had all but retired, a number of new studies of the agency's early history appeared. In *Morgan Versus Lilienthal* (1970), Thomas McCraw studied the early struggles of TVA's first board of directors, and argued that Arthur Morgan and David Lilienthal could not agree on power policy because of personal and policy differences. McCraw also published on the evolution of TVA's electric power program. In *TVA and the Power Fight* (1971), McCraw demonstrated that by 1935 Lilienthal had supplanted the idealistic plans of Arthur Morgan with his own vision of TVA as an electric utility and river control agency.²³

Important works by early TVA contemporaries also appeared during the 1970s. In 1973, Marguerite Owen published *The Tennessee Valley Authority*. TVA's Washington, D.C. representative from 1933-1966 and unofficial fourth member of the agency's first board of directors, Owen had a unique insider perspective on TVA's early

²² Richard M. Freeland, *The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism: Foreign Policy, Domestic Politics, and Internal Security, 1946-1948* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 4-6, 8-11.

²³ Thomas K. McCraw, *Morgan Versus Lilienthal: The Feud Within the TVA* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1970), 106; idem, *TVA and the Power Fight: 1933-1939* (New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1971), 88, 144.

years. Owen viewed the early board struggles as a case of Arthur Morgan's inability to consider the perspectives of his fellow directors. Having worked closely with David Lilienthal, Owen praised the accomplishments of TVA's power program and Lilienthal's wartime direction. Writing at a time when TVA faced criticism for the Tellico Dam project, Owen focused on past accomplishments and the great potential for the agency's emerging nuclear program.²⁴

Perhaps as a reaction to Owen's work, the next year Arthur Morgan returned to the battlefield. Although Morgan had published widely on his grandiose social vision for the agency in the 1930s, it took him decades to reflect on his TVA experience. In 1974, at age 96, Arthur Morgan published *The Making of the TVA*, which reviewed the details of his 1938 removal from the agency and evaluated the growth of the agency. Despite his bitterness toward David Lilienthal, Morgan's TVA memoir looked favorably on the agency's accomplishments, even though social planning took a backseat to electric power productions. In the end, Morgan blamed Roosevelt for his removal from TVA and for impairing the social and economic unification of the Tennessee Valley.²⁵

During the 1980s, as the agency reached its half century mark, TVA faced a number of political, ecological, and economic challenges which threatened the very existence of the agency. These threats produced important scholarship on the TVA's legacies and uncertain future. In 1982, Michael McDonald and John Muldowny's *TVA and the Dispossessed* (1982) analyzed the removal of residents from the Norris Dam

²⁴ Marguerite Owen, *The Tennessee Valley Authority* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 50-51, 86, 246-47, 252-53.

²⁵ Morgan, *The Making of the TVA*, xiii-xiv.

basin. In this case study, the authors argued that TVA enacted a limited approach to removal and resettlement, making the dispossessed the victims rather than the victors. This direct assault of one of TVA's first symbols of progress, Norris Dam, opened the door for other studies of the agency's early planning.²⁶

At TVA's fiftieth anniversary in 1983, Paul Conkin and Erwin Hargrove co-edited a book of essays on the agency's legacies. Their *TVA: Fifty Years of Grass-Roots Bureaucracy* yielded the general conclusion that just like other New Deal programs, TVA never fulfilled its original expectations, but still accomplished many of its goals. Two essays from the book best explained the mixed legacies of TVA. Dewey Grantham's essay argued that TVA expressed the needs of southern liberalism, but also revealed the limitations of America's reform efforts. As for TVA's myth, Paul Conkin's essay asserted that TVA slowly developed its identity and never wedded itself to the early conceptions of Arthur Morgan, social planners, and other conservationists.²⁷

In the wake of criticism of TVA's poor environmental record, William Chandler returned to the arguments of Davidson and Selznick. In *The Myth of TVA* (1984) Chandler declared that TVA represented an expensive government experiment which had never delivered its promised economic returns. He found that TVA may have actually impeded growth in the area it hoped to improve. Chandler believed that Lilienthal had

²⁶ Michael J., McDonald and John Muldowny, *TVA and the Dispossessed: The Resettlement of Population in the Norris Dam Area* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), 264-71.

²⁷ Paul K Conkin and Erwin Hargrove, eds., *TVA: Fifty Years of Grass-Roots Bureaucracy* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983), x, xv-xvii, 3, 26-27, 31-32, 329-31.

made TVA into a mythical agency with imaginary powers in order to survive the postwar years.²⁸

In 1986, William Bruce Wheeler and Michael McDonald examined the inner workings of TVA's bureaucracy, using the beleaguered Tellico Dam project as a case-study. In *TVA and the Tellico Dam, 1936-1979*, Wheeler and McDonald declared that in the 1950s, TVA leaders discovered that electric power alone could not revitalize the Tennessee Valley. To achieve a new mission, TVA took a more aggressive approach to the region it served, by taking large amounts of private lands through eminent domain laws, luring industry to the region, and launching new dam and hydroelectric projects on tributaries. As one example of the latter approach, Wheeler and McDonald argued that the Tellico project represented TVA's attempt to reclaim its earlier glory, regardless of the consequences.²⁹

Roy Talbert, Jr.'s 1987 study of Arthur Morgan focused on TVA's first decade and what might have been. In *FDR's Utopian* (1987), Talbert examined the agency's early direction and Morgan's unimplemented visions. Talbert began work on the book in the late-1960s and developed a close relationship with Morgan and his associates. The book examined Morgan's idealistic plans for the Tennessee Valley, declaring that Morgan's TVA never had a chance against Lilienthal's approach. Talbert believed that Morgan's late-Victorian Era morality made it difficult for him to succeed in the

²⁸ William U. Chandler, *The Myth of TVA: Conservation and Development in the Tennessee Valley, 1933-1983* (Cambridge, MA.: Ballinger Publishing Co., 1984), 1, 7-8, 115-16.

²⁹ William Bruce Wheeler and Michael J. McDonald, *TVA and the Tellico Dam, 1936-1979: A Bureaucratic Crisis in Post-Industrial America* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986), 216-17.

politically-charged New Deal arena. However, Talbert's close relationship with Morgan resulted in a study that is both sympathetic and incomplete.³⁰

The 1980s, the decade which brought a new campaign of anti-communism abroad and the end of the Cold War, was an abundant time for scholarship on the McCarthy Era. In *Hoover and the Un-Americans* (1983), Kenneth O'Reilly's provided the first complete analysis of the relationship between the FBI and HUAC. He argued that after World War II, the FBI launched domestic anti-communism measures and in the process greatly influenced national political policies. While nurturing an anti-communist consensus, O'Reilly believed, the FBI quietly underwrote the tactics and propaganda for HUAC and Joseph McCarthy.³¹

Five years later, Athan Theoharis and John Stuart Cox further explored the growth of J. Edgar Hoover's power and connections with HUAC. In *The Boss* (1988), Theoharis and Cox argued that Hoover used the New Deal's expansion of federal law enforcement authority to enlarge the FBI's operations. Theoharis and Cox also explained that after World War II, Hoover contributed enormously to the "Second Red Scare." During the early 1950s, Hoover advanced the FBI's investigations of suspected Communists and supplied secret information to HUAC and to Joseph McCarthy.³²

³⁰ Roy Talbert, Jr., *FDR's Utopian: Arthur Morgan of the TVA* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 1987), 193-94.

³¹ Kenneth O'Reilly, *Hoover and the Un-Americans: The FBI, HUAC, and the Red Menace* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 6-7.

³² Athan Theoharis and John Stuart Cox, *The Boss: J. Edgar Hoover and the Great American Inquisition* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 6-8.

Social historians also focused on individuals harassed and injured by McCarthyism. The blacklisted “Hollywood Ten” became a topic of several monographs. One of the most notable, *The Inquisition in Hollywood* (1980) by Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund argued that those blacklisted had belonged to the Communist Party and as confirmed radicals they stood in the path of McCarthyism. Although the purges were unique, Ceplair and Englund argued that the fate of the Hollywood Ten represented the fate of other radical colleagues who had once belonged to the Communist Party.³³

As the Cold War ended and new archives opened their doors during the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, scholars of the McCarthy Era covered new historical territory. In *Nightmare in Red* (1990), Richard Fried explored the decline of individual freedoms during the early Cold War. He argued that the period 1949-1954 marked the nadir of civil liberties during the Cold War period. With the events of the Korean War abroad, an anti-communist consensus at home, and bitter partisan political conflict in Washington, the period was ripe for a demagogue such as Joseph McCarthy to rise to the occasion. Fried explained the McCarthy Era as a political phenomenon, which originated from the grievances and ambitions of conservative politicians and from a deeply rooted set of American values antithetical to communism.³⁴

Ellen Schrecker’s *Many Are the Crimes* (1998) further examined the political repression of the McCarthy Era. She argued that Cold War conservative politicians created a false fear of communist takeover to form an anti-communist consensus, which

³³ Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community, 1930-1960* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980), xiii-xiv.

³⁴ Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 9, 36, 118-19, 144.

greatly increased their political power. Thereafter, Schrecker explained that anti-communist leaders built government supported investigative machinery to hunt alleged subversives. As for the legacies of McCarthyism, Schrecker argued that the numerous violations of civil liberties during this period still serve as precedents in modern day government inquiries.³⁵ Five years later, Ted Morgan's *Reds* further argued that the domestic anti-communist sentiment of the late-1940s created McCarthyism and subsequent McCarthyite figures in American politics.³⁶

While Cold War scholars continue to redefine the McCarthy Era, recent scholarship on the TVA and New Deal shows great promise of new directions and re-evaluation. In 1990, Erwin Hargrove explored the organizational culture of TVA by recounting the agency's board leadership. In *Prisoners of Myth*, Hargrove found that David Lilienthal best articulated TVA's early mission and created political support for those lofty goals. But in the process of defining objectives, Hargrove argued that Lilienthal created a TVA "myth" which both protected and harmed the agency. Hargrove agreed with many of Selznick's earlier observations, but he found that the strength of TVA's myth gave agency leaders purpose and direction long after their dam projects had concluded.³⁷

³⁵ Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), xii-xviii.

³⁶ Ted Morgan, *Reds: McCarthyism in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Random House, 2003), xiv.

³⁷ Erwin C. Hargrove, *Prisoners of Myth: The Leadership of the Tennessee Valley Authority, 1933-1990*, 2d ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 5-7, 282-86.

As part of deconstructing that myth, social historians such as Nancy Grant probed the reality of the early TVA. In *TVA and Black Americans* (1990), Grant addressed great faults with TVA's racial policies. She argued that while TVA appeared as a dynamic regional agency, it sponsored few programs and opportunities for the significant black population in the Tennessee Valley. In the climate of 1990s political correctness, TVA's early policies toward African Americans further damaged the agency's reputation.³⁸

The dawn of the twenty-first century brought about new generation of historians who found great fault with the New Deal. Colin Gordon's *New Deals* (1994) examined the connections between big business and New Deal programs. Gordon argued that during the 1930s the combination of powerful business interests in politics and government led to contradictory, self-defeating, and incoherent public policies. Using the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA), the National Labor Relations Act, and the Social Security Act as examples, Gordon explained that New Deal programs were only temporary pragmatic remedies to much more complicated illnesses. Gordon argued that because of economic power, corporations and construction companies shaped New Deal policies to their advantage. Although New Deal programs appeared to be Progressive reforms, Gordon found that business interests generated and controlled the majority of the New Deal's programs and limited their potential.³⁹

Harkening back to Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s cycles of reform, Alan Brinkley's *End of Reform* (1995) focused on the long-term affects of the New Deal. Brinkley argued that

³⁸ Nancy L. Grant, *TVA and Black Americans: Planning for the Status Quo* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), xxix-xxx.

³⁹ Colin Gordon, *New Deals: Business, Labor, and Politics in America, 1920-1935* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1-4.

the Second New Deal ushered in a new era of “new liberalism” (a combination of politics and society) which concentrated less on broad needs of the nation and the economy, as it focused on increasing the rights and freedoms of individuals and social groups. Brinkley argued that the New Deal represented the end of a long period of reform, loosely tied to the Progressive Era, while serving as the beginning of a new and very different liberal era.⁴⁰

Nearly ten years after the first scholarly treatment of Arthur Morgan, in 1996 Stephen Neuse published a biography of David Lilienthal. In *David E. Lilienthal*, Neuse argued that Lilienthal exhibited all the traits of a New Dealer. Similar to Thomas McCraw and Roy Talbert, Neuse explained that Lilienthal’s careful work to establish TVA’s power policy during the 1930s overpowered Arthur Morgan’s more ambitious but less practical plans. Neuse also believed that Lilienthal’s background, political savvy, oratorical skills, and understanding of technology helped lead TVA through World War II with a clear vision for postwar America.⁴¹

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, scholars continue to reassess the legacies of TVA and the New Deal. In 2003, William Chafe’s edited *The Achievement of American Liberalism*, a collection of essays tracing the effects of the New Deal through the end of the twentieth century. Chafe defined New Deal liberalism as a potpourri of policy initiatives, many unrelated to each other and often in conflict. Harkening back to

⁴⁰ David M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), xiii-xiv, 786; Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 4, 8, 10.

⁴¹ Steven M. Neuse, *David E. Lilienthal: The Journey of an American Liberal* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996), xviii, xxi, 108.

William Leuchtenburg, Alan Brinkley's essay explained that Roosevelt's New Deal programs were designed to end the Depression, to relieve the millions in distress, and to establish policies to avoid another economic collapse. Although Roosevelt's initiatives did not achieve those three goals, Brinkley argued that the New Deal made many gains in the process. In his essay on anti-communism as a post-Depression political issue, Robert Fried declared that the New Deal made conservatives fear the erosion of traditional American values such as localism, individualism, and limited government. The concluding essay by Otis Graham argued that since the mid-1960s, New Deal liberalism became an unpopular ideology, both politically and socially.⁴²

As TVA nears its seventy-fifth anniversary, works from early TVA contemporaries continue to appear. In 2002, *Power and the Public Interest: The Memoirs of Joseph C. Swidler*, edited by A. Scott Henderson, offered new directions for TVA research. In 1933, Swidler, a young Chicago lawyer, began a twenty-four-year career with TVA. During the 1930s, Swidler worked closely with David Lilienthal to negotiate the agency's power policy, secure contracts, and develop a market for TVA's power. After World War II, Swidler became TVA's general counsel and for over a decade fought new legal battles for the agency. Unique to Swidler's memoir, and crucial for this dissertation, is the discussion of his TVA loyalty hearing. In 1951, Swidler faced charges that he had associated with communists and he was forced to appear before the review panel to refute the charges. Swidler successfully denied the accusations, but the event left him bitter about the process of proving loyalty and made him a rabid anti-

⁴² William H. Chafe, ed., *The Achievement of American Liberalism: The New Deal and its Legacies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), xii-xiv, 2, 119, 293-94.

communist. In retrospect, Swidler charged that “the motivation behind the FBI’s effort to entangle me . . . was part of an attempt to discredit liberals by labeling some of them as communists or sympathizers.” Swidler’s memoir hints at the larger investigations of communists within TVA, which have been ignored by previous scholars.⁴³

Despite recent scholarly attention on the New Deal, assessments of the early accomplishments and origins of New Deal agencies are sorely needed. Few New Deal agencies have received scholarly attention on their radical roots or ranks, especially related to later anti-communist inquiries by the federal government. Lurking within these agencies was an idealistic generation that has yet to be fully evaluated. The Tennessee Valley Authority is just one example of a New Deal agency with a radical heritage in need of post-Cold War re-examination. In light of the growing literature on the McCarthy Era, there is also a great need to connect the anti-communist government investigations of the 1950s with alleged radical New Dealers and their agencies.

The historiography of TVA contains limited discussion of the agency’s early directives, instead focusing on the successes engineered by David Lilienthal. With Lilienthal’s World War II achievements as TVA’s backbone, the agency survived the 1950s by separating itself from its pseudo-socialistic origins, politically aligning itself with influential Washingtonians and Tennessee Valley leaders, and marketing itself as an electric power company. At the same time, TVA leaders kept a distance from a small group of accused communists who had worked for the agency during the 1930s. Despite

⁴³ A. Scott Henderson, ed., *Power and the Public Interest: The Memoirs of Joseph C. Swidler* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2002), quote 82, 21, 24-25, 70-71, 77-82.

the numerous government investigations into communism and communists within the agency, TVA and McCarthy Era scholars have not explored these complex issues. Only a handful of scholars, including Gary May and Kenneth O'Reilly, acknowledge the anti-communist investigations of TVA, but their books were not focused on the agency or those particular inquiries.⁴⁴

A scholarly study of the fifteen years of anti-communist investigations of TVA, 1940-1955, is long overdue. This study will contribute to the historiography of the TVA, the New Deal, the McCarthy Era, and the Cold War. But instead of focusing on TVA's leadership, this study will examine the investigations through the experiences of fifteen entry-level TVA employees, known in this dissertation as the "Knoxville Fifteen." The lives and TVA tenures of Mabel Abercrombie, Forrest Benson, Bernard "Buck" Borah, Howard Bridgman, Katherine "Kit" Buckles, Christine Eversole, John Frantz, Howard Frazier, Henry Hart, Elizabeth Winston McConnell, David Stone Martin, William Remington, Muriel Speare, Merwin Todd, and Burton Zien are the focus of this dissertation. This bottom-up approach to TVA's early history adds greater social and cultural context to the larger issues of New Deal radicalism, anti-communism, and Cold War justice, while documenting the massive changes in American history from the 1930s to the 1950s. Further, the story of the "Knoxville Fifteen" has modern day implications for understanding the government's hunt for and observation of domestic subversives, terrorists, and even "radical" librarians.

⁴⁴ O'Reilly, *Hoover and the Un-Americans*; Gary May, *Un-American Activities: The Trials of William Remington* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Chapter 2

“We Were a Bunch of Radicals”

Through articles, speeches, and declarations, during the 1930s the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) established itself as a unique agency responsible for more than just building dams on the Tennessee River. Unlike any other New Deal agency in its mission and programs, TVA offered a new way of looking at government, labor, personnel, and most importantly social engineering and regional planning. TVA's most visible early leader, board chairman Arthur Morgan, uttered controversial public statements about the agency's role in building a new society, statements oftentimes not based on a capitalist model. On the issue of governance, in 1934 he declared that “ideal government would not be pure communism, pure democracy, pure aristocracy, or pure dictatorship, but an ever-varying synthesis of all these and other types.” For TVA's role in re-structuring society, Morgan later stated that “it [TVA] won't be capitalism; it won't be socialism; it won't be individualism; it won't be any of those *isms* that have become little more than labels or battle slogans. It will be none of those things, yet some of all of them. It will be a new Americanism.” Uttering his own brand of Progressive Era social uplift and the thoughts of the time, Arthur Morgan's rhetoric attracted national attention.¹

In addition to controlling the waters of the Tennessee River and its tributaries through dams and internal improvements, Congress charged TVA with revitalizing the

Title quoted from author's telephone interview with Mabel Abercrombie Mansfield, Eureka, California, 3 January 2002.

¹ First quote, Arthur Morgan, *Observations*, compiler, Vivian H Bresnehen (Yellow Springs, OH: The Antioch Press, 1968), 91; second quote, North Callahan, *TVA: Bridge Over Troubled Waters* (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1980), 60.

economic and social character of the region. With approximately 2.4 million people living in the Tennessee Valley region, TVA faced enormous challenges. The agency's first board of directors, Arthur Morgan, David Lilienthal, and Harcourt Morgan, disagreed on how to best preserve the existing culture while modernizing the valley. Electric power production and widespread usage eventually eclipsed other revitalizing programs such as the conservation of natural resources and encouraging small pre-existing industries. But during the first several years of TVA, board members were unsure how to best eliminate poverty and promote modernity while controlling flooding throughout the region. Although David Lilienthal emerged from the decade as the dominant leader of the TVA, it was during this "golden age" of development that TVA's first chairman Arthur Morgan made enormous contributions and attracted a wide range of talent to the Tennessee Valley. These later self-described "Morgan Men" left a lasting impression on the agency, long after the first chairman's departure.²

In mid-1933, TVA filled its ranks with a host of employees. After the first meeting of the TVA board in June, David Lilienthal and Harcourt Morgan spent the following six weeks fulfilling prior engagements. During their part-time service, Arthur Morgan built a fledgling workforce from a host of former associates, academics, and proven international experts. Based on his work at Antioch College and as president of his own engineering firm, Morgan evaluated candidates on their professional abilities, direction in life, and especially moral character. Morgan valued ethical fitness, thrifty

² Aaron D. Purcell, "Power to the People: David Lilienthal Finds TVA's Electric Power Policy, 1933," *The Journal of East Tennessee History* 70 (1998): 91; Roy Talbert, Jr. *FDR's Utopian: Arthur Morgan of the TVA* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 1987), 106-7.

economic habits, and a commitment to public service. In most cases, he was more concerned with a person's character than technical qualifications.

In the summer of 1933 thousands of applications for white-collar employment flooded TVA's Knoxville office. Competition for several hundred new jobs grew fierce, even for the entry-level positions. The opportunity to just work in TVA's mailroom attracted a host of intellectuals and free-thinkers to TVA. Overqualified applicants hoped to move up TVA's ranks while the agency rebuilt the region. The promise of TVA inspired a host of young intellectuals from across the country, encouraging them to leave their Southern, Northeastern, Western, and Midwestern lives. Fresh out of college, familiar with the words of Norman Thomas and Earl Browder, and eager to test the limits of the New Deal, in the mid-1930s a large number of young radicals descended on Knoxville to work for TVA.

Fifteen particular individuals secured entry-level positions with TVA during the mid-1930s. Between 1935 and 1937, Mabel Abercrombie, Forrest Benson, Buck Borah, Howard Bridgman, Kit Buckles, Christine Eversole, John Frantz, Howard Frazier, Henry Hart, Elizabeth Winston McConnell, David Stone Martin, William Remington, Muriel Speare, Pat Todd, and Burton Zien arrived in Knoxville to work for TVA. All fifteen were younger than 35 years of age, had some level of college or professional education, and were active in labor organizing. This chapter chronicles the pre-TVA years of the "Knoxville Fifteen." For each individual, it discusses their coming to Knoxville, the ideological baggage they brought with them, their motivations, and concludes with their first day of work for TVA. This chapter argues that the collective origins, work

experience, education, and ideological influences of each individual formed the motivational basis for the later radical activities of the “Knoxville Fifteen.”

During the 1930s, many college campuses served as centers of radical discourse. The Depression threatened the capitalist “old order” like never before and many young thinkers wondered if and when a revolution might occur. Groups like the Young Communist League, the American Student Union, and the American Youth Congress attracted students by the thousands. New Deal reforms brought some relief to certain people and areas, but throughout the decade the Depression worsened. This dire situation and the intellectual ferment on college campuses led many young students and their professors to consider socialism or communism as better alternatives to capitalism. Influential books such as John Strachey’s *The Coming Struggle for Power*, the collected works of Lenin, pamphlets on the teaching of Karl Marx, and periodicals such as the *New Masses* and *The Daily Worker* were readily available at college libraries and bookstores. Budding communists and socialists met on college campuses to discuss the politics of the New Deal, distribute pamphlets, and debate plans for a post-capitalist society.³

By the mid-1930s, the Socialist Party, led by Norman Thomas, and the Communist Party, led by Earl Browder, had made great progress in recruiting for their parties and informing Americans of alternative political systems. Young Americans, especially those in college campus groups already denouncing fascism, proved to be a

³ Robin D.G. Kelley interview with Laurent Frantz, 7 February 1987, Robin D.G. Kelley interview with Marge Frantz, 6 February 1987, all in Oral History Collection #40, Tamiment Institute Archives, Bobst Library, New York University, New York [hereinafter Tamiment, NYU]; John Strachey’s *The Coming Struggle for Power* (New York: The Modern Library, 1935); Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds., *Red Diapers: Growing up in the Communist Left* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 47.

fertile ground for building the ranks of both parties. Leaders of the Communist Party, who attracted professionals and white-collar workers to the fold, found soon-to-be professionals still in college very interested in what their party offered. The young members of the two parties discussed important issues such as New Deal reform, the role of African Americans in society, expanded rights for laborers, and the rise of fascism in Europe.⁴

Although the two parties agreed that capitalism had failed and should be replaced with a social system in which the producers control political power, Thomas and Browder took their parties in different directions. As a socialist, Thomas believed that a slow democratic revolution led by cooperation between the bourgeois and the proletariat would yield a new social system where social ownership and operation replaced private ownership and the individual means of production. The Socialist Party sought to achieve their goals by rejecting capitalism, violence, allegiance to the Soviet Union, dictatorships, and the reform compromises of the New Deal. On the other hand, by the mid-1930s Browder steered the Communist Party more towards cooperation with the Soviet Union, support for Roosevelt's New Deal, and the concept that a sudden political upheaval followed by a dictatorship was necessary to lead the world to a true socialist state. Browder stressed that the Communist Party represented a united front, which would

⁴ Wolf Michal, "Youth Marches Toward Socialism" (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1936), 15-25, 46-47; Earl Browder, "Democracy or Fascism," (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1936), 28-30; Norman Thomas, *A Socialist Looks at the New Deal* (New York: League for Industrial Democracy, 1933), 7; William Z. Foster, "The Communist Party and the Professionals," *The Communist* 17 (September 1938): 805-10; Edward Magnus, "Professionals in a Soviet America" (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1935), 3-10.

eradicate fascism and war, direct and secure victory of a mass political movement, and help prepare the nation for the transition from capitalism to socialism.⁵

Communists and socialists recognized the great potential of TVA. Leaders of the two parties called the agency an important experiment in social control with great possibilities for regional planning. Norman Thomas announced that TVA was perhaps the most socialistic of the New Deal programs, and its unique planning components fit well with the objectives of the Socialist Party. Still, leaders of both parties warned that the capitalist focus of the New Deal made TVA's future uncertain.⁶

Elections and membership numbers during the 1930s reveal that by the end of the decade, the Communist Party had grown to a much greater political force than the Socialist Party. The Communist Party proved to be the more adaptable and better organized political party. In 1933, CP leaders called the New Deal "industrial slavery" and "bourgeois policy," but by 1936 Earl Browder urged members to support Roosevelt's re-election.⁷ Browder found great success in building a southern coalition of Communist Party members. Issues such as labor reform in textile mills and the economic role of

⁵ "Which Road for American Workers, Socialist or Communist? Norman Thomas vs. Earl Browder," (New York: Socialist Call, 1936), 6-10, 20-21, 31, 36-41; A. Levine, "From Reformism to Degeneracy," *Industrial Unionist* 6 (August-September 1937): 9-10.

⁶ Benjamin Stolberg and Warren Jay Vinton, *The Economic Consequences of the New Deal* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935), 77-80; Francis Franklin, "Problems of the Democratic Front in the South," *The Communist* 17 (September 1938): 823; Thomas, *A Socialist Looks at the New Deal*, 7.

⁷ I. Amter, "Industrial Slavery—Roosevelt's 'New Deal'" (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1933), 2; Earl Browder, "What is the New Deal?" (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1933), 2; idem, "The Results of the Elections and the People's Front" (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1936), 26-33.

African Americans appealed to many young educated white southerners.⁸ By addressing these and other labor initiatives and by supporting the New Deal programs, where many possible members worked, Browder developed a complex network of CP officers and recruiters. By softening the CP's connection to the Soviet Union, Browder made communists appear less "radical" and more "progressive."

Within this intellectual climate and national crisis, the University of Tennessee produced several young radicals who brought their talents to the Tennessee Valley Authority. The first of the "Knoxville Fifteen" to enter the TVA work force was John Marshall Frantz. Born October 9, 1916 in Knoxville, he grew up surrounded by intellectuals. His father, Dr. Frank F. Frantz, worked as a Professor of Romance Languages at the University of Tennessee. His mother, Evaline Frantz, participated in local organizations, such as the Knoxville Peace Council, the League of Women Voters, the American Association of University Women, and groups supporting better race relations. A family friend later recalled that Frantz's uncle "imbued him with Marxist theories" so much that Frantz could quote Karl Marx and communist slogans in discussions. His older brother Laurent also took an interest in such doctrines and later became secretary of the Communist Party in Alabama. A precocious student, John Frantz accelerated through Knoxville High School, graduating in 1931 at age 15. A

⁸ See, John J. Ballam, "Southern Textile Workers Organize," *The Communist* 16 (November 1937): 1023-36; Francis Franklin, "For a Free, Happy and Prosperous South," *The Communist* 17 (January 1938): 62-74; Theodore Bassett, "The 'White' South and the People's Front," *The Communist* 17 (April 1938): 369-80; James W. Ford and James S. Allen, "The Negroes in a Soviet America" (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1935); and Tom Johnson, "The Reds in Dixie: Who Are the Communists and What Do They Fight For in the South?" (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1935).

classmate later described Frantz as a “champion of the underdog,” who sympathized with emerging social philosophies.⁹

In September 1931, Frantz enrolled at the University of Tennessee to study French, political science, and public administration. On campus he participated in student activities, especially those of a radical nature. Frantz joined an unrecognized campus organization known as the Student League for Industrial Democracy, which later became the American Student Union. An informant later explained that University officials regarded the group as “campus pinks” who led “pseudo-liberal” movements aimed at altering the status quo. This group sponsored a National Students’ Peace Strike on Armistice Day 1934, which was a one-day demonstration against war, the military, and ROTC training. In class, Frantz enjoyed arguing with students and professors. An informant later reported that Frantz disregarded school rules, largely because his father worked for the University. He did belong to a fraternity but, according to one member, the group expelled Frantz because of his communist activities. But other associates were more sympathetic, one later saying that while in college Frantz showed an “intellectual interest in different political beliefs.”¹⁰

⁹ FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 17 June 1948, John Frantz FBI file #121-7423-23; FBI Charlotte to FBI Washington, 13 December 1954, Frantz FBI file #121-7423-16; FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 12 November 1954, Frantz FBI file #121-7423-50.

¹⁰ FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 17 June 1948, Frantz FBI file #121-7423-23; FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 16 November 1954, Frantz FBI file #121-7423-49; FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 12 November 1954, Frantz FBI file #121-7423-50; J.F. Edwards, “Appeal of John M. Frantz,” 3 February 1945, folder 1, FBI Richmond, Virginia to FBI Washington, 5 January 1955, folder 4, box 627, all in John Frantz, Oversize Personnel Security Investigation Case Files, 1928-1982, Civil Service Commission and Office of Federal Investigations, Records of the Office of Personnel Management, Record Group 478, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland [hereinafter Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park].

After three years of college, in June 1934 Frantz searched for other opportunities. He would later return to the university to take courses, but never received a degree because he could not pass a mandatory physical education course. Interested in political organizing, Frantz considered TVA an important instrument of change. His brother Laurent later recalled that in 1934 “people were buzzing in to see TVA from all over the world.” That summer, younger brother John applied for a position with the agency. Within a few weeks of application, TVA offered him a temporary position as a messenger. A week before his 18th birthday, on October 2, 1934, John Frantz began work for TVA as a junior messenger in the Legal Department.¹¹

Just a few days later, Mabel Abercrombie arrived in Knoxville. Born on August 21, 1912, she grew up in Breman, Georgia, a small town thirty miles west of Atlanta. In 1930, she finished high school and moved to Atlanta. For the next four years, Abercrombie worked as a secretary at the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in downtown Atlanta and attended night courses at the University of Georgia’s Evening School of Commerce.¹²

But Abercrombie was more than just a young woman living and learning in a southern city. She took great interest in alternative forms of government. Historian Gary

¹¹ Quote from Kelley interview with Laurent Frantz, 7 February 1987, Tamiment, NYU; FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 16 November 1954, Frantz FBI file #121-7423-49.

¹² Congress, House, *Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States, Executive Hearings* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1941), 2:1012, 1014; Author’s interview, Mabel Abercrombie Mansfield, Eureka, California, 23 August 2003; “Hearing Before the Un-American Activities Committee,” May 12, 1950, folder: Mabel Mansfield, box 11, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), Executive Session Transcripts and Investigative Name Files, Records of the United States House of Representatives, Record Group 233, Legislative Archives Center, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C. [hereinafter HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA].

May referred to her as a Russophile, who kept scrapbooks filled with news clippings about the Soviet Union. She liked to play and dance to Russian folk songs. Later, she allegedly said to her TVA associates that she “had just as soon salute a dishrag as the American flag.” Abercrombie did not want to overthrow the government, but only to change it for the better. She pledged to help her fellow man by promoting what she called “progressive ideas” for workers.¹³

Abercrombie also had an interest in the conservation of natural resources and preserving the wilderness. An avid outdoorswoman, she belonged to the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club and participated in numerous hiking trips. In early 1934, she joined members of the Smoky Mountain Hiking Club for a trip to the popular Chimneys trail. She met several TVA workers on this outing and became good friends with Benton MacKaye. A Harvard graduate, MacKaye had formulated the idea for the Appalachian Trail during the 1920s, and during the 1930s attracted the attention of TVA social planners. MacKaye wrote a friend about the ignored region saying, “the more I hear about your Tennessee country the more I’m drawn to it.” In April 1934, MacKaye accepted a job with TVA as a Regional Planner. MacKaye encouraged Abercrombie to apply for a job with TVA and helped convince TVA officials of her qualifications. MacKaye stated that Abercrombie had excellent secretarial skills and knew what

¹³ Gary May, *Un-American Activities: The Trials of William Remington* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 27; FBI Summary Report, 27 August 1951, William Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 477-78, 545.

“WILDERNESS really means.” He nicknamed her “child” because of her age and young looks, a name which remained throughout her TVA years.¹⁴

For Abercrombie, TVA represented a different approach for the South in terms of regional planning and education. That fall, with the help of MacKaye, she secured a job with TVA as an under-clerk-typist in the Forestry Division. She arrived in Knoxville on October 6, 1934, and found a roommate at the Maplewood Apartments. TVA paid her twice what she was earning in Atlanta and opened up an array of social opportunities. Her hiking associates and the Great Smoky Mountains were nearby and she quickly found other like-minded TVA employees. Long before the other members of the group arrived in Knoxville, Abercrombie began labor organizing. She promoted the five-day work week and paid vacations for all employees, especially for textile mill workers.¹⁵

Bernard “Buck” Borah, another southerner, arrived in Knoxville in early 1935. Born in Vicksburg, Mississippi on May 10, 1912, his Jewish family moved to Harriman, Tennessee, about 35 miles west of Knoxville, where his father worked as a merchant. Borah attended high school in Harriman and after graduation in 1928 he enrolled at Vanderbilt University in Nashville. Because of a lack of funds, he did not return for his sophomore year, and instead in the fall of 1929 he moved to Brooklyn to live with his

¹⁴ Benton MacKaye to Edward Richards, 22 August 1934, Benton MacKaye to Mabel Abercrombie, 22 August 1934, Benton MacKaye to Mabel Abercrombie, 25 August 1934, Benton MacKaye to Mabel Abercrombie, 21 August 1934, all in folder 20, box 167, Benton MacKaye Papers, Rauner Special Collections, Dartmouth College Library, Dartmouth, Massachusetts [hereinafter MacKaye Papers, Dartmouth]; Benton MacKaye to Paul Fink, 24 March 1933, Paul M. Fink Papers, Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection, Knox County Public Library System, Knoxville, Tennessee [hereinafter Fink Papers, McClung]; Edward Richards to Dr. Reeves, Mr. Sturdevant, and A.E. Morgan, 21 November 1933, F.W. Reeves to Benton MacKaye, 3 April 1934, “Work Record of Benton MacKaye, 1905-1943” all in Benton MacKaye file, Employee Records, Tennessee Valley Authority [hereinafter TVA Employee Records]; Author’s telephone interview with Mabel Abercrombie Mansfield, 4 January 2002.

¹⁵ Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 475, 479.

aunt and uncle. He searched for work for several months and in November found a job as a file clerk in the sound division of Paramount Theaters. He took three courses at the College of the City of New York that fall, but did not complete them. During the following year, he worked in New York City and absorbed the intellectual environment of Greenwich Village. Paramount Theaters cut Borah's position in September 1930, but during his brief tenure he had saved enough money to return to school.¹⁶

In the fall of 1930, Borah resumed his studies as a sophomore at the University of Tennessee. He participated in a number of student activities, including writing for the campus newspaper, the *Orange and White*, and joining drama and literary clubs. He focused his studies on poetry and philosophy. After a year working for his father, Borah returned for his junior year in 1932. Borah served as chairman of the chapter of the Student League for Industrial Democracy, the same group supported by John Frantz. With his funds again depleted, in fall 1933 Borah returned to New York City.¹⁷

Borah's second stint in New York proved to be more influential than the first, for he emerged as a labor leader and confirmed socialist. This time, he found a job at the Spiral Binding Company making notebooks. He worked a 60 hour week and received \$10 each week for his labor. Borah led the other workers to form a protest group to demand better pay and better hours. The group had no union affiliation, but they organized a successful sit-down strike. The company agreed to comply with the worker's

¹⁶ Bernard Borah, "Application for TVA Employment," [2?] December 1934, in folder: Bernard Borah, box 7, HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA; [Name redacted] to Officer in Charge, 9 February 1943, 43-44, Director of Intelligence Report on Bernard Borah, 22 January 1943, 60, all in Bernard Borah, Department of the Army File.

¹⁷ [Name redacted] to Officer in Charge, 9 February 1943, 44-45, Borah Army File.

demands, but only if Borah resigned. He accepted the agreement and obtained a position teaching English to Dr. Arnold Brecht, a German refugee who was Professor of Political Science at the New School for Social Research. In addition to his labor work, Borah became more involved in the intellectual activities of Greenwich Village, associating with actors, intellectuals, and communists.¹⁸

Borah returned for his senior year at the University of Tennessee in the fall of 1934. He increased his involvement in literary and political clubs, but he continued to focus on labor organizing. His reputation as a labor leader in New York had spread to Knoxville and he quickly rebuilt the campus chapter of the League for Industrial Democracy. As chairman of the chapter, he offered to set up picket lines and distribute literature for unions in Knoxville. F.M. Massey, the Dean of Men, ordered Borah to withdraw the offer because of pressure from the State Legislative Education Committee. Borah argued that the matter was political and did not interfere with the Committee's activities. Massey backed away from the situation and later wrote recommendation letters for Borah. The next year, Borah completed his bachelor's degree at the University of Tennessee with a major in philosophy and psychology.¹⁹

In late December 1934, Borah applied for a position at TVA in labor relations or research. The next month, TVA hired Borah as an assistant statistical clerk in the Social and Economic Division. At that time, he was active in labor organizing, the Socialist

¹⁸ [Name redacted] to Officer in Charge, 9 February 1943, 45, Borah Army File; Borah, "Application for TVA Employment," [2?] December 1934, in folder: Bernard Borah, box 7, HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA.

¹⁹ [Name redacted] to Officer in Charge, February 1943, 45, [Name redacted] to Officer in Charge, 24 October 1942, 3, all in Borah Army File.

Party, and anti-war protesting. Although Borah had quite a colorful background even for the agency, an acquaintance of the Borah family later stated that “TVA was considered at that time to be radical.” The 23-year-old started work for TVA on January 25, 1935.²⁰

In the spring of 1935, Merwin “Pat” Todd arrived in Knoxville. Born on May 22, 1911, in New York City, Todd had an upper-middle-class upbringing. His father was a Wall Street banker and the family lived in Greenwich, Connecticut. Todd went to boarding school at St. Mark’s School at Santboro, Massachusetts, graduating in 1930. Interested in a different approach to higher education, Todd attended the Experimental College of Wisconsin in Madison from 1930-1932. Affiliated with the University of Wisconsin, the school taught diverse courses using the tutorial method. At Wisconsin, Todd studied sociology and psychology, and sharpened his writing and research skills. He did not complete his bachelor’s degree, instead enrolling for a year at the Sorbonne in Paris studying sociology and political economy. Todd returned to the United States in the summer of 1933, taking a bank clerk job that his father arranged at a branch of the Corn Exchange Bank in New York City. He resigned the position in October 1933, citing that he disliked banking, and returned to Greenwich to regroup.²¹

²⁰ “Application for TVA Employment,” [2?] December 1934, in folder: Bernard Borah, box 7, HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA; [Name redacted] to Officer in Charge, 8 June 1943, 207, [Name redacted] to Officer in Charge, 10 May 1943, 170, quote from [Name redacted] to Officer in Charge, 25 March 1943, 149, all in Borah Army File.

²¹ Merwin Todd “Application for TVA Employment,” 2 May 1936, Open Information Sheet for Merwin Todd, 18 July 1935, J. McWilliams to C.L. Richey, 9 May 1935, John Howell to Mr. Bowen, 5 May 1935, Alexander Meiklejohn to Judson Todd, 22 June 1932, Merwin Todd, “TVA Acceptance and Personal History Statement,” ca. May 1935, all in Merwin Todd file, TVA Employee Records; Allan G. Bogue and Robert Taylor, eds., *The University of Wisconsin: One Hundred and Twenty-Five Years* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), 40; FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 19 January 1942, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-3.

Hungry for practical experience and a job, in January 1934 Todd enrolled in a six-month airplane and engine mechanic training program at the Roosevelt Aviation School in Mineola, New York. At the Long Island school, Todd studied the technical and manual components of airplane theory, engine maintenance, and general repair. The experience landed him a job as a magnet repairman at the Lester Scintella Magnet Company in Sidney, a small town in upstate New York. For the next eight months he repaired and assembled magnets, while reading everything he could about psychology, psycho-analysis, cooperatives, and the New Deal. In the spring of 1935, with his “resources running low,” Todd applied for a research position in TVA.²²

Todd was quite enthusiastic about TVA. In his personal statement, Todd likened TVA to the Wisconsin Experimental College. He found both to be radical departures from the norm, but designed to meet the needs of individuals and groups. Todd declared that his sociological research into community life and his practical skills would help him “fit into the scheme of TVA’s objectives.” The founder of the Experimental College of Wisconsin, Alexander Meiklejohn,²³ recommended Todd, saying that he was an unusually socially minded individual with a distinctive outlook. But Meiklejohn warned that Todd was “loaded with nervous energy” and needed a tough research project, instead of routine work, to keep him contented. In early May, TVA offered Todd a temporary position as a messenger in the Communications and Reproduction unit. The 24-year-old

²² Hugh S. Copeland to C.L. Richey, ca. May 1935, Howell to Bowen, 5 May 1935, Todd, “TVA Acceptance and Statement,” ca. May 1935, all in Todd file, TVA Employee Records; FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 19 January 1942, Todd FBI file #100-36774-3.

²³ Alexander Meiklejohn, 1872-1964, wrote and taught on issues of free speech and later founded the American Civil Liberties Union. *Contemporary Authors Online*, Gale, 2000.

quickly relocated to the YMCA in downtown Knoxville and began working for TVA on May 8, 1935.²⁴

Later that fall, Howard Frazier began work for TVA. Born on November 20, 1911 in Etowah, Tennessee, about fifty miles southwest of Knoxville, he attended Etowah High School and worked each summer as a machine helper and laborer for the L & N Railroad. He graduated in 1930 and enrolled at the University of Tennessee. A champion of the downtrodden, he often spoke to young boys and students about religion and morals. In early 1931, he briefly served as a reporter for the *Orange and White*, but Frazier's main interest revolved around ending racial discrimination in the Jim Crow South. In March 1933, he participated in organizing an inter-racial conference in Morristown composed of students from Maryville College, Knoxville College, Tusculum College, Morristown College, and the University of Tennessee. The topic of the conference was changing southern politics, education, race relations, and industry. The next year, as a senior, Frazier served as president of an inter-racial forum and attempted, unsuccessfully, to develop inter-racial programs on the all-white campus. During that year he was an active member of the campus YMCA. While representing his chapter at the 1934 regional YMCA conference, Frazier met Henry Hart, a later TVA co-worker. To pay for tuition, he worked during the summers at the nearby Pleasant Hill Community Church near Crossville, and as a salesman for the Fuller Brush Company located in the

²⁴ Todd, "TVA Acceptance and Statement," ca. May 1935, Alexander Meiklejohn, "TVA Rating Scale for Merwin Todd," 1 May 1935, C.L. Richey to Merwin Todd, 8 May 1935, all in Todd file, TVA Employee Records; FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 19 January 1942, Todd FBI file #100-36774-3.

New Sprinkle Building in downtown Knoxville. In June 1934, he graduated from the University of Tennessee with a bachelor's degree in Sociology and English.²⁵

Unsure what to do with his degree, in September 1934 Frazier accepted a teaching job at the Clinton City School in nearby Anderson County, but resigned after a year. In July 1935, he secured a position with the S.H. Kress department store in Knoxville. But TVA intrigued Frazier, especially the aspects of rebuilding the economy and infrastructure of the Tennessee Valley. The next month, he applied for a position and TVA offered him a temporary appointment. The 24-year-old reported for work as a messenger in TVA's General Office Division on October 22, 1935.²⁶

Burton Zien arrived in Knoxville near the end of 1935. Born November 2, 1912 in Milwaukee, his father was a plumbing contractor originally from Pittsburgh and his Jewish mother hailed from Lithuania. He attended grammar school and Washington High School in Milwaukee. His high school yearbook best described his personality, stating that "for sake of argument he'd lose his dinner." Zien worked during the summers as a clerk and manager of a small fruit store in Minocqua, Wisconsin, and sold newspapers in Milwaukee during the school year. He graduated from high school in February 1929, and that fall entered the University of Wisconsin's Milwaukee branch,

²⁵ Howard T. Frazier, "Security Investigation Data for Sensitive Position," 7 July 1965, Howard Frazier FBI file #161-3997-1; FBI St. Louis to FBI Washington, 26 July 1965, Frazier FBI file #161-3997-17; J. Edgar Hoover to Special Assistant to the President, 5 August 1965, Frazier FBI file #161-3997-30; FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 18 June 1948, Frazier FBI file #121-10515-3; *Orange and White*, January-February 1931; Howard Frazier to Jim Dombrowski, [16?] March 1933, folder 31, box 12, Highlander Research and Education Center Collection, 1917-1999, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin [hereinafter, Highlander Collection, Wisconsin].

²⁶ J. Edgar Hoover to Special Assistant to the President, 5 August 1965, Frazier FBI file #161-3997-30; FBI, St. Louis to FBI Washington, 26 July 1965, Frazier FBI file #161-3997-17; C.L. Richey to Employee Management Section, 23 October 1935, Howard Frazier file, TVA Employee Records.

with the intention of studying patent law. In 1932, he transferred to the Madison campus and focused his studies on mechanical engineering. On campus, he served as vice-president of the student chapter of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers and was an associate editor of the *Wisconsin Engineer*.²⁷

While in college, Zien became interested in labor organization. He worked at a variety of low-paying and low-skilled jobs on the Madison campus, including selling fireworks and bussing tables. These experiences led Zien to demand improved worker conditions and benefits. During his last semester, Zien joined the campus League for Industrial Democracy chapter. Through education and organization, he hoped eventually to lead the oppressed masses to a better standard of living. Some of his classmates considered Zien a “black sheep” and one later stated that Wisconsin was too small for him and he “needed to correct the evils of the world.”²⁸

During his senior year, Zien discovered that his engineering training could be used to solve social problems. On October 1, 1934, TVA board chairman and water control engineer Arthur Morgan visited the University of Wisconsin to address the engineering students. He explained that past abuses of private power companies must be replaced by regulated government control of electric power. Morgan spoke broadly of TVA’s mission, calling for a replacement of the old rugged individualism in Tennessee with a planned social program. Morgan believed that socially irresponsible engineers,

²⁷ FBI Milwaukee to FBI Washington, 12 June 1948, Burton Zien FBI file #121-9839-22.X1; FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 11 June 1948, Zien file #121-9839-37.

²⁸ “United States Civil Service Investigation of Burton J. Zien,” 8 April 1941, folder 3, box 2097, “Official Report of Proceedings Before the National Labor Relations Board, Loyalty Board, for Burton J. Zien,” 18 May 1949, vol. 2:302, folder 2, box 2097, all in Burton Zien, Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park; FBI Milwaukee to FBI Washington, 12 June 1948, Zien FBI file #121-9839-22.X1.

ones who would leave after extracting natural resources, were to blame for the lack of opportunity in Tennessee. He urged the engineering students to consider the social significance of their work, proclaiming that they would find greater satisfaction in raising the national standard of living through their efforts, instead of simply conducting their work to secure great profits. Morgan closed by encouraging graduating engineers to apply for positions with TVA.²⁹

The discussion moved Zien so much that the following month he wrote to Morgan, saying: "Are we [engineers] destined to remain abstract, material specialists . . . or are there human cords [*sic*] than can be plucked to vibrate the real song of humanity . . . ?" Zien declared that TVA was just such a project, which moved engineers out of the classroom and into the real world. Zien also appealed to his fellow students, asking for a re-organization of the engineering curriculum to include a course called "The Engineer and Society." He believed that a socially focused program of study would find the right kind of individuals, who would then decide whether engineers were "merely machines or men."³⁰

In 1935, Zien hoped to find employment with TVA. He became an ardent supporter of the New Deal and Roosevelt's social legislation. Zien graduated in June 1935 with a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering and took a summer job at the

²⁹ "An Engineer with a Social Vision," *The Wisconsin Engineer*, 39 (October 1934): 9; Burton Zien, "Statement to the FBI," 2 June 1950, 5, in folder: Burton Zien, box 52, HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA.

³⁰ Burton Zien to Arthur Morgan, 28 November 1934, reel 797, Central File Microfilm, 1933-1940s, TVA Technical Library, Knoxville, Tennessee [hereinafter TVA Central File Microfilm]; Burton Zien, "Where is Our Four Year Engineering College Curricula Taking Us?" *The Wisconsin Engineer*, 39 (January 1935): 64-65.

Deer Lodge in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. In September, he wrote to the TVA personnel office requesting employment. Zien explained that he was more interested in the social philosophy of TVA than the salary, and that his college courses had prepared him for the “modification and readjustment of the present social and industrial economy.” Although TVA had no open jobs for Zien, the next month he hitchhiked to Knoxville and met with TVA personnel officer Arthur Jandrey. Zien emphasized that although he was a trained mechanical engineer, he wanted work in an administrative position. Unable to offer immediate employment, Jandrey informed Zien that he should stay in Knoxville until a position opened. Zien found work as a waiter and dishwasher at the Southern Grill on Main Street and secured a room at a nearby boarding house on Henley Street. Within a few weeks, Arthur Jandrey had lunch at the Southern Grill and again met Zien. At the accidental encounter Jandrey recognized Zien and told him that a job with TVA had just opened. Shortly thereafter, TVA officially offered Zien a position as a messenger in the legal department with a promise that he would be enrolled in a career training program. Zien began work on November 1, 1935, the day before his 23rd birthday.³¹

Over half of the “Knoxville Fifteen” started work with TVA during 1936, the first being Howard Bridgman. Born in Brookline, Massachusetts on August 25, 1911, he grew up in central Massachusetts near the town of Fitchburg. A family of intellectuals and conservationists, the Bridgmans became close friends with the MacKaye family in

³¹ FBI Louisville to FBI Washington, 3 June 1948, Zien FBI file #121-9839-20; FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 11 June 1948, Zien file #121-9839-37; FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 17 July 1941, FBI file #100-10189-15; “United States Civil Service Investigation of Burton J. Zien,” 8 April 1941, folder 3, box 2097, Burton Zien, Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park; Burton Zien, “Statement to the FBI,” 2 June 1950, 5, in folder: Burton Zien, box 52, HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA.

nearby Shirley Center, Massachusetts. Bridgman became especially enamored of Benton MacKaye, who later founded the Appalachian Trail and also worked for TVA. Bridgman attended Fitchburg High School and graduated from Deerfield Academy in 1929. He enrolled in Amherst College, majored in history, and joined a number of campus organizations. He joined the Liberal Club, the Masquers drama society, the International Relations Club, and the Outing Club. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1933.³²

Bridgman had an interest in the Workers' Education movement. Sponsored by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), the program educated thousands of workers in a variety of occupations. During the early 1930s, Workers' Education programs spread across the South to train industrial workers. TVA's training programs and educational opportunities attracted Bridgman to the agency, and in August 1933 he applied for a position. Initially, he did not secure a job with TVA, and the following spring, Bridgman found employment as a southern field representative for the Affiliated Schools for Workers of New York. He traveled to North Carolina to develop Workers' Education programs in the textile producing regions of the state. Bridgman suffered some culture shock in North Carolina, defining the South as the "land of evangelism" with extraordinarily bad politicians who encouraged their followers to "vote dry as long as they can stagger to the polls." Within a few months, FERA offered Bridgman a position as supervisor of Workers' Education for North Carolina. He accepted, and spent the next two years living in Charlotte and working for FERA. Bridgman organized

³² *The Standard Times* [New Bedford, Massachusetts], 10 July 1996; Congress, House, *Un-American Activities, Executive Hearings*, 1:1754; Benton MacKaye to Harvey Broome, 24 March 1937, folder: MacKaye, Benton, 1937, Harvey Broome Papers, McClung [hereinafter Broome Papers, McClung]; Peter Nelson at the Amherst College Archives and Special Collections to the author, 5 October 2004, e-mail in author's possession.

classes for textile and hosiery workers in a number of locations. The courses focused on labor history, unionism, and teacher education.³³

Bridgman worked with organizers and New Deal agencies to promote Workers' Education across the South. He contacted Myles Horton at the Highlander Folk School in Monteagle, Tennessee to share information on his program. Bridgman's courses resembled those offered at Highlander; both used non-traditional methods of dramatics and role-playing to encourage union awareness. He also supported the establishment of Socialist local unions and taught workers about the pitfalls of the New Deal. Bridgman became part of the growing network of southern Workers' Education programs during 1934. That summer, sessions included the Southern Workers' Education Conference at Highlander, the Labor Education Institute in Knoxville, the Southern Summer School for Women Workers in Weaverville, North Carolina, and the State Adult Education Conference in Chapel Hill and Weaverville. During his North Carolina stint Bridgman met local Communist Party organizer and later Knoxville associate Kenneth McConnell.³⁴

³³ Congress, House, *Un-American Activities, Executive Hearings*, 1:1754; Chief, Identification and Detection Division to Director, Inspection-Investigation Service, 22 March 1950, folder: Bernard Borah, box 7, HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA; Howard Bridgman, "Affiliated Schools for Workers Report on North Carolina Workers' Education Project, April 1 to May 5 [1934]," quotes 8, 1-8, folder 12, box 77, Highlander Collection, Wisconsin; Howard A. Bridgman, *Diary, 1936*, MS 2698, Special Collections Library, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee, 1-3.

³⁴ Howard Bridgman to Myles Horton, 5 June 1934, Howard Bridgman, "Affiliated Schools Report," 1934, 7-8, "Program of Labor Education Institute, Knoxville Central Labor Union," 27-28 July 1934, "Southern Workers Education Conference, Highlander Folk School" 26-29 July 1934, Howard Bridgman to Myles Horton, 3 August 1934, all in folder 12, box 77, Highlander Collection, Wisconsin; "Howard Bridgman Testimony," in *United States vs. William Walter Remington*, Cr. 132-344, Transcripts of Record, 1950-1953, 700-1, 939, Records of the United States Courts of Appeals, Record Group 276, National Archives and Records Administration—Northeast Region (New York City) [hereinafter *Remington Trial*, RG 276, NARA Northeast].

Bridgman accomplished a great deal in North Carolina, but by late 1935 he looked for greater opportunities in Tennessee. Through Workers' Education activities and hiking trips, he became familiar with several TVA employees. Benton MacKaye encouraged him to re-apply for a TVA position, and Bridgman submitted another application at the end of the year. TVA offered him a position as a messenger, and after resigning from his FERA position Bridgman accepted the offer. More than just an opportunity to network with other like-minded organizers and educators, Bridgman saw TVA as an important national experiment in social, economic, and natural resources development. In early 1936, he moved into an apartment at 1101 Highland Avenue and on January 27, 1936, the 25-year-old began his work as a TVA messenger.³⁵

A month after Bridgman's arrival, Katherine "Kit" Buckles began working for TVA. Born in Coffeyville, Kansas on February 13, 1907 she spent her childhood in Boulder, Colorado. Her father, W.G. Buckles, worked as a supervisor in a brick manufacturing plant in Boulder and later in Parco, Wyoming. She attended state preparatory school in Boulder and enrolled at the University of Colorado in 1925. Active in a sorority, she also took an interest in writing. During her senior year, Buckles edited the campus literary journal *The Window*. In that position she worked with later associates Franklin Folsom, Forrest Benson, and Christine Eversole. With Benson and Eversole, Buckles wrote about labor organizing for college publications. A witness later recalled that during her college years, Buckles became interested in communism and participated

³⁵ Congress, House, *Un-American Activities, Executive Hearings*, 1:1754.

in communist activities. She graduated *cum laude* in 1929 with a bachelor's degree in English literature and spent the summer months on a "walking tour" of Ireland.³⁶

Buckles returned to the United States that fall to pursue a writing career. She moved to New York City and in August 1934 secured a position as a proofreader in the editorial department of *Scribner's Magazine*. But the opportunities of the New Deal appealed to Buckles and in April 1935 she resigned from *Scribner's* to work for FERA in Denver. After three months in Denver teaching Workers' Education classes, in June 1935 she resigned and returned to New York to be executive secretary of the League of American Writers. An assemblage of writers founded by Franklin Folsom, this group dedicated itself to the preservation and extension of democratic culture and the end of fascism. In her application to TVA later that year, she stated that as secretary of the League of American Writers she "almost single handed . . . built up a national organization of well-known novelists, playwrights, poets, story writers, and historians." The group included Waldo Frank, Vincent Sheehan, John Chamberlain, Carlton Beals, John Howard Lawson, Sidney Howard, Horace Gregory, Lewis Mumford, Van Wyck Brooks, Josephine Johnson, and Archibald MacLeish.³⁷

Her brief stint with FERA and Workers' Education encouraged Buckles to do more organizing. Her sister Eleanor had begun working for TVA as a stenographer in

³⁶ FBI Denver to FBI Washington, 17 May 1950, Katherine Buckles FBI file #100-353259-3; FBI Denver to FBI Washington, 1 November 1950, Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443-18; David M. Hays to the University of Colorado Special Collections and Archives to the author, 10 September 2004, e-mail in author's possession; FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 2 September 1950, Buckles FBI file #100-353259-7; SAC Oklahoma City to FBI Director, 4 November 1952, Buckles FBI file #100-353259-43.

³⁷ FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 2 September 1950, Buckles FBI file #100-353259-7, quote 8-9. See, Franklin Folsom, *Days of Anger, Days of Hope: A Memoir of the American League of Writers, 1937-1942* (Niwot, Colorado: University of Colorado Press, 1994), ix-x, 8.

1934 and convinced Kit to apply.³⁸ With further encouragement from Forrest Benson, who applied at nearly the same time, Kit Buckles applied for a job with TVA on December 28, 1935. In early 1936, TVA offered her a job as an Assistant Research Aide in the Land, Planning, and Housing Division. The 29-year-old Buckles accepted the position, moved in with her sister at the Park Hotel in Knoxville, and started work on February 17, 1936.³⁹

The next month, Buckles' college friend Forrest Benson landed a job with TVA. He was born in 1904 in Thomasville, Colorado, now a ghost-town close to Basalt, Colorado. An intelligent youth, he reportedly contributed articles and features to magazines such as the *American Magazine*, *Popular Mechanics*, and the *New Yorker* as early as thirteen years old.⁴⁰ Benson attended grammar school in Thomasville and the state preparatory school in Boulder. He worked in construction, as a steam shovel fireman and concrete finisher. He had a difficult adolescence, spending eight months in a Boys Industrial School in Elko, Nevada for transporting a stolen car.⁴¹

Benson completed an unusual military career during his early adulthood. On September 20, 1923, at age 19 he enlisted in the Army but less than four months later on January 17, 1924 he deserted at Mitchell Field, New York. Five days later he re-enlisted

³⁸ Before coming to TVA, Eleanor Buckles had been the secretary and typist for southern author Thomas Wolfe. Kyle Crichton, *Total Recoil* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1960), 132-36, 305-7; Folsom, *Days of Anger*, 69.

³⁹ FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 2 September 1950, Buckles FBI file #100-353259-7.

⁴⁰ The FBI worked extensively with the Library of Congress and the New York Public Library to determine Benson's claimed publications. The results of their investigations yielded few results. See, Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443.

⁴¹ FBI Knoxville Report, 3 November 1950, Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443-40; FBI Salt Lake City Report, 6 November 1950, Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443-42.

in New York City under the name Jack Stone. Benson claimed that he left the air service to be part of the engineering corps. Within five months of re-enlistment, his supervisors promoted him as a non-commissioned officer. During this period Benson set records for marksmanship and won a place on the engineering rifle team. He stayed in the Army until September 21, 1925, deserting again at Fort Dupont, Delaware. Benson then enrolled at the University of Colorado in 1925, graduating in 1930 with a bachelor's degree in journalism. After graduation, he enlisted in the Army for a third time, in New York City as Jack Fred Benson. In September 1932, the military awarded him an honorable discharge as a private, although desertion was listed as the reason for his departure.⁴²

Unlike his sporadic military service, Benson had a commitment to social change. During his college years, he expressed concerns about discrimination, slums, and the underprivileged. He found like minded individuals in Boulder, including Kit Buckles and Christine Eversole. During the summer between his sophomore and junior years, he worked for Kit Buckles' father as a brick shader in Parco, Wyoming. Alongside editor Kit Buckles, he wrote poems and articles for *The Window*.⁴³

A short essay entitled "Justice" became his most poignant writing for *The Window*. Benson drew from his experiences as a laborer in 1926 and 1927, between one of his military stints, on a dam project at Big Creek, California for the Southern

⁴² FBI St. Louis Report, 1 November 1950, Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443-39; David M. Hays to the University of Colorado Special Collections and Archives to the author, 13 September 2004, e-mail in author's possession.

⁴³ FBI Knoxville to SAC New York and Washington, 26 October 1950, Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443-8.

California Edison Company. In the story, a Hollywood film company prepared to detonate a condemned dam for a scene in a new picture. After paying \$5,000 to an old doctor for his half-acre and house just below the dam site, they set the dynamite charges and waited for the rains to subside before proceeding. The doctor, who guarded the fact that he had never attended medical school, kept his life savings hidden in a bag inside the wall of the cabin and regularly counted his earnings. Just after adding the \$5,000 check to his pile that night, a woman with a sick baby in her arms knocked on his door pleading for his help. He refused her, vowing that "I ain't doctorin' no more" and instructed her to get some pills at the camp by the dam. Exhausted, the woman headed up the flooded trail beside the old dam. But halfway up the trail she staggered and fell off the ledge. She landed next to a small black box and leaned on it for support. In that instant, she detonated the charges, ruining the company's picture, killing herself, her sick baby, and the doctor as he grasped for his fortune. The essay dealt with more than the destruction of a dam and the triumph of the elements over humankind; it also examined human deception and the greed of individuals.⁴⁴

After graduation, Benson traveled to New York City, where he did freelance writing for various magazines and periodicals, usually under the pen name Jack Benson or Jack Stone. He made contributions and served as associate editor for the *Hunger Fighter*, a newspaper for the unemployed published by the Relief Workers League of Greater New York. He also wrote for the Unemployment Council of Greater New York's *United Action*, including a story in the December 10, 1934 issue about foraging

⁴⁴ Forrest Benson, "Justice," *The Window* 4 (Spring 1930): 7-8, 23-25.

for food in the New York City trashcans, entitled “He Got His Lumps.” His activism involved forming groups to study unemployment insurance and how to better provide government aid to the underprivileged.⁴⁵ Benson reported that during this period he wrote a novel entitled “Banjo Stiff.” Like “Justice,” Benson drew inspiration for the book from his work at the Big Creek project in California. He claimed that in 1935, Simon and Schuster was considering it for publication.⁴⁶

Benson supported his writing by taking odd jobs. From 1930 until 1935, he worked as a pipefitter, department store detective, lifeguard, contract painter, chauffeur, third cook, and waiter at a sanitarium.⁴⁷ With money scarce, Benson looked elsewhere for opportunity. Although unfamiliar with the South, Benson developed an interest in TVA. He read numerous newspaper and magazine accounts of the agency’s programs and had friends such as Eleanor and Kit Buckles who worked for TVA. Late in the fall of 1935 he applied for a job with TVA, with hopes of a position in publicity or statistics. TVA offered Benson a position as an examining clerk in the Personnel Division. Benson

⁴⁵ FBI Denver to FBI Washington, 1 November 1950, Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443-18; FBI Knoxville to SACS Washington and New York, 2 November 1950, Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443-23; FBI New York to FBI Washington, 7 November 1950, Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443-30; FBI New York to FBI Washington, 8 November 1950, Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443-32; FBI Knoxville Report, 3 November 1950, Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443-40; FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 2 November 1950, Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443-43; Jack Benson, “He Got His Lumps,” *United Action* (10 December 1934): 7.

⁴⁶ In 1950, the FBI was unable to locate a copy of Benson’s novel. During its inquiry, Simon and Schuster reported that it had no record of Benson or a manuscript entitled “Banjo Stiff.” Present day searches also yielded no results, which may mean that the novel was an unpublished missive that Benson shared with colleagues or that it never existed. FBI New York to FBI Washington, 18 November 1950, Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443-43, 16.

⁴⁷ FBI Knoxville Report, 3 November 1950, Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443-40.

accepted and in March 1936 moved into the Park Hotel. One of the oldest members of the “Knoxville Fifteen” at 32 years old, he began TVA work in late March 1936.⁴⁸

The only artist in the group, David Stone Martin, found his way to Knoxville in April 1936. Born June 13, 1913 in Chicago, his father ministered at the Granville Presbyterian Church. The Martin family lived in an apartment in the church’s community house. Martin attended S.K. Hays Grammar School and the Nicholas Senn High School. In September 1930, after three years of high school, he withdrew as a result of poor grades. He was below average in every course except those in art and drama. Martin later testified that he had enough credits to graduate and did so the following year.⁴⁹

Regardless of his academic credentials, Martin’s passion was art. He excelled at all varieties of art, especially drawing and painting. The following year, he received a scholarship to the Chicago Art Institute’s advanced art training program. He became most impressed with the work of Audrey Beardsley, who employed the use of shapes and convoluted lines in his work. At night he took courses and during the day worked odd jobs, creating window displays for department stores and working as a clerk at the local A&P supermarket. The grocery store owner later commented that Martin “was definitely of an artistic temperament and was so wrapped up in his art work” that Martin would

⁴⁸ Forrest Benson, “Application for TVA Employment,” [ca. November 1935], in Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443; FBI Knoxville to FBI St. Louis, 2 September 1950, Buckles FBI File #100-353259-7; “Christine Benson Testimony,” 484, Remington Trial, RG 276, NARA Northeast; FBI Knoxville Report, 3 November 1950, Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443-40.

⁴⁹ FBI Chicago to FBI Washington, 16 June 1942, David Stone Martin FBI file #77-24191-5; “Government Exhibit #35 in U.S. District Court, S.D. of N.Y.,” 19 January 1951, in folder 1, box 1244, David Stone Martin, Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park.

never be a success in business. Martin completed the Institute's program in June 1931 and within a year began painting for the Sears and Roebuck Art Department. He continued to take small painting jobs around Chicago. In early 1934, Martin secured work as a designer for the Poster Production Company making displays, murals, and interior effects for the Sears Building at the Chicago World's Fair. The "Century of Progress Exposition, 1833-1933" celebrated the city's centennial during 1933, and so exceeded expectations that organizers reopened the exposition during summer 1934. In June 1934, Martin took a full-time position in the Sears' Display Department, designing posters, displays, and publications.⁵⁰

For an artist, the 1930s were a time of sporadic opportunities. In 1935, Martin worked for a Chicago company called General Displays and Exhibits designing material for its advertising department. In December 1935, the company went bankrupt. That same year Martin married Thelma Durkin, also an artist, and at the time of the layoff she was pregnant. Martin immediately applied for relief from the Work's Progress Administration (WPA), and within a week the agency appointed Martin supervisor of mural projects for the Federal Arts Program in Western Illinois. Stationed in Elgin, Martin supervised 24 artists in the design and creation of murals for government

⁵⁰ Quote from FBI Chicago to FBI Washington, 16 June 1942, David Stone Martin, "Application and Personal History Statement," ca. 1940s, all in Martin FBI file #77-24191-5; "David Stone Martin" PR Release, ca. 1970s, David Stone Martin Papers, 1939-1991, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. [hereinafter Martin Papers, AAA]; "Government Exhibit #35 in U.S. District Court, S.D. of N.Y.," 19 January 1951, folder 1, box 1244, David Stone Martin, Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park.

buildings such as schools and courthouses. The state director of the Federal Arts Program later stated that “Mr. Martin did a marvelous job” as supervisor.⁵¹

Martin’s New Deal employment furthered a growing interest in political and labor organizing. He also discovered that graphic designers were in great demand in other New Deal agencies such as TVA. The agency, in desperate need of designers to create murals for their powerhouses and layout artists to design publications, invited Martin to apply for a position in the Graphic Arts Section. Although unfamiliar with the South, in the spring of 1936 Martin applied for an assistant artist position. TVA offered a nearly doubled salary and a chance to work in a larger department. That March the 23-year-old artist moved his family to Knoxville. Martin reported to work on April 1, 1936.⁵²

Two months later, in June, Muriel Speare began working for TVA. Born August 14, 1913 in Bound Brook, New Jersey, she had a middle-class upbringing. Her father Charles Speare, a Harvard graduate, was a commuting financial writer and analyst on Wall Street and worshipped at the local Presbyterian church. Her mother was a homemaker who raised three daughters. Speare attended grammar and high school in Bound Brook, and in 1930 enrolled at Mt. Holyoke College. At Holyoke she majored in economics and history, participating in the debating society and chairing the library commission. She graduated with an A.B. degree in 1935. She spent that summer in Vermont considering her next steps. Still unsure of an occupation, Speare returned home

⁵¹ Martin, “Application and Personal History Statement,” ca. 1940s, FBI Chicago to FBI Washington, 16 June 1942, all in Martin FBI file #77-24191-5; “Government Exhibit #35 in U.S. District Court, S.D. of N.Y.,” 19 January 1951, in folder 1, box 1244, in David Stone Martin, Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park.

⁵² Martin, “Application and Personal History Statement,” ca. 1940s, Martin FBI file #77-24191-5; “David Stone Martin Testimony,” 2212, Remington Trial, RG 276, NARA Northeast.

that August and began commuting to the Katherine Gibbs Secretarial School in New York City. In May 1936, after a year of studying typing, filing, and tabulation skills, she completed the school's secretarial certification program.⁵³

Although her background differed from some of the other young lights attracted to TVA, the agency fascinated Speare. The experimental qualities of TVA were especially appealing and she was anxious to see the South for herself. Uninterested in the New York metropolitan area, in May she took a competitive secretarial test and applied for a position with TVA. She quickly secured a position as a stenographer in the Personnel Division and arrived in Knoxville over the Memorial Day weekend. The 23-year-old began work for TVA on June 1, 1936.⁵⁴

University of Colorado alum Christine Eversole started work for TVA the next month. Born on October 30, 1910 in Ottawa, Kansas, she grew up on a farm near Lawrence. At age 5, her family moved to a farm near Longmont, Colorado. Her father, a Swedish immigrant, participated in the Farmers Union of Colorado and she quickly became interested in farming cooperative movements. Eversole enrolled at the University of Colorado in 1927 and befriended Kit Buckles and Forrest Benson. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1933. She took a job as a school teacher in her

⁵³ Selma R. Williams, *Red-Listed: Haunted by the Washington Witch Hunt* (Reading, MA.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1993), 106; FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 22 October 1941, Muriel W. Mather FBI file #100-17521-6; Congress, House, *Un-American Activities, Executive Hearings*, 3:1266; Ralitsa Donkova at the Mt. Holyoke Special Collections and Archives to the author, 2 October 2004, e-mail in author's possession; Selma Williams, "Muriel W. Mather Interview," March 1981, [transcript] 1-2, folder 6, box 1, Muriel Williams Mather Papers, 1939-1990, MS 2585, UT Special Collections [hereinafter Mather Papers, UT Special Collections].

⁵⁴ Williams, "Muriel W. Mather Interview," March 1981, [transcript] 2; Selma Williams, "Interview with Muriel Williams Mather," 22 November 1983, [transcript] 2, folder 2, box 1, all in Mather Papers, UT Special Collections.

hometown of Longmont and began to tackle rural problems. Eversole organized a community forum to address abuses by the local sugar beet industry. This group discussed issues such as child labor during harvest season, factory conditions, and migratory Mexican workers. At the same time, a bank foreclosure took her father's property and her family moved to Corvallis, Oregon in search of work.⁵⁵

In 1936, after three years of teaching and local activism in Longmont, Eversole headed for Tennessee. In May, she enrolled in labor organizing courses held at the Highlander Folk School. Committed to radical social change, the Highlander School remained sensitive to the surrounding rural culture. In her application letter she emphasized her willingness to put the welfare of the student body before her own personal interests. Eversole sacrificed a steady job during the height of the Depression because she believed that the union movement had gained approval with the Roosevelt Administration. She attended Highlander for the six-week summer session from May 18-June 27, 1936, taking courses in labor organizing and social problems.⁵⁶

Eversole's close friend Kit Buckles, now in Knoxville, encouraged her to apply for a job with TVA. After the summer sessions at Monteagle concluded, Eversole traveled to Knoxville, found a room, and enrolled at Knoxville Business College. On July 1, 1936, she applied for a secretarial position with TVA and at the same time

⁵⁵ FBI Report by John A. Parker, 6 September 1950, Christine Eversole Benson FBI file #100-369556-2, 2-3; Hays to the author, 10 September 2004, e-mail; Christine Eversole to The Secretary, Highlander Folk School, 25 April 1936, folder 25, box 6, Highlander Collection, Wisconsin; May, *Un-American Activities*, 28.

⁵⁶ Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 434, 437; FBI Knoxville Report, 9 June 1950, Christine Eversole Benson FBI file #100-369556-2; Eversole to Secretary, 25 April 1936, folder 25, box 6, "Highlander Folk School Summer School for Workers, 1936" [announcement] folder 11, box 61, all in Highlander Collection, Wisconsin; *The Lookout* 1 (7 June 1936): 2.

inquired about part-time work at Highlander. TVA responded quickly and on July 16 she took TVA's preliminary secretarial examination. In the meantime, Eversole longed for Highlander, writing the secretary of the school that "the dirt and heat of this place make your mountain seem heavenly." Eleven days later, on July 27, TVA offered her a job as a clerk-typist in the Coordination Division. Although she missed Monteagle, Knoxville offered more opportunity to launch her career in labor organizing. The 26-year-old Eversole began work for TVA immediately.⁵⁷

In September 1936, Henry C. Hart began his duties with TVA. Born in Lucknow, India on February 6, 1916, both his parents hailed from Tennessee and were active in missionary work. His father served several years as a secretary of the overseas Young Men's Christian Association in India. In 1917, the Hart family returned to the United States. Later that year, Hart's mother died and his father re-married. The family returned to India in 1921, where Hart spent his formative years learning Hindi and absorbing the culture. In 1926, the family came back to the United States. They moved to Atlanta, Chattanooga, and finally Nashville. In the early 1930s, Hart enrolled as a student at Vanderbilt and studied economics and psychology. Intensely religious, he served as president of the school's Christian Student Association. In college he continued his involvement with the YMCA and in 1934 served as a delegate to its regional conference. At this conference Hart became acquainted with Howard Frazier, a later TVA co-worker. That same year, he won the Frank K. Houston Oratory contest for a speech on Donald Davidson's poem "The Tall Men" as a criticism of modern life. In June 1936, he

⁵⁷ Christine Eversole to James Dombrowski, 17 July 1936, James Dombrowski to Christine Eversole, 24 July 1936, Christine Eversole to James Dombrowski, 28 July 1936, all in folder 25, box 6,

graduated second in his class at Vanderbilt with a bachelor's degree. That summer Hart volunteered for the Friends' Service Committee, to work on a Quaker-sponsored peace campaign.⁵⁸

Despite extensive travel and education, Hart was unfamiliar with the social realities of the Depression and the South generally. He claimed that he had a vague understanding of day-to-day economics and that he knew of labor organizations only from textbooks. Many of the skills he gained in college, such as fluency in four languages, did not apply in poverty-stricken Tennessee. To further complicate matters, after graduating from Vanderbilt he located only two possible jobs in the state. Hart later recalled that "[o]ne was a junior cashier at a bank with prospect after a lifetime of service of working up to cashier and the other one was a messenger boy at the Tennessee Valley Authority." Hart chose TVA.⁵⁹

The dynamic agency, which focused on natural resource conservation and regional planning, intrigued Hart. He believed that all of the New Deal programs, TVA related most to his interests, which were raising the economy to benefit farmers and poor workers, and general regional development. Hart believed that through technology and

Highlander Collection, Wisconsin; Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 435-6.

⁵⁸ SAC Washington Field to FBI Director, 29 December 1948, FBI file #121-11415-8; Author's interview with Henry Hart, 27 April 2002, [transcript] 1, 4-5; Congress, House, *Un-American Activities, Executive Hearings*, 2:1022; J. Edgar Hoover to Special Assistant to the President, 5 August 1965, in Frazier FBI file #161-3997-30; Congress, Senate, *Nomination of Gordon R. Clapp, Senate Committee on Public Works* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1947), 518; Teresa Gray at the Vanderbilt University Special Collections and Archives to the author, 4 October 2004, e-mail in author's possession.

⁵⁹ Henry Hart, "Preliminary Statement Read to Joint Committee on Atomic Energy," 25 February 1947, 1, folder 2, box 1, Henry C. Hart Papers, 1939-2002, MS 2575, UT Special Collections [hereinafter Hart Papers, UT Special Collections]; SAC Washington Field to FBI Director, 29 December 1948, FBI file #121-11415-8; Author's interview with Henry Hart, 27 April 2002, [transcript] 1.

professionalism, agencies such as TVA could do more than construct dams: they could enact reforms. That summer he applied for a position with TVA and made three trips to interview in the Knoxville personnel office. Overjoyed to get the job offer later that summer, the 20-year-old moved to Knoxville in September 1936 and began working as a messenger and junior clerk.⁶⁰

A few weeks later, Dartmouth College student William Remington arrived in Knoxville. He was born in New York City, on October 25, 1917. The Remington family lived in Ridgewood, New Jersey, a growing suburb for the up-and-coming affluent. His father Fred Remington worked at the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in New York City. Remington attended Kenilworth Grammar School and in 1931 entered Ridgewood High School. A member of the track team, he also developed an interest in political and scientific discussion. Remington organized discussion groups to consider the solutions to the growing Great Depression. In 1934, he graduated from high school and that fall entered Dartmouth College on a partial scholarship.⁶¹

While at Dartmouth, the stripling Remington acquired an outlook more radical and left-wing than that of the typical Dartmouth student. He became an ardent supporter of the New Deal, embracing more extreme policies such as the encouragement of labor unions, government ownership of certain industries, and progressive income taxes. He participated in activities sponsored by groups such as the Student League for Industrial

⁶⁰ Virginia and Henry Hart Oral History Interview, 26 April 1983, tape 13, Wisconsin Democratic Party Oral History Project, 1982-1986, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin; SAC Washington Field to FBI Director, 29 December 1948, FBI file #121-11415-8; Author's interview with Henry Hart, 27 April 2002, [transcript] 1.

⁶¹ May, *Un-American Activities*, 10-14; Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 3.

Democracy, the Young Communist League, and the Marxist Study Group. Labor reform greatly interested Remington and he became involved in a strike of marble workers at a nearby quarry. He gathered donations of clothes, money, and food for the strikers. Afterwards, Remington wrote his parents, saying that “the quarry workers are fine. Cold, hungry, and a little miserable. But quite confident now that they’ll win.”⁶²

After two years of school, Remington had no money and decided to spend a year away from Dartmouth working. In addition to earning money, he wanted to follow his new interests in regional planning and sociology. He believed that the economic problems and unemployment of the 1930s were much more important than the literature that he had been studying. He first learned of TVA in a Housing and Regional Planning course at Dartmouth. Impressed with TVA, Remington found that a relatively small expenditure from the federal government had liberated an enormous amount of economic possibility across a large region. “I saw in TVA a great hope for rehabilitating idle resources and idle human beings,” Remington later testified.⁶³

Remington was so taken with TVA that he decided to visit some of its installations that summer and secure a position. He first went with his roommate to Minnesota and worked as a laborer at resorts during the first half of the summer. By late-

⁶² “Brief for Appellant,” United States of America against William Walter Remington, 1951, “William Remington Testimony,” 2438, all in Remington Trial, RG 276, NARA Northeast; Congress, House, Committee on Un-American Activities, *Hearings Regarding Communism in the United States Government—Part I* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1950), 1780-82; May, *Un-American Activities*, 18-21, 24; William Remington to Ma and Pa, [ca. January 1936], folder: 1926-1936, box 1, William Remington Papers, 1926-1949, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. [hereinafter Remington Papers, LC].

⁶³ “William Remington Testimony,” in United States vs. William Walter Remington, Cr. 138-289, Stenographers Minutes, 1953, 530, Records of the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, Record Group 21, NARA Northeast [hereinafter Remington Trial, RG 21, NARA Northeast]; Congress, House, *Hearings Regarding Communism—Part I*, 1819.

summer, he had saved enough money to make the journey to Tennessee. He arrived in Knoxville in early August and found a room at the downtown YMCA, the same residence as Henry Hart. He appeared on August 11, 1936, for an interview and completed an application. In his personal statement Remington added that "TVA will be my focus of my future career because of their relation to planned social evolution." The session went well; the interviewer noted that Remington "realizes the full significance of the TVA project, being intelligently enthusiastic and in sympathy with the objectives of TVA." The next day, Remington had a second interview, which resulted in a positive recommendation for employment as an inter-office manager. Although Remington was still a teenager, the TVA interviewer believed that Remington had definite potential for future advancement. Ten days later TVA offered Remington a position as a messenger and he accepted. The 19-year-old reported to the TVA training program on September 28, 1936.⁶⁴

The last member of the "Knoxville Fifteen," Elizabeth Winston McConnell, came to Knoxville in the summer of 1937. Born in Asheville, North Carolina on August 9, 1908, she attended grammar and high school in Buncombe County. Winston reported attending the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill for three years from 1924-1927, but no records support her claim. She next found intermittent work in New Orleans as a bookkeeper and secretary, and returned to North Carolina in 1928 to work at Chapel Hill as a secretary in the Department of Conservation and Development. In April 1929,

⁶⁴ "Remington Testimony," 2389-90, Remington Trial, RG 276, NARA Northeast; William Remington, "Application for TVA Employment," [11 August 1936], in folder: William Remington, box 38, HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA; Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 3; "Background of Defendant at Knoxville, Tennessee, 1936-1937, TVA Employee Records," Remington FBI file #74-1379-50, section 4, 1-4; May, *Un-American Activities*, 25.

Winston took a secretarial job at the Owl Drug Company in San Francisco. Once in California, she moved to a better paying secretarial job at the J. Walter Thompson Advertising Company and became acquainted with Kenneth R. McConnell.⁶⁵

Although not a member of the “Knoxville Fifteen,” McConnell became an important figure in the 1930s activities and 1950s investigations of TVA. Born October 28, 1898, in Hicksville, Long Island, New York he left for sea at age 14. In the early 1920s, McConnell returned to New York in search of work, claiming to be a veteran of World War I. He secured work, and then in 1924 embezzled \$700 from his employer and fled to California. He promptly changed his name to Kenroy Malcomb, although he used a number of variations of the name, and settled in Berkeley. The next year, Berkeley police arrested him for attempting to extort money from homosexuals of prominent families. He also harbored a drinking problem, which occasionally landed him in jail for disorderly conduct or public intoxication. For the rest of the 1920s McConnell worked at odd-jobs, as newspaper writer, cook, and common laborer.⁶⁶

Elizabeth Winston and Kenneth McConnell married on July 18, 1930. The following year, they moved to Chapel Hill, North Carolina. She worked in the temporary pool at the University of North Carolina, while he focused on radical political organizing. Following the birth of a son in 1932, Elizabeth McConnell secured a job as secretary to the state director for the Public Works Administration (PWA). During the spring of

⁶⁵ Personal History Record for Elizabeth Malcomb, [ca. 1937], C.E. McKillips to Louis J. Russell, 7 October 1949, all in folder: Elizabeth Todd, box 47, HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA.

⁶⁶ Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 421-22; May, *Un-American Activities*, 150.

1935, a correspondent from the *Daily Worker* recruited her husband into the Communist Party. He quickly rose in the organization, working as a section organizer in Chapel Hill and later in Norfolk and Chattanooga.⁶⁷

In early 1937, the Communist Party assigned McConnell to Knoxville. The CP wanted McConnell to recruit new members from TVA and the Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA). The Communist Party also wanted to assist in the unionization of textile workers in the Knoxville area. In anticipation of the move, his wife filed an application for a clerk position with TVA. Elizabeth McConnell passed TVA's stenographic and typing tests that spring, but moved to Knoxville in early June without definite employment. The couple found an apartment at 1412 Forest Avenue, and within days of arriving TVA offered her an assistant clerk-stenographer position in the Engineering Design Department of the Project Design Division. At age 29, Elizabeth McConnell reported to her first day of TVA work on June 16, 1937.⁶⁸

The first generation of the twentieth century came to maturity during the Great Depression. Young idealistic Americans found the promises of the Communist Party, the Socialist Party, and the New Deal irresistible. By the summer of 1937, Mabel Abercrombie, Forrest Benson, Buck Borah, Howard Bridgman, Kit Buckles, Christine

⁶⁷ SAC New York to FBI Director, 7 April 1951, Elizabeth Todd FBI file #100-440310-5; Personal History Record for Elizabeth Malcomb, [ca. 1937], in folder: Elizabeth Todd, box 47, HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA; Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 421; May, *Un-American Activities*, 150.

⁶⁸ Congress, House, *Un-American Activities, Executive Hearings*, 1:1699; SAC New York to FBI Director, 7 April 1951, Elizabeth Todd FBI file #100-440310-5; Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 425; Acceptance and Personal History Statement for Elizabeth Malcomb, [ca. June 1937], Elizabeth Malcomb to E.B. Schultz, 15 April 1937, George P. Gant to John S. Wood, 24 February 1950, all in folder: Elizabeth Todd, box 47, HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA.

Eversole, John Frantz, Howard Frazier, Henry Hart, Elizabeth Winston McConnell, David Stone Martin, William Remington, Muriel Speare, Merwin Todd, and Burton Zien resided in Knoxville and worked for TVA. Their collective origins reveal an interest in labor organizing, social reform, political theory, and helping the downtrodden of the Depression. Some were eccentric radicals, free-thinkers, or naïve intellectuals, but hardly dangerous. Hungry for new opportunities, TVA seemed an ideal testing ground for their initiatives and once the group came together new possibilities emerged. Within the context of the Popular Front movement and the reforms of the New Deal this group found a place to expand their boundaries—that place was Knoxville.

As a group, the “Knoxville Fifteen” had diverse backgrounds with striking commonalities. None had reached 35 years of age, all had some level of college or professional education, and nearly all had ties to or an interest in labor organizing. All fifteen worked for TVA during the middle to late 1930s, usually in low-level administrative positions such as clerk or stenographer. TVA attracted them for similar reasons, and once in Knoxville they quickly formed a small group of friends and colleagues. Together they promoted labor organizing, social change, economic reform, and the Communist Party. The collective origins, work experience, education, and ideological influences of each individual formed the motivational basis for the 1930s radical activities of the “Knoxville Fifteen.”

Chapter 3

Reds in the Mailroom

If “red” means bread for wife and kid,
A job for you and me,
Why be afraid of being red,
Of wanting work, of wanting bread?
If organizing means we’re red,
Then red’s the thing to be!¹

In the 1930s, Knoxville seemed an unlikely home for hundreds of new TVA employees. During a 2002 interview, former TVA mailroom worker Henry Hart described the scene. “Knoxville looked provincial. The main street was very narrow. Gay Street, it was called. The heart of town was cramped. Aside from the University of Tennessee, and one prosperous upper middle class residential area along Kingston Pike, it was not a gracious city.” Henry Hart’s first impressions of Knoxville mirrored the recollections of another entry-level TVA worker Mabel Abercrombie, who found that 1930s “Knoxville was a country place.” Promoters once hailed Knoxville as an up-and-coming railroad town of the New South, but well into the 1930s the small city of just over 100,000 remained a backwater. The Depression hit the city particularly hard. Knoxville’s economy depended on construction projects, low-grade manufacturing, and mechanical industries, all of which bottomed-out during the decade. Unemployment numbers climbed from 2,284 in 1930 to 7,534 in 1937. Two years later, over 6,000

¹ Poem by B.M., “Red Means Bread,” *The Southern Worker*, 15 November 1933.

county residents were on federal relief. Throughout the 1930s, TVA was the city's one bright spot.²

In 1933, the Tennessee Valley Authority brought the New Deal to East Tennessee and in the process revitalized downtown Knoxville. The TVA Act specified that the agency "shall maintain its principal office in the immediate vicinity of Muscle Shoals, Alabama," the site of Wilson Dam.³ That summer the TVA board met in Washington to discuss first steps. At this eight-hour meeting on June 16, 1933, the directors maintained that Muscle Shoals would serve as the principal office, but they agreed to locate TVA's administrative headquarters in Knoxville because of the city's proximity to the Cove Creek project (later Norris Dam) and resources available at the University of Tennessee.⁴

In July 1933, the board announced that TVA's administrative operations would be located in Knoxville and advised city leaders to prepare for the expected hundreds of new employees. In August, TVA rented office spaces throughout downtown Knoxville. Once-empty buildings on Union Avenue now teemed with activity. With over 100 offices, The New Sprinkle Building served as TVA's central headquarters. As operations grew, TVA expanded into other nearby downtown locations, including the

² Author's interview with Henry Hart, 27 April 2002 [transcript], 5; Author's interview with Mabel Abercrombie Mansfield, Eureka, California, 23 August 2003; William Bruce Wheeler, *Knoxville, Tennessee: A Mountain City in the New South*, 2nd edition (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2005), 57; Knoxville Chamber of Commerce, *Commercial and Industrial Survey of Knoxville, Tennessee* (Knoxville: Knoxville Chamber of Commerce, 1939), section VIII, 3.

³ United States, *Statutes at Large*, 48 stat. 58, "The Tennessee Valley Authority Act of May 18, 1933," section 8.

⁴ Thomas K. McCraw, *Morgan Versus Lilienthal: The Feud Within the TVA* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1970), 26-27; Marguerite Owen, *The Tennessee Valley Authority* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 183; "Minutes of the First Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority, 16 June 1933," TVA Office of General Counsel, Knoxville, Tennessee.

Daylight Building, the Sprinkle Building, the Arnstein Building, the Union Building, and the Old Post Office. In August, TVA had over 44,000 applications for employment and tackled the awesome task of interviewing hundreds of individuals for the many diverse positions scattered across the Tennessee Valley.⁵

During the next three years, TVA received thousands of applications for employment.⁶ Young college students, intellectuals, free-thinkers, and New Dealers were especially taken by this experiment in social and economic planning. The diverse personalities of the idealistic Arthur Morgan and the pragmatic David Lilienthal attracted a multitude of followers to the fold. Throughout the decade, the air in Knoxville was ripe with opportunity. With hundreds of jobs available, engineers, laborers, academics, administrators, and secretaries from across the country and world flooded the agency with applications. TVA also offered entry-level messenger positions to a great number of promising young men and women. Although the menial work in the mailroom paid little, the messenger positions were designed to be apprenticeships with potential for promotion. It was within the mailroom and entry-level ranks that an important and unstudied group of TVA workers emerged.⁷

As mailroom workers, stenographers, researcher aids, and legal clerks, the “Knoxville Fifteen” registered a unique TVA tenure. Their organizing activities—including involvement in the TVA’s AFGE white-collar union, participation in strikes,

⁵ *Knoxville Journal*, 2 August 1933, 15 August 1933; 17 August 1933; *Knoxville News Sentinel*, 3 December 1933.

⁶ For a description of the recruitment policies developed by TVA see, Lee S. Greene, “Personnel Administration in the Tennessee Valley Authority,” *The Journal of Politics* 1 (May 1939): 171-75.

⁷ FBI Knoxville Report, 17 July 1941, FBI file #100-10189-15.

fundraising for the Spanish Civil War, and participation in the Communist Party—represent an important and neglected component of the agency’s early history. Their personal relationships, where they lived, what they did after work, and their interactions with other individuals also reveal much about the 1930s TVA and Knoxville. This chapter reconstructs the 1930s lives of these fifteen TVA employees and argues that their tenures form the foundation for a series of later government investigations into their alleged radical activities.

As workers flooded Knoxville and construction sites to accomplish the wide aims of TVA, the agency considered options for labor control. By 1934, TVA’s labor leaders had organized a number of trade unions for construction workers and local chapters for the growing force of white-collar employees. That summer, TVA’s first non-board employee Paul David organized TVA’s Knoxville white-collar workers into a local chapter of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE). An affiliate of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), the AFGE #136 Knoxville Branch represented employee interests, promoted the goals of TVA, participated in the activities of local and national labor organizations, sponsored educational opportunities, and provided the white-collar workers with social and recreational activities. At their August 1934 meeting, the group elected David as president, and E.B. “Ted” Schultz, from TVA’s Labor Relations Section, as vice-president. The group limited membership to any salaried employee of the Knoxville TVA office and set dues at \$1.00 for an initiation fee and \$0.50 per month. The chapter designated committees for membership, national programs, recreation, and education. The branch quickly affiliated with the Knoxville

Central Labor Union (CLU) and sent representatives to its weekly meetings. With David's assistance, other TVA AFGE chapters organized, most notably the Norris AFGE #135, which consisted of unskilled construction workers and office workers on the Norris Dam project. David carried this momentum to the AFGE national convention that fall, where the organization's officials took great interest in the TVA chapters. David later made an unsuccessful attempt to be chosen as president of the national AFGE. By the end of 1934, David had built a strong chapter in Knoxville which reported 166 members.⁸

In 1935, interest in the AFGE branch #136 grew. In April, chairman Arthur Morgan appealed to white-collar employees to join the AFGE chapter and present their issues to management. Morgan also hoped that AFGE would promote TVA's "educational, recreational, and consumers' cooperative activities." Then, in July 1935, TVA released its "Employee Relationship Policy" to employees, which outlined labor relations and employee rights. The policy reaffirmed the open-shop approach to organizing, set wages according to location, held merit as the basis for promotion, outlined grievance procedures, established hours for the work week, approved authorized overtime, and recognized holidays. Morgan encouraged all employees to study the policy

⁸ Paul David, "Employee-Management Cooperation in the TVA" *Antioch Alumni Bulletin* (November 1936): 19; Paul T. David Interview, 20 November 1990, [transcript] 26-30, University of Kentucky and Pi Sigma Alpha, American Political Science Association Oral History Project, Antioch College [hereinafter David Interview, Antioch]; Paul Strachan, "Certificate of AFGE Charter," 4 August 1934, folder 6, box 3, "Platform of the Knoxville TVA Lodge No. 136 of the American Federation of Government Employees," 7 August 1934, folder 5, box 6, "Minutes of the Meeting of August 17, 1934," folder 4, box 6, "Things You Will Want to Know About TVA Lodge No. 136 of the American Federation of Government Employees," [ca. 1935], folder 18, box 5, Paul David to Richard M. Howell, 7 October 1934, folder 13, box 2, "AFGE Lodge #136, Treasurer's Report for 1934," [ca. December 1934], folder 9, box 1, all in American Federation of Government Employees, Local 136 (Knoxville, Tennessee) Records, 1934-1941, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections, Georgia State University Library, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia [hereinafter AFGE #136 Records, Southern Labor Archives, GSU]; Paul Strachan to Paul David, 20 August 1934, folder: Paul A. Strachan 1934, box 2, Papers of Paul T. David,

and formulate suggestions. That summer, TVA sponsored hearings at six locations to openly discuss the policy with its employees. After considering those suggestions and revising the document, on August 28, 1935, the TVA board adopted the policy.⁹

Under Paul David's direction the AFGE branch expanded its reach during 1935. The branch explored employee issues, including a retirement program, overtime approval, a service-pay rating system, more efficient work schedules, annual physical examinations, and health insurance plans. The group even considered an outside petition to place Knoxville on Eastern Standard Time, which argued that the city was reportedly 45 minutes behind the rest of the county. But Knoxville remained on Central Standard Time until after World War II. Perhaps the AFGE's most unique proposal was that of reinvigorating the considerable number of underweight office workers by having them "drink a half-pint or pint of milk in the middle of the morning or afternoon, and perhaps eat a little candy." TVA responded by establishing an office cooperative to supply workers with milk and candy.¹⁰

1936-1939, Accession #12793-i, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia [hereinafter David Papers, UVA].

⁹ Arthur Morgan to TVA Employees, 3 April 1935, folder 18, box 5, AFGE #136 Records, Southern Labor Archives, GSU; Tennessee Valley Authority, *Employee Relationship Policy, 1935* (Knoxville: TVA, 1935), 2-9; C. Herman Pritchett, *The Tennessee Valley Authority: A Study in Public Administration* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1943), 298; *Knoxville Labor News*, 5 September 1935; E.B. Schultz, "Labor and the Tennessee Valley Authority" *American Federationist* (January 1937): 63-64; Author's interview with Henry Hart, 27 April 2002, [transcript] 1-2; Michael L. Brookshire and Michael D. Rogers, *Collective Bargaining in Public Employment: The TVA Experience* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1977), 65, 69, David Interview, Antioch, 31.

¹⁰ Arthur Morgan to T. Stewart Lyon, 11 February 1935, folder: Hydro Electric Power Commission of Ontario 1934-1935, box 3, David Papers, UVA; E.L. Bishop to Johanna Kollmorgen, 13 July 1936, folder 2, box 8, Paul David to Floyd Reeves, 24 March 1935, folder 4, box 5, Kenneth Cameron to H.A. Morgan, 13 April 1936, folder 17, box 4, quote Paul David to Floyd Reeves, 2 February 1935, Gordon Clapp to Paul David, 25 March 1935, all in folder 4, box 3, all in AFGE #136 Records, Southern Labor Archives, GSU.

But the AFGE was a serious organization interested in real labor progress. The group sponsored studies into the role of women in TVA and office working conditions, and organized study groups on personnel problems and training courses on labor. Members of the AFGE successfully proposed a promotional internship program for young entry-level employees to Gordon Clapp, then personnel manager and later TVA board chairman. At the end of 1935, the AFGE #136 counted 250 members and expected to increase their numbers to 300 during the coming year.¹¹

As one might expect, TVA's white-collar union proved to be a meeting place for young radicals. John Frantz, the son of a University of Tennessee professor, was the first of the fifteen to appear in the AFGE chapter. Frantz began his work for TVA in October 1934, as a temporary junior messenger in the Legal Department, delivering mail and completing clerical work. He lived with his parents at 3318 Woodhill Place in Knoxville. In February 1935, his supervisors promoted Frantz to a permanent messenger position and increased his salary. At the time, his supervisor reported that Frantz "has definite ideas of Communism and leans decidedly in that direction, but will probably overcome that as he grows older." The advancement coincided with Frantz joining the AFGE chapter that same month. But his first membership in AFGE only lasted a few months and he made little impression on the group. Frantz resigned from TVA on June 1, 1935,

¹¹ W.C. Bowen to Paul David, 17 June 1935, AFGE to All TVA Employees, 10 October 1935, all in folder: Educational Activities, 1935, box 1, David Papers, UVA; Author's interview with Henry Hart, 27 April 2002 [transcript], 2; Mary U. Rothrock, Elizabeth Robertson, and Grace Henry to Gordon Clapp, 8 March 1936, folder 18, box 7, "Study of Occupational Hygiene in Central Files Office," [ca. 1936], folder 7, box 2, "Proposed Budget for AFGE Lodge No. 136 for Year 1936," February 1936, folder 9, box 1, all in AFGE #136 Records, Southern Labor Archives, GSU.

stating that the mechanical routine of his position was “psychologically oppressive” and without additional legal background the position offered no hope of advancement.¹²

Eager to see more of what the world beyond Knoxville had to offer, Frantz claimed that in July he went to Cuba as a representative of the American Student Union to study the country’s economic and social conditions. He later testified about taking the trip, saying, “I rode a bicycle from Knoxville to Atlanta, hitchhiked from Atlanta to Jacksonville, rode a train from Jacksonville to Key West, and took the steamship *Cuba* from Key West to Habana [*sic*].” Although passport records do not confirm the excursion, the eighteen-year-old Frantz did spend three months that summer in New York City taking odd jobs, first as an usher at a theater and then as a dishwasher in a Greek restaurant. Frantz returned to Knoxville in the fall of 1935 and resumed his courses at the University of Tennessee. Back in the collegiate environment, Frantz focused his energies on organizing a theater and dance troupe, and later secured an announcing job for the WNOX radio station. Frantz would, however, return to TVA in 1937 and renew his union membership and friendships.¹³

In January 1935, labor organizer and UT graduate Buck Borah started work in TVA’s research division as an assistant statistical clerk. In that capacity, Borah completed social and economic research on the effects of dam and reservoir construction

¹² C.L. Richey to John Frantz, 2 October 1934, C.L. Richey to John Frantz, 16 February 1935, E.A. Shelley to Douglas Chaffin, 14 January 1952, quote from Arthur S. Jandrey inter-office TVA mailing slip, [ca. February 1935], John Frantz to George Gant, 29 March 1937, all in John Frantz file, TVA Employee Records.

¹³ Frantz to Gant, 29 March 1937, in Frantz file, TVA Employee Records; FBI Knoxville Report, 17 June 1948, John Frantz FBI file #121-7423-23; quote from Congress, House, Special Committee on Un-American Activities, *Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States, Executive Hearings* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1941), 3:1003.

on nearby communities. He specifically examined the economic changes necessitated by moving people from the areas to be flooded, and studied the effect of TVA's construction on the local labor pools. Borah believed in union organizing and was often impatient with the slow progress of labor reform. He joined AFGE on April 20, 1935 and quickly became a delegate to the CLU. Borah spent that spring and early summer in TVA's Washington Office, learning about different research methods and promoting the AFGE. Borah returned to Knoxville in July, and later that month visited the Highlander Folk School to discuss TVA's labor organizing. He made such a good impression on the Highlander faculty that they referred to Borah as "one of the most promising young people in [the] labor movement in Knoxville." Within a few years he was a major force in the TVA union and eventually became a notable southern labor organizer.¹⁴

Because of a mutual interest in labor reform, Borah became good friends with Mabel Abercrombie. A Georgian with experience working for an Atlanta insurance company, she began work for TVA as under-clerk-typist in the Forestry Division in October 1934. Abercrombie worked with local union leaders to promote better working conditions, wages, and hours for mill workers. Despite her interest in labor organizing,

¹⁴ Memorandum for Officer in Charge, 3 June 1943, 208, Memorandum for Officer in Charge, 1 June 1943, 210 [Name redacted] to Officer in Charge, 25 March 1943, 149, Memorandum for Officer in Charge, 10 May 1943, 170, all in Bernard Borah, Department of the Army File; Paul David to Bernard Borah, 25 April 1935, Bernard Borah to Paul David, 18 May 1935, all in folder 1, box 1, Lee S. Greene Papers, 1938-1960, MS 1367, Special Collections Library, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee [hereinafter Green Papers, MS 1367, UT Special Collections]; "Highlander Visitors, Guest Book, 1933-1943," folder 12, box 75, quote from "Report on Summer Activities, Highlander Folk School, 1935," 2, folder 11, box 61, all in Highlander Collection, Wisconsin.

she did not join the AFGE #136 until July 1935 and, like John Frantz and Buck Borah, her involvement with the TVA union was not significant until a few years later.¹⁵

Instead, Abercrombie spent most of her non-working time with a small group of conservationists led by Benton MacKaye and Harvey Broome. MacKaye, founder of the Appalachian Trail and a regional planner for TVA, drew young intellectuals such as Abercrombie and Howard Bridgman to Knoxville. To exercise the mind, MacKaye established an informal intellectual group known as the “Philosophers Club.” The debate group discussed history, economics, current events, political philosophy, and natural history. And to exercise the body, the Club held numerous square-dances, sometimes featuring local musicians and traditional Appalachian dances. Likewise, outdoorsman Harvey Broome, a Knoxville lawyer and clerk of the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, introduced a host of young TVA employees to the then-largely unexplored Great Smoky Mountains National Park (established in 1934) through the Smoky Mountain Hiking Club. The Club’s camping and hiking trips appealed to those seeking refuge from, as Howard Bridgman dubbed it, the “everlasting smoke and grime of Knoxville.” Activities of the Philosophers Club and the Smoky Mountain Hiking Club played an important part in lives of many young TVA employees during the 1930s.¹⁶

¹⁵ FBI Summary Report, 27 August 1951, William Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 479; Author’s interview, Mabel Abercrombie Mansfield, 23 August 2003.

¹⁶ Howard A. Bridgman Diary, 1936, 35, 39, quote from 42, 43, 50, 57, 77, MS 2698, UT Special Collections [hereinafter Bridgman Diary, 1936, UT Special Collections]; “Benton’s ‘Philosophers Club,’ Knoxville, Tennessee, 1935-1936,” folder 110, box 184, Olcott Deming, “Ode to the Philosophers Club,” [ca. 1936], folder 38, box 200, “Folk Songs and Dances at Big Ridge Park, 1 November 1935, [invitation],” folder 1, box 168, Benton MacKaye Papers, Rauner Special Collections, Dartmouth College Library, Dartmouth, Massachusetts [hereinafter MacKaye Papers, Dartmouth]; Smoky Mountains Hiking Club, *Eleventh Annual Handbook, 1936* (Knoxville: Smoky Mountains Hiking Club, 1936), 5; Harvey Broome, *Out Under the Sky of the Great Smokies: A Personal Journal* (Knoxville: The Greenbrier Press, 1975), 17;

Knoxville also offered Pat Todd an opportunity to unionize the industrial masses. Todd, who had attended the Experimental College of Wisconsin, the Sorbonne in Paris, and the Roosevelt Aviation School in New York, began work as a TVA messenger for the Communications and Reproduction unit in May 1935. A staunch labor organizer, he participated in AFGE activities, but did not officially join until the fall of 1936. Instead, Todd became involved with strikers and local Communist Party leaders. Todd's dedication to the union cause brought him numerous challenges. Colleague Henry Hart later called Todd "the kind of fellow who would jump right into a situation." Todd quickly proved to be an important force in southern labor organizing.¹⁷

In the fall of 1935, Howard Frazier, another graduate of the University of Tennessee, began work for TVA and became acquainted with Frantz, Borah, Todd, and Abercrombie. Frazier lived with his aunt in Knoxville at 1825 Highland Avenue. During his time as a student and while a TVA employee, he frequently let friends stay at her house for extended periods, until they could find permanent residences. Frazier would later share residences with some of the other radicals who arrived in 1936. Frazier started as a messenger in TVA's General Office Division on October 22, 1935, and joined the AFGE a month later. Frazier's strong beliefs set him apart from other AFGE members. Frazier made it clear to colleagues that he was a socialist in thinking and sympathies, and antagonistic towards the Communist Party because of its underground character and methods. He participated in local labor organizing and represented the AFGE as a

Daniel S. Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 186.

¹⁷ Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 554; Author's interview with Henry Hart, 27 April 2002 [transcript], 10.

delegate to the CLU. More than anyone in the union, Frazier was devoted to black rights and ending racial discrimination in the South. He was a supporter of the Highlander Folk School and during his TVA tenure made several trips to visit Monteagle. But even for young idealists like Frazier, segregation and racial discrimination remained an insurmountable obstacle in the Jim Crow South.¹⁸

In early February 1936, Amherst College graduate Howard Bridgman joined the AFGE. Only a few weeks on the job as a TVA messenger, Bridgman found his work demanding, with “secretaries hollering for extra, urgent messages, impossible to fulfill immediately.” Messengers worked a seven-hour day from 8:00 am to noon, interrupted with a three hour break, and then returned to work from 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm. Bridgman commented that the exhausting hours helped him “realize what it means to be a member of the working-class.” But like other young TVA employees, Bridgman expected to move up in the ranks of the organization after paying his dues. Bridgman renewed his friendship with Benton MacKaye and found other TVA employees such as Mabel Abercrombie to share hikes in the Smoky Mountains, square-dances, and political discussions. An active member of the Smoky Mountain Hiking Club and frequent participant in the Philosophers Club meetings, Bridgman developed a close network of friends.¹⁹

¹⁸ FBI Milwaukee Report, 5 August 1950, Howard Frazier FBI file #121-10515-20; FBI Knoxville Report, 16 September 1950, Frazier FBI file #121-10515-16; Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 429; Howard Frazier to Jim Dombrowski, [16?] March 1933, folder 31, box 12, Highlander Collection, Wisconsin.

¹⁹ Bridgman Diary, 1936, quotes from 34 and 42, 35-36, 39, 41, 82, UT Special Collections.

Membership in the AFGE allowed Bridgman to promote Workers' Education activities and to commiserate with other young thinkers. Bridgman served on several AFGE committees, most notably the Education Committee and the Foreign Films Committee. Through the Education Committee, Bridgman organized education courses for workers and in June started a summer scholarship program for women to attend the Southern Summer School for Women Workers in Industry in the nearby mountains of Western North Carolina. The Foreign Films Committee organized the presentation of British, Russian, German, and French films to Knoxvilleans. With the cooperation of the University of Tennessee, the AFGE Foreign Films Committee showed subtitled films such as "Don Quixote," "New Gulliver," and "A Nous la Liberte" (Freedom is Ours), on the University campus at the Alumni Auditorium, Ferris Hall, and even the football stadium, Shields-Watkins Field. By the end of 1936, the films were so popular that the committee sold season tickets and showed films at Knoxville College, the city's African American school.²⁰

Like other outsiders, Bridgman relied on temporary residences during his TVA tenure. During the early years of the agency, boarding houses, the YMCA, rented rooms, or short-term apartments served as the home-bases for the rush of TVA workers, most of them new to the city. Bridgman first rented a small room at a Highland Avenue address, but quickly tried to find a rural residence with "no neighbor's radio within earshot." That

²⁰ *Knoxville Labor News*, 18 June 1936, 25 June 1936, 9 July 1936, 2 July 1936, 23 July 1936; *The Aurora*, 26 November 1936; Bridgman Diary, 1936, 72, UT Special Collections; Howard Bridgman, "Joint Report of Educational Committee and Foreign Films Subcommittee," 7 April 1937, folder 10, box 3, AFGE #136 Records, Southern Labor Archives, GSU; George Palo to Parents, 29 November 1936, folder 5, box 2, George P. Palo Papers, 1924-1967, Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection, Knox County Public Library System, Knoxville, Tennessee [hereinafter Palo Papers, McClung].

spring Bridgman drove through the surrounding countryside in his car, nicknamed the “Rebel,” searching for more permanent and secluded housing.²¹

Within this network of activities and individuals, Bridgman exhibited his interest in labor education and unionization. Bridgman’s diary from the first three months of 1936 shows his devotion to the plight of workers. He first focused his efforts on local hosiery workers in desperate need of strong union leadership and education. At AFGE and CLU meetings Bridgman met with representatives from the American Federation of Hosiery Workers (AFHW) active in the Knoxville area. Bridgman believed that Workers’ Education could benefit all laborers and looked for allies. He became good friends with fellow labor guru and TVA employee Buck Borah. Bridgman also appealed to Myles Horton at Highlander, and in late February he visited Monteagle to discuss conducting labor classes in Knoxville. While at Highlander, Bridgman became acquainted with John Frantz, who provided the group with “some excellent local mountain dew (160 proof).”²²

Bridgman’s socialist leanings became more apparent that winter, as he pushed for workers’ security, participated in labor organizing, and frequently criticized the government for its ineffective approaches to economic and industrial recovery. Bridgman found that New Deal agencies had little understanding of planning, cooperation, investigation, and coordination, especially in rural areas. As a result, he declared that the snubbed “rugged individualists” who might be able to lead plans for

²¹ Bridgman Diary, 1936, quote from 39, 82, UT Special Collections.

²² Ibid., quote from 54, 34-36, 42, 51-55, 97.

social betterment “dodge their social responsibility by the ancient and mystical process of retreating to a cave in the mountains and pulling it in after them.” Bridgman believed that economic restructuring and the conservation of natural resources were at the heart of recovery. Like other Americans, he questioned the stability of capitalism, writing in his diary that he would keep “one foot to the Left, so as to be able to swing that way if and when things come to a breaking point.” After less than a month on the job, Bridgman started to question TVA’s ability to enact change throughout the valley. Specifically, he found the agency’s local cooperative program, TVAC, to be ineffective and in need of a stronger educational component. Bridgman’s union friends encouraged him to leave the agency and become more involved with the organized labor movement, but with a permanent job, potential for labor education, and a variety of social outlets, Bridgman decided to stay with TVA.²³

During the last part of February 1936, Howard Bridgman recruited Burton Zien into the AFGE local. Zien, a graduate of the University of Wisconsin, started his TVA tenure in November 1935 as the personal clerk and messenger for James Lawrence Fly, who at that time was General Counsel for TVA.²⁴ Zien also delivered official documents for the Legal Department. Within a few months, Zien experienced great discontentment about his job, believing that he was too qualified to deliver mail. Zien shared his thoughts with friend, boardinghouse neighbor, and co-worker Pat Todd, who worked in

²³ First quote *Knoxville Labor News*, 9 April 1936; Bridgman Diary, 1936, second quote from 41, 35, 51, UT Special Collections.

²⁴ James Lawrence Fly, 1898-1966, left TVA in 1939 to become the chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

the Coordination Division. Todd believed that Zien was more suited to the engineering and administrative aspects of the Coordination Division and encouraged Zien to apply for an internal transfer. During the summer of 1936 Todd and Zien took an extensive motorcycle trip across Tennessee, Mississippi, and Arkansas. Todd was especially concerned with the plight of southern tenant farmers. They traveled to cotton plantations across the Mississippi Delta, talking to sharecroppers and visiting cooperatives. Zien took a leave of absence to make the journey, and while on the road he wrote TVA requesting a raise because he was discussing TVA with the sharecroppers and valley residents he encountered. TVA denied the request.²⁵

In addition to his friendship with Todd, Zien also found an audience for his employee concerns within the ranks of the AFGE chapter. Zien's interest in labor increased his activity in the AFGE and by the end of the year the group elected him as a delegate to the CLU. To broaden his understanding of industrial management and shop practices, during the fall of 1936 Zien took several non-credit courses in statistics and public administration at the University of Tennessee. As Zien grew even more impatient

²⁵ FBI Boston Report, 7 July 1950, in folder 1, box 2097, Burton Zien, Oversize Personnel Security Investigation Case Files, 1928-1982, Civil Service Commission and Office of Federal Investigations, Records of the Office of Personnel Management, Record Group 478, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland [hereinafter Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park]; Burton Zien, "Statement to the FBI," 2 June 1950, 6-8, in folder: Burton Zien, box 52, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), Executive Session Transcripts and Investigative Name Files, Records of the United States House of Representatives, Record Group 233, Legislative Archives Center, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C. [hereinafter HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA]; FBI Knoxville Report, 18 December 1941, FBI file #100-10189-29; FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 11 June 1948, Burton Zien file #121-9839-37.

with TVA, complaining that as “office boy” he had to buy cigarettes for his boss and pull office shades, he was developing skills as a labor organizer.²⁶

Like his other labor-minded colleagues, Zien wrote articles for the *Knoxville Labor News*, hailed by its publishers as the official newspaper of organized labor in Knoxville and East Tennessee. Zien wrote articles about coal mining legislation, national defense, and the state’s workman’s compensation act, but was particularly critical of the Knoxville Housing Authority. Unimpressed with Knoxville’s inability to solve its urban problems, Zien’s April 1936 article, “God Bless Our Home,” attacked the poor living conditions of the city and compared them to the slums of New York City. According to Zien, Knoxville’s host of dilapidated, unpainted wooden structures covered with rusty metal shingles contained malaria, rickets, pellagra, and bred “laziness, lust, futility of life,” ignorance, and crime. Zien continued to write socially conscious pieces, and in August 1936, he joined Forrest Benson, Christine Eversole, and Thurber Wolfe as assistant editors of the TVA section of the *Knoxville Labor News*.²⁷

Kit Buckles, who Zien later called the “original woman Communist of the TVA,” served as editor of the TVA section of the *Knoxville Labor News*. A graduate of the University of Colorado, Buckles started as a TVA research aide in February 1936 and immediately became active in the AFGE. Although Buckles held a low-level TVA job, her skills as a labor organizer made her an ideal chapter leader. She served as chair of the

²⁶ Zien, “Statement to the FBI,” 2 June 1950, 8, Zien HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA; FBI Washington Report, 7 July 1941, FBI file #100-10189-6; “United States Civil Service Investigation of Burton J. Zien,” 8 April 1941, folder 3, box 2097, Burton Zien, Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park.

²⁷ *Knoxville Labor News*, quotes from 12 April 1936, 30 April 1936, 28 May 1936.

chapter's education committee and by March she had launched a regular section of the *Knoxville Labor News*, called "With the Tennessee Valley Authority," to highlight the activities of AFGE branch #136. As editor of the TVA section, Buckles worked with Howard Bridgman, Burt Zien, Paul David, Forrest Benson, and Christine Eversole to promote the AFGE. She also stood alongside her colleagues on nearby picket lines and led rallies for workers of the Holston Hosiery Mills.²⁸

Although her time with TVA would be short-lived, Buckles influenced the direction of many of her colleagues and the agency's white-collar employee union. Buckles put just as much energy into her personal life as she did her union work. A good friend of Benton MacKaye and Mabel Abercrombie, Buckles hiked with the Smoky Mountain Hiking Club, attended numerous square dances, and enlivened meetings of the Philosophers Club. But her true passion was labor organizing and her political sympathies belonged with the Communist Party. In 1936, the Communist Party offered many pro-labor supporters other alternatives to New Deal recovery. Buckles believed that her unionization efforts in Tennessee would only be strengthened by holding a loose affiliation with the Communist Party.

Tennessee's Communist Party in the 1930s consisted of few members and even fewer organizers. In 1936, Ted Wellman served as the secretary of the Tennessee Communist Party, responsible for statewide organizing. Born in Russia and raised in New York, Wellman enjoyed "plays, movies, and current literature," and listed "drinking and female companionship" as his favorite hobbies. Later CP district organizer Paul

²⁸ Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 520, 557; [AFGE] "Committees," ca. 1936, folder 19, box 9, in AFGE #136 Records, Southern Labor Archives, GSU; Mabel Abercrombie to

Crouch described Wellman as “a sort of Greenwich Village character; witty, entertaining, sophisticated and shallow.” As state CP organizer from 1935 to 1939, Wellman worked out of Chattanooga and edited the *Southern Worker*, a pro-Communist newspaper.

Wellman hoped to build a CP membership within TVA’s ranks. During the summer of 1936, Mabel Abercrombie reported that Wellman had held a rally near the Tyson Park, a tranquil wooded public space located several blocks from the University of Tennessee campus, to explain the CP’s presidential platform. That year, Wellman had successfully recruited Kit Buckles and Pat Todd to build the “TVA Branch.”²⁹

During their search for fellow travelers, Buckles and Todd met TVA artist David Stone Martin. A regular at AFGE meetings, Martin’s skills as an artist were particularly useful for union publications. Martin believed that the plight of the worker was the most pressing issue of the time and hoped that the small local could make significant contributions to area labor organizing. But Martin’s political philosophy grew more reactionary. That summer his brother Francis, an under-employed advertising copy editor from Chicago, moved to Knoxville. Francis quickly found work with a small advertising agency and shared a house with his brother’s family. Both of the Martin brothers were interested in union organizing, with Francis leaning more toward communism. Francis, who later became Communist Party organizer for Knox County,

Benton MacKaye, 1 October 1936, folder 5, box 168, MacKaye Papers, Dartmouth.

²⁹ Paul Crouch, “Broken Chains,” unpublished mss., chapter 19, page 2, box 17, Paul Crouch Papers, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, Stanford University, Stanford, California [hereinafter Crouch Papers, Stanford]; Gary May, *Un-American Activities: The Trials of William Remington* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 29; FBI New York Report, 1 July 1946, Theodore Wellman FBI file #100-31075-24; SAC Miami to FBI Director, 27 April 1948, Wellman FBI file #100-31075-29; Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 459-60; Mabel Abercrombie to Benton MacKaye, 17 August 1936, folder 5, box 168, MacKaye Papers, Dartmouth.

held a great deal of influence over his brother's thinking. The Martin household quickly became a location for Communist Party meetings.³⁰

By summer of 1936, college acquaintances Forrest Benson and Christine Eversole joined Buckles in the AFGE. The three University of Colorado alums found the AFGE a safe harbor of like-minded individuals interested in labor organizing. Benson wrote articles for the TVA page of the *Knoxville Labor News* concerning textile strikes, union organizing, Workers' Education courses, and TVA employee benefits. At the same time Eversole contributed to the *Knoxville Labor News*, joined a young socialist group called the Falcons, planned education courses for women textile workers, and prepared for the union's participation in the 1936 Labor Day celebration.³¹

Knoxville's observance of Labor Day 1936 brought the AFGE group to a much larger audience. Buckles and her assistant editors published an expanded issue of the union's *Knoxville Labor News* page. But the union's parade float, co-designed by David Stone Martin, drew the most attention. The lower part of the float depicted a dam with water flowing through the sluice gates, while the top of the float featured a man's head, facing forward. Beneath the image, large letters read: "Workers Vision the Future." One union member later described the float as "a good piece of art in the approved style of Communism," with an "idealized proletarian gazing into the unclouded future." Forty

³⁰ "Case of David Stone Martin," January 1944, folder 1, box 1244, David Stone Martin, Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park; Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 462.

³¹ FBI Knoxville Report, 3 November 1950, Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443-40; Christine Eversole to James Dombrowski, 17 July 1936, Christine Eversole to James Dombrowski, 28 July 1936, Christine Eversole to James Dombrowski, 11 August 1936, folder 25, box 6, Highlander Research and Education Center Collection, 1917-1999, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin [hereinafter, Highlander Collection, Wisconsin]; FBI Knoxville Report, 9 June 1950, Christine Eversole Benson FBI file #100-369556-2.

chapter members marched behind the float through downtown Knoxville and later that day about twenty members marched with the float during a parade in nearby Maryville. The float garnered a great deal of attention but limited applause from the spectators.³²

Office romance also figured prominently in the lives of young, single TVA employees. Square dances, late-night meetings, and overnight hikes were ideal opportunities for couples to form. For many young men and women just out of the college dormitories or their parents' homes, these were their first unsupervised activities with the opposite sex. One TVA employee later explained that during a hike in the Great Smoky Mountains, he and a "liberal" female colleague shared a tent. He recalled, "I guess I was fairly stiff in those days, but I remember she seemed to be prepared to go absolutely as far as I wanted to go." Within the "Knoxville Fifteen," several personal relationships, marriages, and divorces occurred during the late 1930s. Christine Eversole and Forrest Benson, friends from college, were the first of these TVA relationships to blossom. Their whirlwind courtship during the summer of 1936 resulted in a September wedding. Kit Buckles also dated Buck Borah for a brief time during 1936. But for marriages between two TVA employees, the agency's nepotism policy prohibited the

³² A photograph of the AFGE float is in the folder 12, box 1, David Stone Martin Papers, 1939-1991, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. [hereinafter Martin Papers, AAA]. Johanna Kollmorgen to Louis McDade, 22 August 1936, Johanna Kollmorgen to Ed Jones, all in folder 11, box 5, in AFGE #136 Records, Southern Labor Archives, GSU; *Knoxville Labor News*, 3 September 1936, 17 September 1936; quote from Lee Greene, "The Seven Ages: An Autobiography," 1986, typescript copy, Lee S. Greene Collection, 1938-1986, MS 1391, UT Special Collections [hereinafter Green Collection, MS 1391, UT Special Collections]; Lee [Greene] to Paul David, 8 September 1936, folder: Paul T. David, 1934-1936, box 1, David Papers, UVA.

employment of both husband and wife after one full year of marriage. So some marital unions may have been nipped in the bud.³³

Just after the Labor Day celebrations in 1936, Mt. Holyoke College graduate Muriel Speare joined the TVA AFGE chapter. Speare arrived in Knoxville that summer and after a short time in the stenographic pool she worked in the Social and Economic Division, typing reports on the areas to be flooded by TVA dams. Speare found the work overwhelming, later calling TVA “a new experimental government organization, a big organization that was growing, [and] doing great things.” She believed that TVA would help remedy the region’s poverty, poor education, and the exploitation of the workers, especially in the textile mills. Building on her interests, Speare began attending AFGE meetings and met a variety of socially conscious individuals. She later recalled that union gatherings “became a social event. Here I was, a single person, didn’t know anybody in the city of Knoxville.” Speare became good friends with Abercrombie, Buckles, Martin, and two TVA employees who arrived later that fall.³⁴

The first, Henry Hart, began work for TVA in September. Fresh from Vanderbilt University, Hart sought intellectual stimulation and a chance to move up in TVA. The AFGE provided Hart access to other young thinkers as well as recreational opportunities. His zeal for political discussions in the AFGE group and as a member of the Philosophers

³³ May, *Un-American Activities*, 28; FBI Knoxville Report, 2 September 1950, Katherine Buckles FBI file #100-353259-7; Author’s interview with Henry Hart, 27 April 2002, [transcript] 9; Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 434; Floyd W. Reeves to TVA Board of Directors, 15 June 1934, folder 2, box 7, AFGE #136 Records, Southern Labor Archives, GSU.

³⁴ Quotes from, Selma Williams, “From Interview with Muriel Williams Mather,” ca. 1990, [transcript] 1-2, folder 6, box 1, Muriel Williams Mather Papers, 1939-1990, MS 2585, UT Special Collections [hereinafter Mather Papers, UT Special Collections] and Selma R. Williams, *Red-Listed: Haunted by the Washington Witch Hunt* (Reading, MA.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1993), 106.

Club attracted attention from Kit Buckles. Within his first week on the job, Buckles and Hart had lunch at the Terrace Tea Room in Knoxville to discuss communism. Over lunch, Buckles emphasized the role of African Americans in the CP movement, as their subordinate role in the Jim Crow South made them ideal undercover operatives. Hart expressed an interest in communism, but he told Buckles that his religious beliefs would prevent him from joining the CP. Not discouraged, Buckles offered Hart writing opportunities for the TVA page of the *Knoxville Labor News*. Hart gladly accepted and continued his AFGE involvement. Hart also found solace in social distractions. An outdoorsman and devoted mountain climber, Hart joined Abercrombie, Bridgman, and Speare on numerous trips to the Great Smoky Mountains.³⁵

Like other TVA messengers, Hart first lived at the downtown YMCA. In early October, Hart met William Remington, another young intellectual and YMCA resident. As a TVA messengers, they each earned about \$90 per month and could easily afford the inexpensive rates of a boardinghouse. Remington and Hart decided to pool their resources and search for a residence together. The following week, another TVA employee referred Hart and Remington to a boardinghouse at 920 Temple Court. The landlady, Nellie Ogle, showed them a first floor furnished apartment, with a living room, a sleeping porch, and bathroom. Together, Hart and Remington could afford the monthly rent of \$60, which included meals. Mrs. Ogle also told them that other TVA employees lived there, which was the final selling point for Hart and Remington. That day Hart and

³⁵ Author's interview with Henry Hart, 27 April 2002, [transcript] 6-7; Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 533; SAC Washington Field to FBI Director, 29 December 1948, FBI file #121-11415-8; May, *Un-American Activities*, 29; FBI Knoxville Report, 9 June 1950, Christine Benson FBI file #100-369556-2.

Remington moved into the apartment, and spent two hours deciding living arrangements. Excited with his new residence, Remington reassured his parents that moving to Knoxville was “turning out to be a most marvelous idea from the point of view of getting to know people,” but further wrote that “the way these southerners do business is an education.” Within the week, Remington met second-floor resident Mabel Abercrombie at the Temple Court dinner table, and would soon join her and others on hikes in the Great Smoky Mountains.³⁶

Hart and Abercrombie introduced Remington to other TVA intellectuals and got him involved in the AFGE chapter. Through the branch, Remington organized education programs for African Americans at Knoxville College and later he participated in picket lines at nearby factories. His interest in labor education led him to work closely with Kit Buckles on articles for TVA’s page in the *Knoxville Labor News*. Sometime in October 1936, Buckles attempted to recruit Remington into the Communist Party, but conflicting accounts make it difficult to determine if she was successful. More certain, however, is that Buckles recruited Colorado colleague Christine Benson into the CP that fall. At the same time, Mabel Abercrombie joined the CP, or as she called it the “Benighted Front.” Pat Todd also found success recruiting for the CP and in December 1936 convinced Howard Bridgman to join. Todd became good friends with Remington, and that fall Todd sold his red Indian 75 motorcycle, which Todd had used during his trip with Zien, to Remington for \$150. Todd quickly purchased another motorcycle and joined

³⁶ Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 4,5, 9, 472, 493; FBI Knoxville Report, 29 May 1948, FBI file #121-6159-50, 10-11; May, *Un-American Activities*, 26-27; quote from William Remington to Parents, n.d. [ca. October 1936], William Remington Papers, Addition, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. [hereinafter Remington Papers Addition, LC].

Remington on a number of motorcycle trips through the Smoky Mountains. While Buckles and Todd worked to unionize local workers and mobilize African American voters in the area, both made efforts to convince other AFGE colleagues to join the Communist Party.³⁷

Just as quickly as a core group of like-minded individuals formed within the entry-level ranks of TVA, its membership suffered a loss. Not long after Kit Buckles invited Remington to join the Communist Party, she unexpectedly left Knoxville. Officially, on October 16, 1936, Buckles requested leave time from her TVA position “due to ill health.” Unofficially, Buckles may have left because of outside pressure. In a letter to Burton Zien that October, Buckles asked Zien to take over the editorial responsibilities of TVA’s *Knoxville Labor News* page. “You are the best one, the logical one and I hope you will take over,” Buckles explained. She closed by saying, “I won’t go into any other details now. Will you call me and tell me if you will take over this week? I may leave the TVA alive if you do instead of in a pine box.” It is likely that CP leadership or local labor leaders pressured Buckles to leave East Tennessee. At the same time, Buckles had suddenly married journalist Elliott Schryver. By November, the Schryvers had relocated to Wyoming and later would settle in New York City. The

³⁷ Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 36, 44, 411, 417, 432-33, 519; May, *Un-American Activities*, 27, 29; FBI Knoxville Report, 29 May 1948, FBI file #121-6159-50, 11; FBI Knoxville Report, 9 June 1950, Christine Benson FBI file #100-369556-2; Congress, House, Committee on Un-American Activities, *Hearings Regarding Communism in the United States Government—Part I* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1950), 1755; Mabel Abercrombie to Benton MacKaye, 1 October 1936, folder 5, box 168, MacKaye Papers, Dartmouth; “William Remington Testimony,” in *United States vs. William Walter Remington*, Cr. 132-344, Transcripts of Record, 1950-1953, 2435-36, Records of the United States Courts of Appeals, Record Group 276, National Archives and Records Administration—Northeast Region (New York City) [hereinafter Remington Trial, RG 276, NARA Northeast].

following spring, Kit Buckles Schryver officially resigned from TVA, leaving behind a brief but complex legacy.³⁸

At exactly the same time as Buckles' departure, the AFGE's national leadership changed. During 1936 the American Federation of Labor (AFL) split into two labor organizations. John L. Lewis, leader of an internal AFL group called the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO), demanded that the organization include unskilled workers and adopt the policy of industrial unionism. The AFL, led by an older generation of union leaders interested in representing skilled craft workers, ordered the dissolution of the CIO. Instead, the CIO, later renamed the Congress of Industrial Organization, emerged as a rival labor organization representing the unskilled and the newer generation of union leaders.³⁹

The TVA branch of the AFGE paid close attention to this national shift. In May 1936, Paul David took a leave of absence from TVA to serve with Floyd Reeves, the first Director of the Personnel and Social Economic Division, on the President's Committee on Administrative Management. David moved to Washington D.C. to work on a study of personnel administration and the next month officially stepped down as president of the branch. During David's absence many chapter members became disenchanted with the

³⁸ Quotes from FBI Knoxville Report, 2 September 1950, Katherine Buckles FBI file #100-353259-7 and Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 519; FBI Denver Report, 23 May 1942, Elliot Schryver FBI file #77-24514-3; FBI New York Report, 2 July 1942, Elliot Schryver FBI file #77-24514-6; SAC Knoxville to FBI Director, 16 June 1950, Katherine Buckles FBI file #100-353259-6.

³⁹ Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Age of Roosevelt: The Coming of the New Deal* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1959), 412-15; William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 110-11; Thomas R. Brooks, *Toil and Trouble: A History of American Labor* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1964), 172-73; Philip Taft, *The A. F. of L. From the Death of Gompers to the Merger* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), 145-46, 168-69.

AFL and pushed for affiliation with the CIO. In November, David officially resigned from TVA to accept a position on the President's Committee on Vocational Education. In his absence, the branch appointed George Gant as temporary leader and then in December, elected Lee S. Greene to the presidency. Greene resigned from the position a month later, and left Hugh Urban in charge of the branch. Under Urban's direction, the local moved towards more liberal activities and national affiliation with the CIO.⁴⁰

The CIO represented new directions for organized labor and TVA's AFGE members wanted a more proactive affiliation. At the time of this transition, TVA union members supported liberal causes such as the League for Industrial Democracy, the League Against War and Fascism, the Boycott Against Japanese Goods, the American Civil Liberties Committee, and especially the Loyalist cause in the Spanish Civil War. In 1936, war broke out in Spain between the Francisco Franco's fascists and the existing Popular Front republican government. The war became a staging ground for World War II, with Adolph Hitler and Benito Mussolini supporting Franco, while the Soviet Union and Mexico endorsed the Spanish Loyalists. The United States government refrained from officially supporting either side. However, a substantial group of young intellectuals joined the Loyalists as fundraisers and soldiers in the Abraham Lincoln

⁴⁰ Paul David to Johanna Kollmorgen, 30 June 1936, folder: Paul T. David, 1934-1936, box 1, David, "Examination for Principal Economist," ca. 1940, all in David Papers, UVA; Richard O. Niehoff, *Floyd W. Reeves: Innovative Educator and Distinguished Practitioner of the Art of Public Administration* (New York: University Press of America, 1991), 183; David Interview, Antioch, 60-61; A.J. Robertson to U.S. Civil Service Commission, 15 March 1937, David file, TVA Employee Records; Lee S Greene, "Memoirs, 1905-1957," 5-7, typescript copy, MS 1601, UT Special Collections.

Brigade. The North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy served as the national organization supporting the anti-fascist Loyalists.⁴¹

During the fall of 1936, several Knoxville unions, including the AFGE, organized committees to raise funds and awareness for the Spanish Loyalists' cause. Together the unions sponsored lectures, including a presentation by blinded Spanish Civil War veteran Robert Raven. Bridgman, Zien, Todd, Martin, Frazier, Hart, and Remington all promoted the cause of Spanish democracy. "We mainly raised money but also we did a good bit to try to influence the public opinion" on the issues of the Spanish Civil War, Hart later recalled. Although their efforts were stretched across other causes, the "Knoxville Fifteen" consistently contributed to the national effort to support the Spanish Loyalists.⁴²

At the beginning of 1937, the AFGE chapter counted a solid 321 members. During their January meeting, the group elected nine CLU delegates, which included Frazier, Martin, Borah, Christine Benson, Todd, and Bridgman. Along with Zien, Hart, Remington, Speare, Forrest Benson, Abercrombie, and Frantz (who returned to TVA that fall), this small cadre of intellectuals came together through AFGE activities. The social nature of their activities formed the basis for their associations. Remington later recalled

⁴¹ Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 477; David M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 398-99; Peter N. Carroll, *The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade: Americans in the Spanish Civil War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 59-63.

⁴² "Minutes of the [AFGE] Meeting of October 7, 1936," folder 1, box 1, Greene Papers, MS 1367, UT Special Collections; "Minutes of [UFWA] Meeting of January 19, 1938," "Minutes of [UFWA] Meeting of March 16, 1938," all in folder 9, box 6, "Resolution on the Spanish Situation," ca. 1937, folder 15, box 8, AFGE #136 Records, Southern Labor Archives, GSU; Quotes from author's interview with Henry Hart, 27 April 2002, [transcript] 8; Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 477, 515-17, 522-25, 550-1.

that “there was never a day that we didn’t get together . . . either to hand out leaflets and then go drink some beer or sit down at dinner and talk about how many people had been signed up at this or that mill and decide what to do next.” Ideological discussions, workplace concerns, and even practical considerations such as splitting rents kept them together. Over the next two years, small social groups formed and re-formed among the “Knoxville Fifteen” according to the cause and situation.⁴³

Uncomfortable living conditions led many of the thirteen individuals to constantly move and seek new roommates. At the 920 Temple Court boardinghouse, Hart, Remington, and Abercrombie tested the limits of the landlady Mrs. Ogle. Dinner discussions on the failures of capitalism and the triumphs of the New Deal angered Ogle, who believed that Roosevelt was financially breaking the country and that the nation “should have a king again.” Abercrombie responded, by saying she “had just as soon salute a dishrag as the American flag.” Ogle was even more suspicious of Remington, who wore his hair long and uncombed, and left the residence on his red motorcycle at unusual hours. Curiosity led Ogle to Remington’s room, where she found labor literature and allegedly stole Remington’s candy. Ogle also overheard Remington’s late night phone calls from the house, which she believed were related to the labor organizing activities reported in local newspapers. By March 1937, Ogle had decided that Hart, Abercrombie, and Remington were “Communistically inclined” and asked them to move. Hart took a temporary TVA assignment in Dayton, Tennessee for a few weeks. Abercrombie quickly took residence in Norris, Tennessee, where she became involved in

⁴³ “Minutes of the [AFGE] Meeting of January 13, 1937,” folder 1, box 1, Greene Papers, MS 1367, UT Special Collections; quote from “William Remington Testimony,” 2472, Remington Trial, RG

the local AFGE chapter. Remington hoped to remain in Knoxville and found a room at Miss Ruby Cox's boardinghouse on 933 North Broadway. He shared an apartment with Pat Todd and later Horace Bryan, a member of the Arkansas Communist Party working to promote the TVA union. To appear less suspicious, Bryan, along with Bridgman, Todd, Borah, and later Remington, used post office box #1692 to receive mail from labor and Workers' Education groups.⁴⁴

But these and other residences proved temporary. During the spring of 1937, Ruby Cox grew concerned that Remington, Todd, and Bryan held meetings in their apartment "at all hours of the night." The group, under Bryan's direction, took a great interest in organizing local textile workers and recruited other TVA union members, including Bridgman, Abercrombie, and Zien, to participate in strikes and membership drives. Just like the previous landlady, Cox listened to their conversations, which she later described as "Communist talk." At one particular meeting that spring, while Cox sat on the porch listening and copies of the *Daily Worker* were strewn across their room, Bryan mentioned the need to organize the workers at Appalachian Mills in Knoxville. Immediately, Cox alerted the president of the company, Roy N. Lotspeich, who began an investigation of his own. Within a week, Cox demanded that Remington, Todd, and Bryan vacate the apartment. The trio then moved to an apartment at 912 Sevier Avenue, but they remained there only a few weeks, because they "had considerable trouble with

276, NARA Northeast.

⁴⁴ Quote from Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 476 and 545, 475, 529, 545-47, 552; May, *Un-American Activities*, 27-28, 31; FBI Newark Report, 11 December 1951, Horace P. Bryan FBI file #100-26303-15; "Application for Post-Office Box, Knoxville, Tennessee," 8 March 1937, Donald Appell to Committee on Un-American Activities File on Horace Bryan, 27 March 1950, all in folder: Horace Bryan, box 8, HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA.

bedbugs.” After their departure from 933 North Broadway, Cox cleaned out the space and found leaflets and pamphlets which she believed to be communist literature. At the end of May 1937, Bryan, Remington and Todd briefly took up residence at 1013 Oak Avenue. Burton Zien and Henry Hart, fresh from work in Dayton, had been staying with Howard Frazier, but soon joined Bryan, Remington, and Todd as roommates. At the residence, the group held serious political discussions and informal social gatherings such as strawberry shortcake parties, where the group would listen to phonograph records.⁴⁵

In June 1937, the final member of the “Knoxville Fifteen” arrived in Knoxville. Although sources debate the exact date, sometime during the first half of June 1937 Elizabeth McConnell and her husband Kenneth McConnell moved into an apartment on 1412 Forest Avenue. On June 16, Elizabeth McConnell, who claimed she was attending the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, began working for TVA as an assistant clerk and stenographer in the Engineering Division and quickly became active in the AFGE branch. While Elizabeth McConnell became familiar with other young employees interested in labor organizing, her husband set out to build a strong regional CP presence. He first held a meeting at Tyson Park, several blocks from the University of Tennessee campus, to gauge interest in the Communist Party. At the meeting, McConnell found enough interest in Knoxville and among TVA employees to begin recruiting new CP members. Together, the McConnells filled the void left by Kit Buckles as a CP recruiter within TVA. Their apartment quickly became the location for meetings to discuss labor

⁴⁵ Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 470, 497-99, 502-503, 540, 547-48, 550; “Howard Bridgman Testimony,” 734-5, Remington Trial, RG 276, NARA Northeast; May, *Un-American Activities*, 32; “Roy N. Lotspeich,” *Men and Women of Affairs: Who's Who in Knoxville* (Knoxville: Great Smoky Mountains Publishing Company, 1928); Zien, “Statement to the FBI,” 2 June 1950, 10-11, Zien HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA.

organizing, which drew a variety of CP members and non-members. Elizabeth McConnell recruited Muriel Speare into the Communist Party that summer and became good friends with fellow CP member Pat Todd.⁴⁶

During this period, William Remington also attempted to recruit for the Communist Party, even though it is unclear if he had officially joined himself. That May, Remington had met with TVA labor relations official and fellow AFGE member Rudolph Bertram. Remington scheduled a lunchtime appointment with Bertram to discuss their mutual interest in Workers' Education. Bertram later recalled that, "after generally beating around the bush," Remington invited him to join the Communist Party in order to achieve the goals of the labor movement. The invitation outraged Bertram and started a lengthy argument. With a strong background in trade unionism, Bertram lectured Remington on the evils of communism, while Remington defended the principles of the CP. Remington never admitted that he had joined the CP himself, but Bertram later recalled that if Remington was not a member, "he certainly was close to it."⁴⁷

The push for CP membership coincided with a renewed interest in the CIO activities throughout the valley. This new emphasis resulted in several TVA resignations. Dissatisfied with his chances for advancement and convinced that the agency needed better union leadership, Burton Zien resigned from TVA in March. Within a month he

⁴⁶ Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 414, 423, 425, 428, 440, 469-70, 473; C.E. McKillips to Louis J. Russell, 7 October 1949, folder: Elizabeth Todd, box 47, HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA.

⁴⁷ Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, quote from 445, 444; May, *Un-American Activities*, 30; "Rudolph Bertram Testimony," in United States vs. William Walter Remington, Cr. 138-289, Stenographers Minutes, 1953, 328-32, Records of the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, Record Group 21, NARA Northeast [hereinafter Remington Trial, RG 21, NARA Northeast].

found employment with the Knoxville Workers' Education Council. In April, Pat Todd also resigned from TVA to work directly for the Textile Workers Union (CIO) as a full-time organizer. The following month, Remington resigned from TVA to work alongside Zien on the Workers' Education Council. Buck Borah also followed suit and left TVA. That winter Borah's supervisor noted that his union work had impeded his TVA duties, and gave Borah an "unsatisfactory" employee rating. Borah successfully appealed the decision, but by the spring his work with TVA was over. In May, Borah resigned from TVA to work for the United Mine Workers (CIO) as a business and labor representative. Two months later Borah became an organizer for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America based in Atlanta. Although Zien, Todd, Remington, and Borah worked for different employers, the four individuals remained connected to their TVA colleagues by attending the same union meetings, participating in strikes, and meeting for social engagements.⁴⁸

In addition to the CIO, other union initiatives emerged in the region. Remington found that the Workers Alliance, a WPA union, allowed him to be much more than an "errand boy" for the CIO. That spring, he traveled to the small mining town of Mascot, Tennessee to help organize WPA workers. Remington followed that success with a trip to LaFollette, Tennessee to unionize construction workers. Pat Todd recognized

⁴⁸ Zien, "Statement to the FBI," 2 June 1950, 11, Zien HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA; FBI Washington Report, 28 June 1948, Burton Zien FBI file #121-9839-32X; FBI Knoxville Report, 19 January 1942, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-3; May, *Un-American Activities*, 32; "Background of Defendant at Knoxville, Tennessee, 1936-1937, From TVA File," Remington FBI file #74-1379-48, 4-5; [Name redacted] to Officer in Charge, 3 June 1943, 211, [Name redacted] to Officer in Charge, 9 February 1943, 46, all in Borah Army File; *Knoxville Labor News*, 10 June 1937; Paul David to Herbert S. Marks, 18 February 1937, Charles M. Stephenson, "Restatement of Judgment Concerning the Work of Bernard Borah," ca. 1937, folder 18, box 1, AFGE #136 Records, Southern Labor Archives, GSU.

Remington's growing reputation as a union activist, and invited Remington to help distribute handbills to the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union at the Washington Manufacturing Company in Cookeville, Tennessee.⁴⁹

On a hot June afternoon, Todd and Remington arrived in Cookeville and met with workers interested in forming a CIO union. The following day, on June 4, 1937, just before the end of the afternoon shift, Todd and Remington parked their car outside of the plant entrance with the intention of announcing a CIO meeting. They intended to distribute TWOC (Textile Workers Organizing Committee of the CIO) leaflets containing the slogan "Be Wise—Organize." But only a few moments after the 3:00 whistle blew, a group of fifteen to twenty men beat Remington with blackjacks, threw rocks at Todd, and ordered them to get out of Cookeville. Shaken and bruised, Remington and Todd left the scene and drove into the town for the union meeting. However, the anti-union mob followed the duo and, despite the presence of police and citizens, the group once again assaulted Todd and Remington while the pair attempted to "get some coca-cola." One witness later recalled that the mob "divided in two. One group practically played football with Pat, and the other group, in which there was a deputy, beat Bill with a blackjack." After several rounds of kicking and beating, the police finally halted the fight, leaving Todd with a broken arm, a fractured wrist, and a cracked vertebra, while Remington suffered heavy bruises and a mild concussion. Following medical attention, a few days later the two returned to Cookeville with a CIO motorcade of twenty cars honking their

⁴⁹ "William Remington Testimony," 2464-69, 2479, Remington Trial, RG 276, NARA Northeast; May, *Un-American Activities*, 32.

horns and yelling union messages. Their CIO mission was unsuccessful, but for Remington the event was an important part of his union education.⁵⁰

During the summer of 1937, the need for cheap rent led several TVA employees to sub-let a house together. Henry Jennison, a botany professor at the University of Tennessee and active member of the Smoky Mountain Hiking Club, lived at 1905 Prospect Place and spent the summers in New England. It is likely that Jennison met a number of young TVA employees on hikes in the Smokies, and it is certain that Jennison agreed to sub-let his house to Todd, Frazier, Hart, Bridgman, Zien, and another TVA employee Edward Glazek during the summer of 1937. Zien emerged as house manager, “planning the meals, directing the work of the colored maid, and purchasing the groceries.” At \$60 per month for rent, the house was not only economical but served as an important meeting place for the young TVA radicals during the summer months of 1937. While there, the Jennison house residents held study groups to discuss politics, philosophy, and the Spanish Civil War.⁵¹

Membership in the TVA union, strikes, meetings of the Communist Party, shifting residences, and general social occasions such as campouts and square dances made for unusual bedfellows. During 1937, dating, marriages, and extra-marital affairs within TVA’s entry-level ranks ensued. William Remington allegedly dated both Abercrombie

⁵⁰ “William Remington Testimony,” 2479-80, Remington Trial, RG 276, NARA Northeast; May, *Un-American Activities*, 33-34; “Textile Organizers Beaten by Company Thugs,” *Southern Worker* 5 (June 1937): 12; “Summary of Investigation at Cookeville,” Remington FBI file #74-1379-48, 89-90; “Investigation Concerning Remington’s Activity in Knoxville,” Remington FBI file #74-1379-663, 156-64; [Myles Horton], “Cookeville Case,” n.d., Myles Horton, “Comments on the Cookeville Case,” n.d., quote from “Maggie Rudolph Statement,” 14 December 1939, folder 4, box 41, Highlander Collection, Wisconsin.

⁵¹ Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 461, 512; Zien, “Statement to the FBI,” 2 June 1950, 11-12, quote from 14, Zien HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA.

and Speare. Other accounts claim that Abercrombie dated several of the other young TVA men. Muriel Speare did in fact begin dating Buck Borah, which led to marriage that fall and divorce a year later. Burton Zien began dating TVA stenographer Jeanne Pinaire during the spring of 1937, and the two married later that fall. Once in Knoxville, the McConnells quickly drifted apart. Kenneth's problems with alcohol and a propensity to be away on official CP business strained the marriage. Elizabeth, who had been active in labor organizing in Knoxville, also began a relationship with Pat Todd that summer. In October 1937, the McConnells divorced and one month later Elizabeth married Pat Todd. Kenneth McConnell left Knoxville shortly thereafter, leaving the Todds and Francis Martin, the brother of David Stone Martin, in charge of CP recruiting activities for Knoxville.⁵²

From the summer and into the fall of 1937, the "Knoxville Fifteen" and their associates continued to lose members to other obligations. Based on his mildly successful union work, William Remington considered staying in Tennessee. But Kenneth McConnell and Pat Todd convinced Remington to complete his college education, and sometime in July or early August 1937, William Remington left Knoxville to return for his junior year at Dartmouth College. So taken with the concept of TVA, for his senior thesis project, Remington proposed to write on the possibilities for developing

⁵² Louis J. Russell, "Report on Horace Bryan, Merwin Todd, William Remington, et al.," in folder: Horace Bryan, box 8, Zien, "Statement to the FBI," 2 June 1950, 17, all in HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA; May, *Un-American Activities*, 150; Williams, *Red-Listed*, 108; Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 461, 559; FBI New York Report, 7 April 1951, Elizabeth Todd FBI file #100-440310-5.

the Connecticut River Valley in the spirit of TVA.⁵³ Remington probably joined the Communist Party during his nine-month stint in Knoxville, as his associations and activities were clearly connected to the CP.

Because of TVA's nepotism policy, in September Christine Benson resigned from TVA and began working as a research assistant for Dr. Herman Finer. A British economist from the University of London, Finer worked out of an office adjacent to the TVA directors' offices in the New Sprinkle Building. Finer needed help preparing a study of TVA and hired Benson. Although not officially employed by TVA, Benson worked closely with TVA employees and maintained her AFGE and CP activities. Confirmed CP member Howard Bridgman also left TVA in September to take a job with the Eastern Cooperative League in New York City. At the same time as those departures, Remington's former roommates Henry Hart and Burton Zien officially joined the Communist Party.⁵⁴

By the fall of 1937, just over half of the "Knoxville Fifteen" still worked at TVA. The remaining individuals, Henry Hart, Mabel Abercrombie, Forrest Benson, John Frantz, Howard Frazier, David Stone Martin, Elizabeth Todd, and Muriel Speare, all emerged as leaders in the TVA white-collar union. In August 1937, the union officially

⁵³ Present day searches did not uncover Remington's senior thesis, only his senior fellowship proposal. Remington proposed to outline the economic and social implications of developing the Connecticut River Valley, while also comparing such an endeavor to TVA. William Remington, "Senior Fellow prospectus," 6 February 1938, Senior Fellow Papers, DA-84, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire.

⁵⁴ Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 6, 423-25, 434492, 512, 535; May, *Un-American Activities*, 34-35; "William Remington Testimony," 2462-63, 2478-79, "Howard Bridgman Testimony," 689, 748-49, all in Remington Trial, RG 276, NARA Northeast; Robert Stripling to Louis Russell, 19 March 1948, folder: William Remington, box 38, HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA; FBI Knoxville Report, 9 June 1950, Christine Eversole Benson FBI file #100-369556-2.

broke its affiliation with the AFL and re-formed under the banner of the CIO as the TVA Local #24 (Knoxville, Tennessee) of the United Federal Workers of America (UFWA). Outside assistance from Burton Zien, who worked as a UFWA organizer, also brought other TVA locals over to CIO affiliation. The Local #24 began addressing employee issues such as recruiting and termination policies, the contents of personnel files, grievance procedures, the employment of blacks, a revision of the nepotism policy, and programs for internal promotion. As before, a small number of confirmed CP members existed within the new local, including Hart, Elizabeth Todd, and Speare.⁵⁵

The greatest CP influence in the United States occurred in the 1930s. Communism emerged just outside the political and cultural mainstream, but was central to New Deal era issues such as unionization, unemployment insurance, and anti-fascism. Through pamphlets, speeches, and publications, Earl Browder found a large audience interested in an alternative to capitalism. Affiliation with the Communist Party during the 1930s was far different than images of communists during the Cold War period. The main objective of the 1930s CP revolved around improving the lives and security of workers and had little to do with overthrowing the United States government. By mid-decade, the CP supported New Deal initiatives and brought together a diverse group of writers, intellectuals, laborers, and the unemployed as part of the "Popular Front" or

⁵⁵ Congress, House, *Un-American Activities, Executive Hearings*, 3:1044-46; "Announcement of AFGE Meeting, August 4, 1937," "To All Knoxville TVA Employees," ca. August 1937, folder 11, "United Federal Workers of America, Local 23, By-Laws, ca. August 1937, folder 4, all in box 6, "Hugh Urban to Eleanor Nelson, 24 August 1937, folder 1, "Tentative Proposal for Improvements in TVA's Personnel Policies and Practices," ca. 1937, folder 11, all in box 7, Hugh Urban to George Gant, 29 September 1937, folder 12, box 3, all in AFGE #136 Records, Southern Labor Archives, GSU.

“Democratic Front” movement. This haphazard coalition petitioned for new rights for workers and made some advances.⁵⁶

TVA union members, especially those with CP memberships, joined the Popular Front movement. During this period, the Communist Party attracted members by de-emphasizing revolutionary dogma, instead claiming to represent twentieth century Americanism. As a result, the CP embraced a pro-Roosevelt and pro-New Deal platform. The CP upheld TVA as a shining example of what reform and legislation could accomplish. Likewise, members of the TVA chapter regarded the CP as a kind of advanced guard with the ability to extend and improve the New Deal. New recruits in Knoxville believed that extending New Deal reforms was possible through the CP.⁵⁷

Increased Communist Party activity during the late 1930s attracted attention from national government officials. In late-1936, the Department of Justice investigated some forty employees from the Department of Agriculture for communist affiliations. The Department of Agriculture fired all forty employees, many of whom belonged to AFGE Local #116. Members of the Knoxville white-collar union discussed the removals, but did not record any opinions. Because of political pressure from the right and left, in 1938 Congress created the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) to investigate allegations of communist infiltration. The committee, led by Texas Representative Martin Dies (D), investigated a wide range of Americans, including ten-

⁵⁶ Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1984), ix-xi, 207-8; Eugene Lyons, *The Red Decade*, 2nd edition (New York: Arlington House, 1970), 298-303; Carroll, *Odyssey of the Lincoln Brigade*, 49-51.

⁵⁷ Crouch, “Broken Chains,” unpublished mss., chapter 19, page 3, box 17, Crouch Papers, Stanford; May, *Un-American Activities*, 31; Leuchtenburg, *FDR and the New Deal*, 282.

year old actress Shirley Temple, in an effort to expose the communist nature of the New Deal's programs, personnel, and planning. Within two years of its creation, the Dies Committee would investigate the activities of the TVA UFWA local.⁵⁸

In the meantime, Communist Party activities in Knoxville attracted attention from local leaders and law enforcement. Roy N. Lotspeich, the president of Appalachian Mills and owner of the *Knoxville Journal*, directed Sheriff J.C. Cates to hire private detectives to investigate CIO activities and the "Communist talk" that had come from Ruby Cox's boardinghouse. Cates hired Josephus Remine, a 57-year-old real estate agent, farmer, and former deputy sheriff, to investigate "any kind of violations about anything" in the Knoxville area. From May to August 1937, Remine used the broad charge to investigate possible communist activities. Remine found that a number of TVA employees, including Henry Hart, William Remington, John Frantz, Pat Todd, David Stone Martin, and Buck Borah were quite active in CIO labor organizing activities and were probably all communists. Remine followed the TVA employees to strikes at nearby mills, secretly listened to their meetings by eavesdropping from dark boardinghouse hallways or in adjacent rooms, and observed their social activities.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ R.S. Sowell to Eureka Vess, 24 October 1936, Henry Wallace to John Schricker, 7 October 1936, folder 4, box 8, all in AFGE #136 Records, Southern Labor Archives, GSU; "Minutes of the [AFGE] Meeting of November 4, 1936," folder 1, box 1, Greene Papers, MS 1367, UT Special Collections; Leuchtenburg, *FDR and the New Deal*, 280-81; Kenneth O'Reilly, *Hoover and the Un-Americans: The FBI, HUAC, and the Red Menace* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 37, 44; Nancy Lopez, "Allowing Fears to Overwhelm Us:" A Re-Examination of the House Special Committee on Un-American Activities, 1938-1944," (Ph.D. dissertation, Rice University, 2002), 80-81.

⁵⁹ May, *Un-American Activities*, 31-32; Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 546-47; Congress, Senate, *Confirmation of Atomic Energy Commissioner and General Manager, Hearings Before the Senate Section of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1947), 797-804; Wheeler, *Knoxville*, 74.

A “Communist camp out in the east end of Dutch Valley, about 5 or 6 miles from the courthouse,” called Reeve’s Roost proved to be Remine’s most revealing finding. The eccentric owners of the property were Jesse W. Reeve, who worked as a linotype operator for the *Knoxville News Sentinel*, and his wife Jean, who later ran for state representative on the CP ticket. Confirmed nudists and communists, the Reeves often cooked outdoors, usually making barbeque, in the nude and participated in local CP activities. The rumor of nude CP meetings at Reeve’s Roost proved too tantalizing for Remine to ignore. On one occasion early that summer, Remine “secreted himself [in the woods] at sundown at the scene of the orgies.” Remine observed a “nude party” where eleven couples “both male and female stripped their clothing naked just like they were when born in the world,” and “gamboled nude” on a platform at the back of the Reeves’ house. Remine later explained that while observing the nude orgy he “saw plenty.” He believed that the nude partygoers were all communists and specifically identified Pat Todd, William Remington, Buck Borah, and Horace Bryan in attendance.⁶⁰

In August 1937, Remine delivered his final report on CP activities in Knoxville to Lotspeich. Remine found that CP activities were alive and well in Knoxville and that a small cell of CP members existed within the ranks of TVA. However, Lotspeich suppressed the report when he discovered that Remine’s niece was dating John Frantz, whom she later married. Despite some inaccuracies and personal biases, Remine’s report

⁶⁰ Congress, Senate, *Confirmation of Atomic Energy Commissioner*, first quote from 799, 800-804; second and fourth quotes from *Washington Post*, 27 February 1947; May, *Un-American Activities*, 32; third quote from J.S. Remine to W.R. Berry, ca. December 1949, Remington HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA.

did confirm rumors of unusual meetings of labor organizers and CP members in the Knoxville area.⁶¹

A month later, in September 1937, Kenneth McConnell reported on the progress of the CP in Knoxville at the Southern Conference of the Communist Party held in Chattanooga. McConnell heralded Knoxville as an ideal location for the building of the southern CP. He found that the numerous textile mills, ALCOA, nearby mining operations, small industries, and a disfranchised black population—which accounted for one-quarter of the city’s population—made it possible to build a strong CP in East Tennessee. Further, McConnell reported that TVA played a “tremendous part in forwarding the liberal-progressive movement” in Knoxville. The small TVA CP branch, he reported, “occupies a very strategic position for assuming the leadership in this movement.” Despite the great fanfare, in September 1937 the CP counted only 33 members in the city of 150,000, making the CP an insignificant political group. For TVA, the report counted 7 CP members in the clerical force and 13 members in the agency’s industrial ranks. Later testimony placed TVA’s contribution to the local CP as high as 20 white-collar employees, with all of them holding low-level jobs as messengers or stenographers. For another two years, TVA’s CP members kept the tiny Knoxville unit afloat.⁶²

⁶¹ Congress, Senate, *Confirmation of Atomic Energy Commissioner*, 797; May, *Un-American Activities*, 32.

⁶² “Evidence of Communist Party Cell Existing at Knoxville, Tennessee, 1936-1937,” Remington FBI file #74-1379-48, 12-17; May, *Un-American Activities*, 30; Congress, House, *Hearings Regarding Communism-Part I*, 1768.

Even with some local publicity on the small CP unit within TVA, during the late 1930s the press and the public remained fixated on the growing discord among the agency's first board of directors. Convinced that his fellow board members were taking TVA in the wrong directions, in 1937 Arthur Morgan took the offensive. In a series of articles and statements, Morgan questioned the ethics of David Lilienthal and Harcourt Morgan, and criticized the agency's uncooperative attitude toward private power companies. By the end of the year, Lilienthal and Harcourt Morgan fully informed President Roosevelt that Arthur Morgan's statements had damaged the agency and threatened the integrity of other New Deal programs. With TVA in the middle of a crucial legal battle before the Supreme Court, the case against the Tennessee Electric Power Company, Arthur Morgan continued his accusations and further angered Roosevelt.⁶³

The TVA board situation reached a climax in March 1938, when Roosevelt called the directors together for a White House meeting. At the session, Arthur Morgan refused to cooperate and after two more unsuccessful meetings, Roosevelt fired Morgan on the charge of "contumacy." Morgan challenged the decision and demanded a full congressional investigation of TVA. The resulting eight-month probe shed no light on Arthur Morgan's charges and fully vindicated David Lilienthal and Harcourt Morgan. The final report, released in April 1939 with over 6,000 printed pages, featured testimony from hundreds of witnesses and included over 600 exhibits. The investigation seemingly examined every component of TVA's activities. However, the issue of unionization of

⁶³ Aaron D. Purcell, "Struggle Within, Struggle Without: The *TEPCO* Case and the Tennessee Valley Authority, 1936-1939," *The Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 61 (Fall 2002): 201-2.

white-collar employees appeared only briefly when one witness discussed the development of the AFGE and the UFWA. Further, the final report contained nothing on the outside labor organizing activities of TVA employees or any alleged CP affiliations.⁶⁴

During the TVA investigation, recruiters, organizers, and members of the CP once again changed. In June 1938, TVA transferred Forrest Benson to Gilbertsville, Kentucky to serve as a personnel officer during the construction of Kentucky Dam. Christine Benson accompanied her husband and ended her brief membership in the Knoxville branch of the CP. That same month, Elizabeth Todd resigned from TVA and, along with her husband Pat, moved to New York City. Pat Todd continued his work as a CIO organizer, and by the fall the Todds had moved to Washington, D.C. Elizabeth secured a job as a junior stenographer with the National Resources Committee in Washington, while Pat Todd continued organizing and enrolled for courses at the Bliss Electrical Engineering School in Takoma Park, Maryland. In their place, Ted Wellman and Kenneth McConnell leaned heavily on Francis Martin and a handful of TVA employees to recruit new CP members.⁶⁵

During 1938, UFWA members continued their union activities with more intensity than their AFGE predecessors. Local president Hugh Urban focused the

⁶⁴ See also, President, *Removal of a Member of the Tennessee Valley Authority* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1938); Purcell, "Struggle Within, Struggle Without," 203-5; McCraw, *Morgan Versus Lilienthal*, 100-104; Congress, *Hearings Before the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Tennessee Valley Authority* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1939), 8:3274, 3386-95.

⁶⁵ Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 433; FBI New York Report, 7 April 1951, Elizabeth Todd FBI file #100-440310-5; McKillips to Russell, 7 October 1949, folder: Elizabeth Todd, box 47, HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA; FBI Knoxville Report, 19 January 1942, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-3; FBI New York Report, 24 October 1955, Todd FBI file #100-36774-10; May, *Un-American Activities*, 150.

membership on solving common problems of all employees and warned that a union “is not a recreational organization, an athletic association, a technical or professional society, or a debating society.” Members responded by forming new committees. With a large number of UFWA members employed in the Central Files Division, in March 1938 the chapter organized a “Shop Committee” to investigate the unit’s working conditions. The division served as the agency’s mailroom, the repository for all important documents, and the home for many entry-level employees. Based on the comments of union members, the committee first investigated the “occupational hygiene” of the division, by surveying atmospheric conditions, such as lighting, ventilation, and overall health of the workers.⁶⁶

But more than just correcting working conditions, the organization of the Shop Committee stemmed from numerous complaints about the Division’s administration. James L. Smith served as head of the Files Unit, supervising a great number of entry-level employees. Smith began working for TVA in September 1933 and quickly rose in the ranks to direct the division. Consumed with efficiency, Smith applied motion studies to filing methods and claimed that he had increased the production of employees by 600 percent without increasing their fatigue. Henry Hart later recalled that many Files Unit employees detested Smith, who they called the “speed-up guy.” Smith’s traditional attitude towards work ran counter to the opinions of his employees, including John Frantz, and co-workers Harry F. Alber and Kenneth Cameron. During 1938, the Shop

⁶⁶ Quote from Hugh Urban, “Functions of a Union in TVA,” 12 October 1937, folder 23, box 9, “Central Files Permanent Employee Shop Committee,” ca. March 1938, folder 21, box 8, “Study of Occupational Hygiene in Central Files Office,” ca. 1938, folder 7, box 2, all in AFGE #136 Records, Southern Labor Archives, GSU; “Head of Central Files Removed From Position Following Union Charges,” *White Collar* 2 (February 1939): 3.

Committee investigated the numerous allegations that Smith was not only difficult to work for, but discouraged union activity among his workers.⁶⁷

Smith suspected that a number of his employees were communists and believed that the UFWA union was a front organization designed to infiltrate the entire agency. From the beginning of his TVA tenure, Smith claimed that his supervisors had pressured him to harbor communists in Central Files. In 1934, Smith's supervisor strongly encouraged him to hire textile union activist Lucille Thornburgh. Smith was not given time to review her credentials, but quickly learned that Thornburgh began as a textile worker at the Cherokee Spinning Company in 1932, and the following year organized a union to address employee concerns. Thornburgh led the union through an eight-week strike during the southern textile strikes of 1934, but after the strike collapsed she found herself blacklisted from textile work. An active member of the Central Labor Union, Thornburgh emerged as an important labor leader in East Tennessee and worked with TVA's labor relations officials. Under pressure from his superiors, in November 1934, Smith reluctantly hired Thornburgh as a file clerk.⁶⁸

The creation of a "Shop Committee" in 1938 further convinced Smith that communists controlled the agency. Smith observed that many of his employees were

⁶⁷ Congress, Senate, *Nomination of Gordon R. Clapp, Senate Committee on Public Works* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1947), 228-30; quote from author's interview with Henry Hart, 13 November 2003.

⁶⁸ Congress, Senate, *Nomination of Gordon R. Clapp*, 232-33, 236; Connie L. Lester, "Lucille Thornburgh," in *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, ed. Carroll Van West (Rutledge Hill Press: Nashville, 1998), 975; Janet Irons, *Testing the New Deal: The General Textile Strike of 1934 in the American South* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 3-8, 70; Lucille Thornburgh, "Application for TVA Employment," ca. November 1934, idem, "TVA Acceptance and Personal History Statement," ca. November 1934, George Slover to Kenneth McKellar 29 November 1939, all in Lucille Thornburgh file, TVA Employee Records.

active in the TVA union and questionable causes, such as taking donations for the Spanish Loyalists. To make matters worse, Smith observed that some of his employees were busy with union activities during their work time. For these and other reasons, Smith opposed the formation of an internal committee to regulate his department and discouraged employees from participating in any unions. In June 1938, the Shop Committee released a report detailing the need to refine and simplify office procedures such as filing, indexing, and processing. As supervisor of the unit, Smith largely ignored the committee's recommendations and did little to implement the suggestions.⁶⁹

By the fall of 1938, the Shop Committee had lost all hope for establishing effective relations with Smith and in November filed a lengthy petition for Smith's removal. The committee charged that Smith had violated TVA's "Employee Relationship Policy" by ignoring employee grievances, refusing to recognize union representation, denying explanation of management decisions that directly affected the immediate interests of the employees, and allowing employee morale to decline. In dealing with employees, the committee charged that Smith's actions "have been clothed in mystery and marked by an absence of 'plain dealing' with those under his supervision." The committee's petition also questioned Smith's methods of accuracy and efficiency. Smith's "factory methods" included the practice of imposing fines on late employees, publicly posting the names of tardy employees, using an entrance-exit buzzer system to maintain promptness, restricting telephone usage, and frequently waving budget-cut documents in front of employees to imply threats of termination. As a result,

⁶⁹ W. Grant Boyer to James L. Smith, 20 June 1938, folder 7, box 1, AFGE #136 Records, Southern Labor Archives, GSU; Congress, Senate, *Nomination of Gordon R. Clapp*, 233-35.

the committee found Smith responsible for the low morale and extreme distrust that plagued the employees of the Central Files Unit.⁷⁰

TVA's Personnel Department responded to the committee's petition to remove Smith with a series of conferences and hearings. The case represented the growing importance of the TVA union and tested the authority's commitment to its 1935 "Employment Relationship Policy." TVA denied Smith's request for legal representation and instead he presented his own case before a committee. A TVA attorney represented the union, and called Alber, Frantz, Cameron, and Thornburgh as witnesses. The final meeting concluded on January 6, 1939, leaving a voluminous record of over 450 pages of testimony and over 70 exhibits. The committee determined that the union had taken an appropriate course of action in filing the petition, that Smith had failed to discharge his responsibilities as a supervisor, and that the evidence presented justified Smith's removal. The final report declared that Smith had refused to recognize the needs of his employees. On January 31, 1939, Gordon Clapp, the Director of Personnel, issued Smith's termination notice. Unable to appeal the decision, Smith resigned from TVA in late February, convinced that his refusal to join the CP had cost him his job.⁷¹

During the Smith case another important figure joined the CP and became an active participant in the lives of the remaining members of the "Knoxville Fifteen."

⁷⁰ Hugh Urban to Gordon Clapp, 25 November 1938, folder 21, box 8, quote from "In the Matter of Petition of United Federal Workers of America, Local 24, For the Removal of James L. Smith, Head of Files," ca. January 1938, 1, folder 23, box 4, AFGE #136 Records, Southern Labor Archives, GSU; "Decision in Central Files Case Seen as a Key to Future Policies," *White Collar* 2 (April 1939): 3, 10; Congress, Senate, *Nomination of Gordon R. Clapp*, 570.

⁷¹ A.S. Jandrey to Gordon Clapp, 28 January 1939, James Smith to Gordon Clapp, 28 February 1939, all in binder: Re: Smith, box 7, L.B., Bolt, Jr. Papers, 1930s-1960s, MS 2677, UT Special Collections [hereinafter Bolt Papers, UT Special Collections]; "Head of Central Files Removed," 3, 7; "Decision in Central Files Case," 10-12; Congress, Senate, *Nomination of Gordon R. Clapp*, 234, 238.

Roxie J. Paris, a registered nurse and member of several community organizations, took an unusual path to CP membership. In early 1938, her son William graduated from Carson-Newman College in nearby Jefferson City, Tennessee, and applied for a job at TVA. In the meantime, he secured a job as a taxi driver in Knoxville. In April, many taxi drivers joined the local International Teamsters and Chauffeurs Union #621 (AFL) and with help from the CLU organized a strike. To support her son, Paris served as secretary of the local union, largely preparing food for the strikers and raising money. During the strike, William made four or five unsuccessful attempts to secure a job with TVA. After departing from his last TVA rejection, William met Henry Hart while walking past the New Sprinkle Building. Hart invited him to a meeting at David Stone Martin's home, and allegedly informed William that he needed to join the Communist Party in order to get a TVA job. William attended the gathering and received a number of pamphlets on labor activities. After the meeting, a confused William informed his mother of Hart's ultimatum. Afraid that William was "too young and might become infected," Paris forbid her son from joining the CP and instead decided to join in his place.⁷²

That fall, Paris carefully made her way into the East Tennessee Communist Party while hiding her true motives for joining. Paris was well aware of union activities in Knoxville. During the taxi drivers' strike Paris had served as a delegate to the CLU and

⁷² Quote from James L. Smith, "Notes on Conversation with Mrs. Roxie J. Paris," 10 February 1947, folder 1947 Confirmation Committee, box 23, Kenneth McKellar Papers, 1898-1952, Memphis and Shelby County Public Library, Memphis, Tennessee [hereinafter McKellar Papers, Memphis]; "Roxie J. Paris Hubbert Testimony, "Official Report of Proceedings Before the National Labor Relations Board Loyalty Board in the Matter of Bernard J. Zien," 18 May 1949, I:101-3, folder 1, II:135, 174, folder 2, box 2097, Burton Zien, Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park; Congress, Senate, *Nomination of Gordon R. Clapp*, 599; idem, *Confirmation of Atomic Energy Commissioner*, 692-3.

became president of that organization's ladies auxiliary. Paris befriended a number of TVA employees during the taxi cab strike, including Henry Hart, Hugh Urban, John Frantz, David Stone Martin, Muriel Speare, and Buck Borah. Harry Alber also played a key role in the strike, reportedly saying that strikers should "blow up all taxicabs with or without passengers." Paris proceeded carefully, first informing Knoxville FBI agent John Davis of her intent to join and infiltrate the CP. Although he could not offer Paris any protection, Davis encouraged her to report information back to the FBI. Paris then began attending various labor meetings, and within a matter of weeks Muriel Speare asked her to join the CP.⁷³

Paris officially joined the CP in December 1938 and throughout her five-month membership she kept exact details of meetings, associations, and activities. On December 31, 1938, Paris attended her first CP meeting at the CIO hall in Knoxville. At the meeting, the group discussed Chinese relief efforts and David Stone Martin allegedly displayed his portraits of Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco. The stylized drawings reportedly showed Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco dressed in rags, while Stalin donned a crisp uniform. Then, on January 19, Paris met with her new friends at the Chicken Shack, a black restaurant on Vine Street, near Mulvaney Avenue. While eating the "best fried chicken in the world," members discussed the fate of a black schoolteacher fired for allegedly raping a student. At the end of the meeting, Paris received her membership card and learned that there were 55 CP members in Knox County, with 33 of them

⁷³ Smith, "Conversation with Paris," 10 February 1947, McKellar Papers, Memphis; Congress, Senate, *Nomination of Gordon R. Clapp*, 243; idem, *Confirmation of Atomic Energy Commissioner*, 693-94; Hubbert Testimony, "Proceedings in the Matter of Bernard J. Zien," 18 May 1949, I:101, Burton Zien, Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park.

employed by TVA. In January 1939, Paris also attended an informal meeting with Henry Hart, Muriel Speare, David Stone Martin, Francis Martin, and V.V. Paul, a black elevator operator for TVA. The group discussed TVA's role in the larger objectives of the CP. According to Paris, David Stone Martin assured the group that "Gordy" [Gordon Clapp] would play an important role "when the revolution comes." Paris later testified that CP members spoke highly of Clapp and expected him to support their initiatives.⁷⁴

During the spring of 1939, Paris continued to meet with her CP colleagues and made frequent visits to the FBI branch office. At one CP meeting held in the Farragut Hotel, Henry Hart spoke on lifting the Spanish embargo and raised nearly \$60 for the effort. In April, Paris attended her last meeting as a CP member. Hart, Kenneth Cameron, and John Frantz made presentations to an audience full of TVA employees. At the end of the meeting Paris announced that she was quitting the CP, which drew Francis Martin's comment that "You can't quit. No communist can ever quit." Nonetheless, Paris officially left the CP and at the end of the month sent the *Knoxville News Sentinel* a report on her subversive activities and gave up all of her notes to the FBI. Paris later explained that she joined the CP not to expose TVA and certain individuals, but to let the public know of the injustices of government employment and to defend her son.⁷⁵

Similar to Josephus Remine's investigations, Roxie Paris's reports and later testimony on the Knoxville CP proved to be questionable at best. Paris, who was

⁷⁴ Smith, "Conversation with Paris," 10 February 1947, McKellar Papers, Memphis; Congress, Senate, *Nomination of Gordon R. Clapp*, 602, 604-5; idem, *Confirmation of Atomic Energy Commissioner*, 694, 701.

⁷⁵ Quote from Smith, "Conversation with Paris," 10 February 1947, McKellar Papers, Memphis; Congress, Senate, *Nomination of Gordon R. Clapp*, 610-12, 624; idem, *Confirmation of Atomic Energy Commissioner*, 694, 704.

considerably older than her TVA comrades, drew additional attention to herself by constantly writing in her journal during CP meetings. Henry Hart later admitted that the TVA CP members were suspicious of Paris and at the time some had believed that she only joined to infiltrate their group. So it is likely that the CP members exaggerated their intentions and activities during the meetings with Paris in attendance and took matters more seriously when Paris was absent. But again, the issue of communists in TVA re-emerged as a seemingly legitimate concern. TVA did not issue any specific warnings about communism, but officials carefully followed the activities of the Dies Committee, which counter-balanced its support of the Roosevelt administration with an anti-New Deal direction. At the same time, war spread across Europe.⁷⁶

The crucial moment for CP members of the Depression occurred in the late summer of 1939. On August 23, Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia signed a non-aggression pact. Stunned by Joseph Stalin's agreement with Adolph Hitler, thousands of CP members grew further dismayed as Hitler quickly invaded Poland and France, and Britain reacted by officially declaring war on Germany. For CP members who had supported Stalin and opposed Hitler during the Popular Front movement, these catastrophic events were too much to bear. As a result, large numbers of CP members in the United States renounced their membership and quit the party. The pact fractured numerous New Deal alliances, especially those between organized labor and the CP. The agreement between Stalin and Hitler marked the end of the glory days of the CP in the

⁷⁶ Congress, House, *Un-American Activities, Executive Hearings*, 2:713; Author's interview with Henry Hart, 18 July 2002; Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear*, 349; August Raymond Ogden, *The Dies Committee: A Study of the Special House Committee for the Investigation of Un-American Activities, 1938-1944* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1945), 129-34; Martin Dies, *Martin Dies' Story* (New York: Bookmailer, 1963), 139-46.

United States. Shortly after the agreement, the Dies Committee re-opened cases and called witnesses to testify about past—but what were then very recent—indiscretions.⁷⁷

The non-aggression pact had an immediate effect on CP members in Tennessee. The agreement cut the state's overall CP membership of 150 members in half, with several branches collapsing. Within a matter of weeks of the news, nearly all admitted CP members who worked for TVA dropped their affiliation. Unable to salvage the TVA branch, Ted Wellman asked for a new assignment. His replacement, Paul Crouch, later recalled that the TVA CP cell “completely folded up, its members bitterly denouncing Stalin's alliance with Hitler and the new party line.” TVA employees Henry Hart and Muriel Speare both claimed that they had ended their CP memberships for ideological reasons several months before the pact, but regardless of when they withdrew, the agreement confirmed CP members' suspicions about the new directions of the party.⁷⁸

In what might have then seemed like a finale to the brief period of the TVA CP branch, a month after the treaty, Dartmouth graduate William Remington passed through Knoxville. Earlier in the year, Remington had informed Gordon Clapp that he hoped to return to TVA after graduation, but his return to the agency came in the fall as a tourist. Remington and his new wife Ann, a Bennington College graduate and a CP member, were on their way back from a honeymoon in Mexico and wanted to reminiscence. Remington introduced his wife to several of his former TVA associates, including Hart, Speare, and Abercrombie. The old friends visited Norris Dam, camped in the Smoky

⁷⁷ May, *Un-American Activities*, 55; Klehr, *Heyday of American Communism*, 386-90, 400-409.

⁷⁸ Quote from Crouch, “Broken Chains,” unpublished mss., chapter 19, page 3, box 17, Crouch Papers, Stanford; Williams, *Red-Listed*, 107; Congress, Senate, *Confirmation of Atomic Energy Commissioner*, 492.

Mountains, and discussed the recent past. But the news of Stalin's treaty with Hitler cast a dark shadow over their warm memories. Remington's next-day departure seemingly marked the end for all activities and recollections of TVA's short-lived CP branch.⁷⁹

At the end of 1939, only four members of the "Knoxville Fifteen" remained with TVA. John Frantz had steadily advanced in the ranks of TVA to become a Junior Office Procedure Investigator. Frantz also played an active role in the UFWA. Along with Kenneth Cameron, Frantz continued to chair the Shop Committee in an effort to make the Central Files Unit a more reasonable workplace.⁸⁰ By 1939, Henry Hart had also moved out of the mailroom, gotten married, and worked in the Personnel Department as a Research Assistant. In this position, Hart compiled questions for the oral and written examinations given to employees. Hart also maintained union ties, serving as chairman of the UFWA's education committee and urging donations for Loyalist Spain.⁸¹

David Stone Martin remained with TVA through the decade and found great success as an Assistant Artist. He designed murals for TVA's newly constructed powerhouses, illustrated agency publications, and supervised other studio artists. Martin remained active with the UFWA, serving as layout designer for the union's newsletter, the *White Collar*. He belonged to the chapter's committee on radio programs and

⁷⁹ May, *Un-American Activities*, 46-48, 55; "William Remington Testimony," 2511-12, Remington Trial, RG 276, NARA Northeast; William Remington to Gordon Clapp, 18 February 1939, Remington HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA; Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 480.

⁸⁰ E.A. Shelley to Douglas Chaffin, 14 January 1952, John M. Frantz file, TVA Employee Records; "Officers and Committees of United Federal Workers, Local No. 24, Knoxville, Tennessee, 1939-1940, folder 8, box 7, AFGE #136 Records, Southern Labor Archives, GSU.

⁸¹ SAC Washington to FBI Director, 29 December 1948, FBI file #121-11415-8; Henry Hart to Elinor Coit, 11 March 1939, folder 11, box 2, AFGE #136 Records, Southern Labor Archives, GSU.

“arranged for speakers of many beliefs and creeds” to speak for union sponsored programs.⁸² Martin also found associates at the University of Tennessee. In 1939, he became friends with a UT chemistry professor Clarence Hiskey, a somewhat radical thinker who would later work for TVA.⁸³

Outside of his TVA work, David Stone Martin entered and won a number of artistic competitions. In 1939, the Federal Works Agency and *Life* magazine sponsored the “Forty-Eight State Competition” for public art. Each state conducted its own competition, with the winning sketches appearing in *Life*, exhibited at several museums including the Whitney Museum in New York and the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C., and later rendered as murals on the walls of new public buildings in each state. In late 1939, Martin’s sketch entitled “Electrification,” which celebrated the Rural Electrification Administration and the TVA for the completion of southern electric lines, won the Tennessee competition. The following year, the finished sketch appeared as a 12’ x 4’5” mural on the wall of the recently completed Lenoir City Post Office, only a few miles from the TVA’s Fort Loudon Dam project.⁸⁴

⁸² David Stone Martin, “Application and Personal History Statement,” ca. 1940s, Martin FBI file #77-24191-5; quote from “Government Exhibit #35 in U.S. District Court, S.D. of N.Y.,” 19 January 1951, folder 1, box 1244, David Stone Martin, Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park.

⁸³ After TVA, Clarence Hiskey worked on the Manhattan Project at the University of Chicago and later faced charges that he sold secrets to the Russians. Walter Goodman, *The Committee: The Extraordinary Career of the House Committee on Un-American Activities* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968), 274-75.

⁸⁴ Carroll Van West, *Tennessee’s New Deal Landscape: A Guidebook* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 65-66, 240-41; Edward Rowan to David Stone Martin, 28 December 1939, folder 2, Edward Rowan to David Stone Martin, 12 August 1940, folder 3, box 1, all in Martin Papers, AAA; “Contract with David Stone Martin,” 1 November 1939, folder, Lenoir City Post Office, box 102, Records of the Section of Fine Arts, Public Buildings Administration, 1933-1943, Record Group 121, NARA, Washington, D.C. [hereinafter Public Building Administration, RG 121, NARA].

In June 1939, Muriel Speare moved to Chattanooga to be with another TVA employee, Stillman Williams. Williams, a Harvard graduate, worked in TVA's Finance department and met Speare at a Civil Service exam held that April. The two began dating and in September the couple transferred their TVA employment to the agency's Chattanooga office. They married in December 1939.⁸⁵

In 1939, two other TVA employees left the agency entirely. At the end of June 1939, TVA eliminated a number of positions, including Howard Frazier's temporary job as a personnel assistant. Up until that time, Frazier maintained his union membership and served as a member of the UFWA's membership committee and belonged to the executive committee on behalf of TVA's custodial union. In August, Frazier secured a position in Nashville as an inspector in the Wage and Hour Division of the U.S. Department of Labor.⁸⁶ Mabel Abercrombie, one of the first of the "Knoxville Fifteen" to arrive in Knoxville, resigned from TVA in 1939. Abercrombie spent most of her TVA tenure as a stenographer in the Forestry Division, but her contributions to the AFGE and UFWA chapters were perhaps more influential. She moved to Nashville at the end of the year to begin a job working for the state of Tennessee.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Williams, *Red-Listed*, 108; "Muriel W. Mather Interview," March 1981, [transcript] 2-3, Mather Papers, UT Special Collections; "Minutes of [UFWA] Meeting of September 13 [1939], folder 11, box 2, AFGE #136 Records, Southern Labor Archives, GSU.

⁸⁶ George Slover to Howard Frazier, 3 October 1939, Howard Frazier file, TVA Employee Records; J. Edgar Hoover to Special Assistant to the President, 5 August 1965, Howard Frazier FBI file #161-3997-30; "Officers and Committees of UFWA, 1939-1940," folder 8, box 7, AFGE #136 Records, Southern Labor Archives, GSU.

⁸⁷ Congress, House, *Un-American Activities, Executive Hearings*, 3:1012, 1021; Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 476.

As quickly as the “Knoxville Fifteen” came together, they split apart. They represented a core group of early TVA employees. At the end of the decade, TVA also emerged as a much different agency than when it began just seven years earlier. More focused on power production and less on regional social planning, the agency drifted away from the TVA first envisioned by deposed chairman Arthur Morgan. Likewise, the agency’s employees experienced great transformations. The mood of the nation forged their youth and zeal for labor organizing into a powerful force. For one brief moment in time these individuals came together and applied their ideological upbringings to real-life situations. As a group, they organized unions, participated in strikes, formed picket lines, founded committees, informed the public, and supported larger national causes. From 1936-1939, members of the “Knoxville Fifteen” appeared as the key players in union activity in Knoxville and in TVA’s white-collar union. After a few years of service with the agency, most of them grew frustrated or took other opportunities elsewhere. But during that period, each found the direction in life that best suited his or her interests. In nearly all of their cases, TVA served as a bridge between college and adult responsibilities.

The question of Communist Party membership is perhaps the most intriguing component of the TVA group’s experience. A handful of the fifteen officially joined the Communist Party, while others participated, and still others refused membership. Only during later government investigations did anyone seem to notice who was or who was not an official member of the CP. And even during these lengthy investigations, conflicting testimony and evidence make it difficult to compile a definitive list of CP members. These designations become further complicated considering that the group’s

social and political gatherings tended to blend together. During meetings of the union and at casual dinners, communism and politics were most certainly discussed. So determining which meetings of the group were really disguised CP gatherings is not only difficult but unnecessary. For those who did join the CP, it was only because they saw communism as a possible remedy to the Depression. CP membership and activities should be viewed as part of the entire social and political experience for the “Knoxville Fifteen,” but there were indeed Reds in TVA’s mailroom.

The “Knoxville Fifteen,” registered a unique TVA tenure. Their organizing activities—including involvement in a white-collar TVA union, participation in strikes, promotion of the Popular Front movement, fundraising for the Spanish Civil War, and participation in the Communist Party—represent an important and neglected component of the agency’s early history. Their personal relationships, where they lived, what they did after work, and their interactions with other individuals also reveal much about the 1930s TVA and Knoxville. Although brief, the 1930s activities of the “Knoxville Fifteen” formed the basis for a series of subsequent anti-communist government investigations into TVA.

Chapter 4

Wars at Home and Abroad

On September 1, 1939, David Lilienthal lay in bed recovering from the flu. Just two weeks before, the young TVA board member had finalized the agency's purchase of all the properties owned by the Tennessee Electric Power Company for \$78 million. The transaction single-handedly made TVA the largest power company in the South, after a mere six years in existence. But the flurry of activities that summer had finally caught up with Lilienthal, landing him at home sick for over two weeks. That morning, a neighbor's radio broadcast awakened Lilienthal with shocking news. "I could make out something to the effect that the Germans had been dropping bombs on Warsaw and other Polish cities," he recorded in his journal. "It was begun—war! I didn't believe it would come."¹

Lilienthal was not alone. The outbreak of war in Europe in 1939, took many informed Americans like David Lilienthal by surprise. During the 1930s, President Franklin D. Roosevelt understood the strength of antiwar sentiment and kept his policies in line with public opinion. His administration called for negotiations instead of confrontation. While Roosevelt urged support for Britain, the United States grew increasingly more at odds with Germany and Japan. By the beginning of his unprecedented third term as president in 1941, public opinion shifted to oppose the rise of fascist regimes and support Britain. With four more years in the White House, Roosevelt

¹ Quote from David Lilienthal, *The Journals of David E. Lilienthal* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1964), I: 121; Aaron D. Purcell, "Struggle Within, Struggle Without: The TEPCO Case and the Tennessee Valley Authority, 1936-1939," *The Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 61 (Fall 2002): 205-6.

pledged the United States to be an arsenal of democracy. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor later that year thrust the nation into a world conflict on numerous fronts. The subsequent national shift from economic recovery to wartime preparedness to war itself brought enormous social, political, and cultural change. Public attention on the over ten-year old domestic economic depression and criticisms of recovery methods refocused on the emerging battlegrounds in Europe, the Pacific, and Asia. As wartime President, Roosevelt expanded the nation's military forces, mobilized the industrial sector, and readjusted the economy. Mobilization for war also intensified the government's efforts to seek and control internal subversive activities through government investigations.²

For TVA and Lilienthal, the coming war meant new directions. During the 1930s TVA's mission revolved around protecting farmland from flooding and erosion, creating navigable rivers, and producing electric power. But with war on the horizon, the agency revamped its directives towards mobilizing resources. Beginning in the summer of 1940, TVA focused its attention on national defense, stating in its annual report that the agency would make the nation as "impregnable in war as it is rich and secure in peace." Lilienthal, who became chairman of the TVA board in 1941, masterfully connected the agency's production of electric power to the war effort. He argued that that TVA dams generated the massive amounts of power needed to supply war industries. Specifically, Lilienthal declared that TVA jobs helped build planes, bombs, and tanks. During the war, TVA printed posters and pamphlets containing effective slogans, including: "Out of water power comes air power, these TVA dams are needed for victory!" The effective

² Patrick J. Maney, *The Roosevelt Presence: A Biography of Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), 109, 118-19, 138-43, 153-56; Robert K. Carr, *The House Committee on*

publicity campaign yielded millions of dollars in Congressional appropriations for the completion of several new wartime dam projects, created thousands of new jobs in the Tennessee Valley, and generated more kilowatt hours than ever expected. In the latter category, TVA supplied enormous amounts of electric power to the nearby Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA) and for a secret government project only about thirty miles from Knoxville, known then as the Clinton Engineer Works and later as Oak Ridge.³

Wartime needs increased and recast TVA's workforce, bringing in hundreds of new white-collar and blue-collar employees. Gone were the early social visionaries like Arthur Morgan, Benton Mackaye, Paul David, and many of the agency's young idealistic employees. By 1940, a small group of white-collar workers who came together in Knoxville during the 1930s also had disbanded. For most, their brief flirtation with the Communist Party and the Popular Front movement ended in 1939 with the non-aggression pact between the Soviet Union and Germany, while for a few their radical tendencies continued. At the same time the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) led by Texas Representative Martin Dies began government investigations. One inquiry focused on the radical elements of TVA's workforce. During the period, the members of the "Knoxville Fifteen" served in the military, took jobs with the federal government, completed advanced education programs, and generally

Un-American Activities, 1945-1950 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952), 17-18.

³ Quote from, *Annual Report of the Tennessee Valley Authority, 1941* (Knoxville: TVA, 1941), 1; second quote from "Voices in the Valley: Remembering World War II, Excerpts from TVA Oral History Interviews of Former Employees," Mary Jane Lowe, compiler (Knoxville: TVA, 1993), cover poster, original poster in National Archives, Washington, D.C; Don McBride, *TVA and National Defense* (Knoxville: Tennessee Valley Authority, 1975), chapters III-V.

supported the war effort. By the end of the war, only one of the “Knoxville Fifteen” remained with TVA.

This chapter follows the “Knoxville Fifteen” from 1940 until 1945. This interim period featured the final dissolution of the group and the first significant government investigations into their activities. It will examine the lives and whereabouts of Mabel Abercrombie, Christine and Forrest Benson, Buck Borah, Howard Bridgman, Kit Buckles, John Frantz, Howard Frazier, Henry Hart, David Stone Martin, William Remington, Elizabeth and Pat Todd, Muriel Williams, and Burton Zien with particular focus on the first government investigations into their 1930s activities. This chapter argues that by the end of World War II the “Knoxville Fifteen” no longer existed and each individual had little expectation of further government investigation into their 1930s TVA tenures.

At the beginning of 1940, only five of the “Knoxville Fifteen” still worked for TVA. John Frantz, Muriel Williams, David Stone Martin, Henry Hart, and Forrest Benson each had several years of experience and had all advanced beyond entry-level status. TVA’s 1940 annual report listed Frantz as a Junior Administrative Assistant, Williams as Junior Clerk Stenographer, Martin as an Assistant Exhibits Artist, Hart as a Junior Research Assistant, and Benson as an Associate Personnel Officer. Frantz, Martin, and Hart worked in TVA’s Knoxville office, while TVA stationed Williams in Chattanooga and Benson in Gilbertsville, Kentucky near the Kentucky Dam site. In 1940, Benson’s wife Christine Eversole no longer worked for TVA, but remained active in Gilbertsville as a union volunteer for clothing drives, Workers’ Education, and radio

broadcasts to support the causes of labor. Certainly none of them were in significant administrative positions, each earning at least \$1,500 per year (enough to list them in the agency's annual report). All were active in the local union activities, serving on committees, planning organizing campaigns, and promoting organized labor, but none of them maintained any ties to the Communist Party. Instead, each of the five focused on their TVA duties, local labor organizing, and international events.⁴

In 1940, three others members of the "Knoxville Fifteen" remained in Tennessee. Howard Frazier, an activist for African American rights and a labor proponent, worked in Nashville for the Department of Labor as an inspector in the Wage and Hour Division. In 1940, Mabel Abercrombie also resided in Nashville. One of the first of the original group to arrive in Knoxville, at the beginning of the decade she held a state government position as a senior clerk in the capital city.⁵

Burton Zien also lived in Nashville and worked with Frazier. After leaving TVA in 1937, Zien first worked in Chattanooga as a CIO organizer and later in Knoxville as a promoter of the United Federal Workers of America (UFWA). That fall, he married TVA stenographer Jeanne Pinairre, who shortly thereafter joined her husband as a CP member. By the spring of 1938, organizational budget cuts eliminated his UFWA position and Zien searched for other work. After temporary employment on state

⁴ *Annual Report of the Tennessee Valley Authority, 1940* (Knoxville: TVA, 1940), 335, 351, 356, 369, 392; FBI Knoxville Report, 9 June 1950, Christine Eversole Benson FBI file #100-369556-2; FBI Knoxville Report, 3 November 1950, Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443-40.

⁵ J. Edgar Hoover to Special Assistant to the President, 5 August 1965, Howard Frazier FBI file #161-3997-30; Congress, House, Special Committee on Un-American Activities, *Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States, Executive Hearings* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1941), 3:1012, 1021.

political campaigns, by the fall of 1938 Zien had found a regular job as a Workers' Education teacher with the Adult Education Division of the Knoxville City Schools. Zien also taught classes for the WPA-directed Workers Alliance, attended meetings of the Knoxville Central Labor Union (CLU), and became part of the Knoxville Workers' Education Council. In the summer of 1939, he secured work as a Junior Deputy for the Tennessee Department of Labor in the Unemployment Compensation Division located in Knoxville. With the change in position, the Ziens both renounced their CP membership and drifted away from their TVA acquaintances. Early the next year, Zien accepted a position in Nashville as an inspector in the Wage and Hour Division of the Department of Labor.⁶

By 1940, the remaining members of the "Knoxville Fifteen" had left Tennessee altogether, but several remained in the South. In 1939, Pat Todd completed an electrician training program at the Bliss Electrical Engineering School in Maryland and Elizabeth Todd resigned her position with the National Resources Committee to have another child. After just a year in Washington, D.C., the Todds moved to Charlotte, North Carolina. Pat Todd first worked as an electrical contractor for the R.H. Bouligny Company while Elizabeth cared for their children. At the beginning of 1940, Elizabeth returned to work as a writer at the WBT radio station in Charlotte while Pat took an electrician position

⁶ FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 11 June 1948, Burton Zien FBI file #121-9839-37; FBI Washington Report, 28 June 1948, Burton Zien FBI file #121-9839-32X; Burton Zien, "Statement to the FBI," 2 June 1950, 16-31, in folder: Burton Zien, box 52, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), Executive Session Transcripts and Investigative Name Files, Records of the United States House of Representatives, Record Group 233, Legislative Archives Center, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C. [hereinafter HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA].

with the Westinghouse Electric Company. It is unclear if the suddenly domestic Todd family remained active in labor organizing while in Charlotte.⁷

After leaving TVA in May 1937, Buck Borah spent the rest of the decade labor organizing for the CIO. As an organizer for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America based in Atlanta, Borah traveled throughout the South promoting CIO unions. He participated in several strikes, including one at the Big Jack Overall Company in Bristol, Tennessee, during 1937. In April of the following year, Borah visited strikers at the Rockwood Hosiery Mills, just south of Knoxville, and allegedly told them to “dynamite the mills.” Shortly after the fiery speech, supporters blew up a water main in Rockwood and exploded dynamite in the front yard of a mill worker. Local police never caught the perpetrators, but quickly newspapers reporters and law enforcement officials accused Borah of advocating violence among the strikers at Rockwood and other Tennessee mills. In 1939, CIO officials appointed Borah the Southern Director for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America. Like his past positions, Borah devoted all of his time to the work, which had contributed to his divorce from Muriel Speare a year before. In 1939, he re-married after meeting a waitress from Greensboro, North Carolina. The next year, Borah met with CIO officials in Washington, D.C. and New York, while directing strikes and negotiating with company officials in mills throughout the South.⁸

⁷ C.E. McKillips to Louis J. Russell, 7 October 1949, folder: Elizabeth Todd, box 47, HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA; FBI Charlotte Report, 23 September 1941, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-2.

⁸ [Name redacted] to Officer in Charge, 9 February 1943, 46-47, “Extract of Newspaper Clipping from the *Rockwood Times*, 7 May 1938,” 220-23; War Department Investigation, Bernard Borah, 13 May 1943, 166, all in Bernard Borah, Department of the Army File; FBI Knoxville Report, 6 March 1942, Bernard Borah FBI file #100-81707-1.

By 1940, the last three members of the “Knoxville Fifteen” had left the South entirely. After resigning from TVA in September 1937, Howard Bridgman returned to the Northeast and broadened his intellectual prowess. From the fall of 1937 until June 1938, he worked for the Eastern Cooperative League, an educational organization that promoted consumer education. Bridgman’s work led him to New York City and Fitchburg, Massachusetts. While in New York, Bridgman maintained his Communist Party affiliation by attending several meetings near Columbia University. But Bridgman longed for the academic environment of a university and in the fall of 1938, he began a graduate program in economics at Harvard. While in Cambridge, he joined a local CP branch of about ten to twelve members, serving as treasurer. For the next year, Bridgman attended weekly CP meetings in friends’ apartments and a renovated “car barn” as he completed his studies. By the spring of 1939, Bridgman grew disillusioned with the CP and through his courses learned that such doctrines were but a “small footnote in the general line of economic and social thinking.” Like his TVA colleagues and other 1930s CP members, Bridgman totally severed his CP affiliation after the August 1939 pact between Hitler and Stalin. He later testified that “it was necessary to finally make a choice . . . between my country and the Communist Party.” Bridgman re-focused his energies on studying personnel economics at Harvard, and in the fall of 1940 with his master’s degree nearly finished he secured a teaching position as an instructor at Brown University. As he entered the academic world, Bridgman seemed to have left his brief CP membership behind him.⁹

⁹ “Howard Bridgman Testimony,” in United States vs. William Walter Remington, Cr. 132-344, Transcripts of Record, 1950-1953, 748-55, Records of the United States Courts of Appeals, Record Group

Higher education and radical politics also attracted William Remington.

Following graduation from Dartmouth in June 1939, Remington married Ann Moos and enrolled in graduate school at Columbia University. Remington secured a graduate fellowship to study economics and public administration at Columbia, while his wife took secretarial courses at the Pace Institute. Ann came from a family of wealthy political radicals from Croton-on-Hudson, New York and before their marriage belonged to a CP branch unit at Columbia and in her hometown. While in New York City, the Remingtons participated in a number of radical political organizations including the CP-directed American Youth Congress (AYC). Ann worked for the AYC as a secretary, and in early 1940 joined her husband at the group's Citizen Institute training program in Washington, D.C. Although neither William nor Ann formally joined a CP chapter in New York, the Remingtons gravitated to those on the far left. Even after the 1939 Russian and German pact, the Remingtons supported CP causes, and well into the 1940s they exhibited radical tendencies.¹⁰

Kit Schryver also settled in New York City after her 1936 departure from TVA. She and husband Elliott Schryver first lived in Montana and moved to New York in early 1937. Once in Manhattan, the Schryvers both worked as editorial assistants, or proofreaders, in the publishing industry. Kit worked at Random House, while Elliott

276, National Archives and Records Administration—Northeast Region (New York City) [hereinafter Remington Trial, RG 276, NARA Northeast]; quotes from Congress, House, Committee on Un-American Activities, *Hearings Regarding Communism in the United States Government—Part I* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1950), 1766, 1768, 1754, 1768-69.

¹⁰ Gary May, *Un-American Activities: The Trials of William Remington* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 45-47, 50, 55-59; Mr. Ladd to FBI Director, 7 December 1945, William Remington FBI file #65-56402-118; FBI Summary Report, 27 August 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 28-37.

secured a job at Viking Press. Schryver maintained her organizing efforts, serving as a member of the United Office and Professional Workers of America (CIO). The Schryvers also promoted voting rights for African Americans through several organizations. It is unclear if Schryver suspended her CP membership after the Stalin and Hitler pact, but her affiliations during the 1940s hint that she remained a CP member.¹¹

During the 1940s, however, Schryver and other former TVA employees suddenly discovered that government investigators were taking great interest in their past activities. Since the late 1930s, the FBI and the Dies Committee had directed ongoing government investigations into internal subversives. Both organizations took particular interest in rooting out radical New Dealers. The two government entities, however, were at odds over methods and objectives. Martin Dies found the FBI poorly managed and ineffective in the prosecution of dangerous individuals. Likewise, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover charged that the Dies Committee jeopardized FBI counter-espionage operations and threatened the political agenda of the Roosevelt administration. Despite their differences, cooperation between the two organizations developed. By 1940, the Dies Committee provided the FBI with evidence and leads into possible subversives, while the FBI carefully monitored the Committee and its members.¹²

The Dies Committee gathered information on possible subversives through tactics reminiscent of the first Red Scare of the 1920s. Although their investigations discovered

¹¹ SAC Knoxville to FBI Director, 16 June 1950, Katherine Buckles FBI file #100-353259-6; FBI Knoxville Report, 2 September 1950, Katherine Buckles FBI file #100-353259-7; FBI New York Report, 2 July 1942, Elliot Schryver FBI file #77-24514-6.

¹² Kenneth O'Reilly, "The Roosevelt Administration and Legislative-Executive Conflict: The FBI

Nazi and pro-fascist groups, Dies found communist organizations to be the most “un-American.” Between 1938 and 1941, Committee investigators conducted raids on Communist Party offices and suspected officials in numerous cities, including Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Boston, Baltimore, Detroit, Chicago, and Pittsburgh. The thirty person staff of investigators seized Communist Party documents, correspondence, and internal files. Dies also investigated alleged CP-front groups, such as the American League for Peace and Democracy, the Workers Alliance, the International Labor Defense, the American Student Union, and the American Youth Congress. As Hitler’s armies marched across Europe, the threat of internal overthrow of the federal government emerged as a legitimate concern. With Congressional support and seized evidence, beginning in 1938 the Committee conducted a series of public and private hearings to determine the extent of domestic un-American activities.¹³

During the next two years, Dies refined his message against internal subversives. He believed that a “Fifth Column” force of foreign agents, pro-Nazi sympathizers, and domestic traitors existed in the United States. Through speeches and publications, Dies announced that without eradication the “Fifth Columnists” would infiltrate the nation and yield it unprepared for war. The theme of guarding against the “Trojan Horse,” the enemy within, became his most successful campaign. In the event of an invasion, Dies

vs. The Dies Committee,” *Congress & The Presidency* 10 (Spring 1983): 81-83.

¹³ Kenneth O’Reilly, *Hoover and the Un-Americans: The FBI, HUAC, and the Red Menace* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 44-45; Carr, *Committee on Un-American Activities*, 15-17; August Raymond Ogden, *The Dies Committee: A Study of the Special House Committee for the Investigation of Un-American Activities, 1938-1944* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1945), 39, 45-47, 50, 200; Nancy Lopez, “Allowing Fears to Overwhelm Us:” A Re-Examination of the House Special Committee on Un-American Activities, 1938-1944,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Rice University, 2002), 120; Congress, House, Special Committee on Un-American Activities, *Annual Report, 1939* (United States Government Printing Office, 1939), 10-17, 69-82.

warned that the Fifth Column force would emerge from the Trojan Horse to direct the incoming enemy troops. With the backdrop of war in Europe and the Pacific, Dies' message of internal threat from communists and Nazis found a wide audience. Even President Roosevelt warned that enemy agents were already working to dismantle the nation from within, and reassured Americans that his administration would guard against internal sabotage. In response, Roosevelt supported the 1940 Alien Registration Act (known as the Smith Act) and the Voorhis Registration Act. With these legal precedents, the government deported subversive aliens, investigated potential offenders, and made membership in revolutionary groups a punishable offense.¹⁴

By 1940, the Dies Committee directed its attention to communist activities in the South. In Tennessee, the committee first took great interest in the Highlander Folk School. Dies announced in March that he had a large amount of evidence to prove the radical nature of Highlander and would launch an investigation of the school. Based on tips from anonymous informants, the previous year FBI agents had visited Highlander but had found insufficient evidence of subversive activity. But in 1940, Dies and the FBI sent another wave of investigators to Highlander to explore rumors of communism. By the fall, articles in Nashville newspapers and Joseph Kamp's pamphlet, *The Fifth Column in the South*, branded the school as a regional center for communist education. In an

¹⁴ Francis MacDonnell, *Insidious Foes: The Axis Fifth Column and the American Home Front* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 3-4, 79-80, 137; Ogden, *The Dies Committee*, 208-9; Martin Dies, *The Trojan Horse in America* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1940), 11; *New York Times*, 2 June 1940; Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 97-98; Michael R. Bellman, *Cold War Political Justice: The Smith Act, the Communist Party, and American Civil Liberties* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977), 21-26; Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On? The American Communist Party During the Second World War* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1982), 68-69.

effort to discredit the White House, the pamphlet reprinted a 1940 check from Eleanor Roosevelt to Highlander for support of a scholarship program. A handful of witnesses appeared before the Dies Committee to describe the radical activities at Highlander.¹⁵

In the spring of 1940, the Dies Committee also concentrated on communist activities in Alabama. Investigators targeted the Communist Party office in Birmingham, maintained by Robert F. Hall, the district and state CP secretary. On April 9, Birmingham police broke into the CP office searching for Hall and instead found Laurent Frantz, brother of TVA employee John Frantz. Unable to find and detain Hall, the police arrested Frantz for vagrancy. Similar to his brother John, Laurent Frantz held a degree from the University of Tennessee (Bachelor of Law) and nursed a radical streak with communist leanings. In 1940, when police stormed the office, Frantz worked for Hall as a legal researcher. After two days in a Birmingham jail, on the charge of being “held for investigation,” the police released Frantz and served him with a subpoena to appear before the Dies Committee in Washington, D.C.¹⁶

¹⁵ John M. Glen, *Highlander: No Ordinary School*, 2nd edition (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 74-75; Frank Adams, *Unearthing the Seeds of Fire: The Idea of Highlander* (Charlotte, NC: John F. Blair Publisher, 1975), 106-7; Myles Horton to Estes Kefauver, 24 April 1940, folder 16, box 17, Highlander Research and Education Center Collection, 1917-1999, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin [hereinafter, Highlander Collection, Wisconsin]; “Dies to Probe Highlander,” clipping file from *Grundy County Herald*, 7 March 1940, folder 1, box 8, Highlander Folk School, Manuscript Records Collection, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee [hereinafter, Highlander Collection, TSLA]; FBI Memphis to FBI Washington, 29 January 1940, Highlander Folk School FBI file #61-7511-2; Joseph P. Kamp, *The Fifth Column in the South* (New Haven: Constitutional Educational League, Inc., 1940), inside cover, 19-25.

¹⁶ Congress, House, Special Committee on Un-American Activities, *Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States, Hearings* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1940), 13:7842-49; Ogden, *The Dies Committee*, 202; Ollie F. Osborne to Eugene “Bull” Connor, 18 April 1940, folder TVA 1947 L, box 24, Kenneth McKellar Papers, 1898-1952, Memphis and Shelby County Public Library, Memphis, Tennessee [hereinafter McKellar Papers, Memphis].

On April 19, 1940, Laurent Frantz appeared at a public hearing in Washington, D.C., before the Dies Committee to discuss his knowledge of Robert Hall's whereabouts and CP activities in the South. Martin Dies served as chairman of the committee, with investigator J.B. Matthews leading the questioning. Frantz first answered questions about his legal work with Hall. Since March of that year, Frantz had worked for Hall studying election laws of twelve southern states to determine how to get Communist Party candidates on southern ballots. When Matthews asked if he had ever been a CP member or attended CP meetings, Frantz answered "never." Matthews continued this line of questioning by asking Frantz about his personal associates and their political persuasions. Frantz objected to discussing his knowledge of other individuals in CP circles, as it might damage their reputations. Without evidence to back up the committee's accusations, Matthews moved on to Frantz's past work in Knoxville, Tennessee.¹⁷

In 1936, Laurent Frantz had worked on a WPA project to survey federal archives in Knoxville. While there, he had associated closely with his brother, other TVA employees, and local union leaders. One of his employees, Dorothy Remine, later married Laurent's brother John Frantz. Matthews asked Frantz questions about several Tennessee associates, including CP organizers Ted Wellman, Paul Crouch, and his brother John and wife. Frantz's membership in the Workers Alliance during 1936 emerged as a topic of questioning, as did his recollections of the 1938 Rockwood Hosiery Mills strike. Despite the breadth of questions, Frantz provided little information on his years in Knoxville. Matthews also reviewed Frantz's later work in Birmingham with

¹⁷ Congress, House, *Un-American Activities, Hearings*, 13:7848-49, 7853; Ogden, *The Dies Committee*, 203.

similar limited results. Throughout the hearing, Frantz remained solid. Responding to question after question, Frantz acknowledged his familiarity with certain individuals, without incriminating them as radicals. Frantz's testimony provided the Committee few leads into suspected CP activities in Knoxville during the 1930s.¹⁸

Laurent Frantz's testimony in April 1940 represented the first public discussion of TVA as an alleged safe harbor for radicals. The very mention of Dorothy Remine, the wife of John Frantz, during the hearings hints that the Dies Committee knew about Josephus Remine's unofficial investigation from a few years earlier. The Committee also held information from Roxie Paris, who had infiltrated the TVA group in 1938. According to Kenneth Cameron, in early 1939 Paris had contacted the Dies Committee with information on a CP unit within TVA. In addition to having information from these two unofficial 1930s investigations, by 1940 the FBI held information on a number of suspected subversives in TVA's ranks. Each FBI file, whether based on individual or subject, held background information, personnel records, interviews with informants, and reports from agency offices. But in 1940, the FBI showed little interest in launching a major investigation into TVA or its former employees. Instead, the Dies Committee took the initiative and began investigating a number of former TVA employees.¹⁹

With the scent of a CP-tainted New Deal agency, in April and May of 1940 Dies Committee investigators contacted numerous potential informants and witnesses to discuss TVA. The files of the Dies Committee contain little information on what

¹⁸ Congress, House, *Un-American Activities, Hearings*, 13:7857-59, 7860-63, 7866-69.

¹⁹ Kenneth Cameron to John Sherman, 16 February 1939, folder 1, box 1, Henry C. Hart Papers, 1939-2002, MS 2575, Special Collections Library, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee [hereinafter Hart Papers, UT Special Collections].

investigators uncovered on TVA employees or the number or nature of those interviews. Instead, these scant files consist of material supplied by cooperative witnesses, including Roxie Paris.²⁰

From the other perspective, a letter from Henry Hart to Muriel Williams written on May 4, 1940, reveals the concerns of TVA employees being investigated. In his letter, Hart discussed fellow TVA employees, legal strategies, and the course of the Dies investigations. Hart guessed that the Dies Committee either wanted to smear TVA by exposing espionage within an agency involved in national defense, or simply wanted to provide ammunition for those “great Southern anti-reds” in Congress. Hart confirmed that investigators had already visited Mabel Abercrombie, who he believed had “gotten off without incriminating herself or anyone else.” Hart expected that the Dies Committee would subpoena Abercrombie as a ruse, but reminded Williams to tell Abercrombie to be “extra puritanical from here on out.” Williams had previously asked Hart about her legal obligations if interviewed. Hart explained that until sworn before a committee, interviewees were under no obligation to answer questions put to them by an investigator.²¹ In fact, Hart recommended that Williams review any statements that she might make before a committee with long-time TVA supporter Judson King.²²

²⁰ Paris Exhibits, 30 June 1940, folder: Mrs. George H Paris, box 14, HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA.

²¹ Quotes from Henry Hart to Muriel Williams, 4 May 1940, folder 7, box 1, Muriel Williams Mather Papers, 1939-1990, MS 2585, UT Special Collections [hereinafter Mather Papers, UT Special Collections].

²² Judson King organized the first National Conference on Government Measures, the National Popular Government League, and served as a TVA consultant. His book, *The Conservation Fight: From Theodore Roosevelt to the Tennessee Valley Authority* (Washington, D.C: Public Affairs Press, 1959), remains an important work on the efforts of George Norris to create TVA. *New York Times*, 5 July 1958.

In the letter to Williams, Hart also indicated that he had been communicating with other TVA associates about the Dies Committee and potential testimony. According to Hart, John Frantz had predicted that the accusations made by Roxie Paris would be enough to warrant calling TVA witnesses. Hart agreed and added that Paris was “a natural because of her flamboyance and drama. But that may cause her to overshoot her work and make ridiculous statements.” If subpoenaed before the committee, Hart planned to state that he only “knew Mrs. Paris as a most untrustworthy member of the Spanish committee.” Hart reminded Williams not to “tell any unnecessary lies,” as Mrs. Paris “knows an unusual amount.” The Committee’s obsession with confirming meetings and attendees also worried Hart. If Francis Martin got “too excited,” Hart believed that Martin might corroborate the meeting lists and names of attendees supplied by Mrs. Paris. Hart also reported that Laurent Frantz, fresh from testifying, believed that refusing to supply names to the committee was not a contemptuous offense, as the names of those individuals would be irrelevant to their un-American propaganda investigations.²³

Hart’s letter to Williams also exhibited his youthful confidence. Hart bragged that he would give Dies and his committee a “scathing” at his presentation before the Knoxville Ossoli Circle planned for the following week. Convinced of his forthcoming summons, Hart declared that “I’ll have my testimony ready for the Committee,” and reminded Williams that “we have the advantage of a lapse of time on our side.” Hart closed his letter by saying, “Remember, the last one to get subpoenaed [*sic*] is a yellow-

²³ Quotes from Hart to Williams, 4 May 1940, Mather Papers, UT Special Collections.

livered fascist!” Within a month, Hart and several of his TVA associates appeared before the Dies Committee.²⁴

In the summer of 1940, the Dies Committee began a series of closed executive hearings. The sessions were designed to uncover facts about those who “were led into the [Communist] party without knowing its real purpose,” but not to harm those individuals with publicity. However, daily newspaper reports followed the sessions and final transcripts of the hearings quickly appeared as printed government documents. The first executive hearings investigated communism within TVA and the Birmingham steel industry. In the former investigation, Dies announced that the results would be given to the President and TVA officials. The TVA-related hearings began in Washington, D.C. during early June. Dies served as chairman of the committee, with investigators J.B. Matthews and Robert B. Barker leading the questioning. The investigators first amassed a list of forty-five potential CP members within TVA, but within a few weeks had narrowed the list to ten individuals. By the time of the hearings, only seven witnesses were summoned to appear before the committee to answer questions about CP activities in Knoxville and confirm suspicions that a CP cell had once existed within TVA’s workforce.²⁵

The first TVA witnesses took the stand on June 2, 1940. Investigator Barker asked John Borden, a former TVA employee in the Norris cooperative store, whether he

²⁴ Quotes from *Ibid.*

²⁵ Ogden, *The Dies Committee*, 209; Congress, House, *Un-American Activities, Executive Hearings*, 2:672; *New York Times*, 4 June 1940; “Committee on Un-American Activities,” [ca. 1947], folder Un-American Activities Committee, box 16, Washington Correspondence Files, 1933-1970, Records of the Tennessee Valley Authority, Record Group 142, NARA—Southeast Region (Atlanta) [hereinafter TVA RG 142, NARA Southeast].

had ever joined the Communist Party. Borden denied any CP membership and the committee moved on to the next witness. Frank White, a former rodman on the Norris Dam project, proved to be an informative and cooperative witness. White testified that he joined the CP in the summer of 1937 while living in Norris. As fellow members of the Norris chapter, White named John Borden and Mabel Abercrombie. White testified that his first CP meeting took place at Abercrombie's residence, 103 Hilltop Lane in Norris, which another witness, Kenneth Talley, and either Kenneth McConnell or Francis Martin attended. He then described for the committee another CP gathering in Knoxville at the McConnells' apartment, where White met Elizabeth McConnell, Francis Martin, and David Stone Martin.²⁶

Kenneth Talley, another former employee from the TVA cooperative store in Norris, followed White on the stand. He confirmed White's testimony on the details of the CP meeting in Norris and in Knoxville at the McConnell home. Barker specifically asked Talley if he remembered a TVA messenger at these meetings who "rode a motorcycle." Talley could not recall such an individual, making it unclear if the committee members were searching for information on Pat Todd, William Remington, or Horace Bryan. But Talley did remember CP organizer Kenneth McConnell and commented on McConnell's 1937 report on the CP in Knox County. Barker introduced the 1937 report as evidence and throughout the June inquiry asked witnesses about the accuracy of McConnell's figures on the number of CP members in Knox County.²⁷

²⁶ Congress, House, *Un-American Activities, Executive Hearings*, 2:655-59.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 2:660-71.

After hearing White and Talley confirm details of CP activities in Knoxville, the committee recalled Borden to testify. Chairman Martin Dies reassured Borden that their mission was to gather facts and protect the misled. Under pressure from the committee, Borden admitted his brief CP membership and answered questions about the political leanings of specific individuals. As a McConnell recruit, Borden worked on establishing cooperatives, organizing CIO unions, and raising money for the Spanish Loyalists. Borden confirmed attending several CP meetings in Norris and Knoxville in 1937. At these gatherings, Borden remembered meeting Pat Todd, Elizabeth Todd, Mabel Abercrombie, Muriel Williams, Kenneth Talley, and David Stone Martin. However, Borden emphasized that most of their Norris meetings were “bull-sessions” where the group discussed such broad topics as political events, philosophy, and even the high rents in Norris. Still, Borden’s testimony encouraged the committee to push further.²⁸

The committee next heard testimony from William Green, son of Roxie Paris. Green explained that in 1938 his only avenue to TVA employment was through CP membership. An invitation by Henry Hart in the summer of 1938 led Green to attend a meeting of other potential communists. Green testified that TVA employees David Stone Martin, Kenneth Cameron, and Henry Hart led the meeting and invited him to join the CP. Green declined the offer and immediately had alerted the local FBI office about the CP unit in Knoxville. But Green testified that the FBI agents in Knoxville took little interest in his story.²⁹

²⁸ Ibid., 2:674-76, 679-80.

²⁹ Ibid., 2:689-94.

Later that day, the committee asked Roxie Paris to explain the details of the TVA branch of the Communist Party. Paris testified that she joined the CP in place of her son with the intention of infiltrating the group. During her brief CP tenure, Paris attended meetings, labor rallies, and social events, such as dances. She added a new layer to the testimony by charging that mid-level TVA administrators, including E.B. “Ted” Schultz, Arthur Jandrey, Ronald Wank, Melvin Siegel, R.O. Niehoff, Rudolph Bertram, and Joseph Swidler, supported CP activities and the members within the entry-level ranks of the agency. Paris confirmed that lower-level TVA employees David Stone Martin, Burton Zien, Jeanne Pinairre Zien, Henry Hart, Mabel Abercrombie, Muriel Williams, Lucille Thornburgh, Buck Borah, Kenneth Cameron, Elizabeth Todd, John Frantz, and Hugh Urban, were active in CP activities. Paris closed her testimony by mentioning the influence of the Highlander School on the development of the Communist Party in Knoxville.³⁰

With confirmation of a CP unit within TVA and new evidence emerging with every witness, in July 1937, Dies established a subcommittee to continue the investigation. That summer, the subcommittee convened in Chattanooga for more hearings focused on alleged CP activities in TVA. Using names and events from the previous executive hearings, the subcommittee subpoenaed fifteen TVA employees, including five of the employees studied here, alleged to have once been active in the CP. With their 1930s lives hardly behind them, that summer Mable Abercrombie, John Frantz, Henry Hart, David Stone Martin, and Muriel Williams all testified before the Dies

³⁰ Ibid., 2:713, 716-22, 729-37, 743-45.

subcommittee in Chattanooga. Apart from Abercrombie, who worked in Nashville, the other four still worked for TVA and feared that they might lose their jobs.³¹

On July 17, 1940, HUAC's TVA inquiry continued before an executive subcommittee in Chattanooga. Alabama Congressman Joseph Starnes served as chair of the subcommittee, with investigator Robert B. Barker leading the hearings. Starnes explained to the witnesses that the hearings were not public events and the testimony would not be published. Isaac Cecil Wiggs, a WPA employee and member of the Knoxville Workers Alliance, first took the witness stand. Three months before, Wiggs had told FBI investigators that he had joined the CP and knew a number of TVA employees also associated with labor activities in Knoxville. On the witness stand before an official committee, however, Wiggs appeared nervous and could not even confirm his own CP affiliation. Barker warned Wiggs that if his statements were contradictory to previous testimony, then he might be charged with perjury before a House committee. But despite the pressure, Wiggs did little to help the subcommittee connect the CP with TVA employees and requested that he be allowed to return home to take care of his "sick wife" and "five little babies." Starnes released Wiggs from the stand, but the mention of perjury and federal charges set the tone and tactics for the entire proceeding.³²

John Frantz, the precocious intellectual with two periods of TVA employment, appeared before the subcommittee as the second witness. Much like the testimony of his brother Laurent a few months prior, John Frantz appeared sharp on the stand and unafraid

³¹ Ibid., 3:983.

³² Ibid., 3:983, 989-991.

of losing his job. Barker asked Frantz about his TVA duties, union affiliations, associates, and whether he had ever belonged to the Communist Party. Frantz testified that he had joined the white collar AFGE union during his first stint with TVA, and then the UFWA when he returned in 1937. He also identified a number of union members, including Mabel Abercrombie, Henry Hart, and Muriel Williams, but emphatically denied ever belonging to the Communist Party. He explained that none of his past or current associates and activities were communistic, despite what newspapers and unofficial investigations reported. When Barker reminded him about perjury, Frantz stated, "I have no intention of telling the committee anything but the truth. But, neither do I intend to make a positive statement where I cannot make a positive statement."³³

In the face of an unflappable witness, Barker tried to connect Frantz to radical activities of the TVA white-collar union. The removal of James Smith from the Files Division in 1938 and the origin of the petition itself intrigued the subcommittee. When questioned, Frantz denied authorship of the petition, explaining that the ideas for the document emerged from the union membership and the final copy came from the union's legal counsel. Barker then charged that the final document originated from the same typewriter that had been used to draft the union's newsletter, the *White Collar*. Frantz could not confirm the exact typist or typewriter of the Smith removal petition, but reassured the subcommittee that the union paid TVA for printing. Barker then charged that the AFGE and UFWA supported alleged subversive activities, such as hiring black messengers and supporting the Spanish Civil War. Frantz explained that TVA union

³³ Ibid., 3:992-96, 1002-3, quote from 1003.

members supported a great number of causes in the 1930s, but he regarded none of the members or organizations as subversive or un-American.³⁴

The next witness, Mabel Abercrombie, took a much more evasive strategy with the subcommittee. From 1934 to 1939, Abercrombie worked for TVA and took an active role in union as well as social activities with other mailroom workers. On the stand, Abercrombie confirmed that she had worked with the other TVA witnesses on various causes related to unionization efforts in the Tennessee Valley. Barker asked if she had ever belonged to the Communist Party and reminded Abercrombie that “a mass of documentary evidence” and past testimony before the Dies committee confirmed her membership. Abercrombie denied the charge and for the rest of the hearing gave mostly “yes” and “no” answers. Barker pursued Abercrombie with questions about other TVA employees, her attendance at various gatherings in Norris and Knoxville, fundraising for the Spanish Loyalists, and how she had obtained her job with the state of Tennessee. Steadfast to the questions, Abercrombie denied any knowledge of the CP and said little about her TVA tenure and past associates. Barker found her testimony unbelievable and reserved the right to re-call Abercrombie. Convinced that Abercrombie “was a leader in the Communist Party,” Barker recommended that the district attorney press perjury charges against the witness.³⁵

Henry Hart, once the roommate of William Remington, followed Abercrombie on the stand. Despite the aggressive tone of his May 4 letter to Muriel Williams, Hart took a

³⁴ Ibid., 3:1006-11.

³⁵ Ibid., 3:1012-22, quote from 1022.

more cooperative attitude with the committee by openly admitting his CP membership. In the summer of 1937, Hart had joined the Communist Party but left in January 1939 because of a growing disenchantment with its leadership. Chairman Starnes inquired about the number of CP members working in TVA, and Hart answered that he was the only one. Barker followed by asking Hart about the organization of TVA's CP branch, but Hart denied that such a group ever existed and explained the informal nature of the CP in Knoxville. Hart recalled that during his brief CP tenure, Knoxville supported only about a half dozen members. When asked about a long list of individuals, Hart testified that none of them had participated in CP activities. Hart admitted that he had indeed met William Green, Roxie Paris' son, but never suggested that Green join the CP in order to get a job with TVA. In fact, Hart appeared surprised to learn that Green had been a TVA applicant when they first met.³⁶

The committee then questioned Hart about other alleged radical organizations and statements. Hart had raised funds for the North American Committee for Spanish Democracy while he belonged to the CP, and the committee believed the two groups were connected. While on the stand, Hart explained that he believed in the Spanish Loyalists for political reasons and would not have supported the cause if it were merely a Communist-front organization designed to recruit members. Barker then inquired about Hart's talk before the Knoxville Ossoli Circle two months earlier. Hart had spoken to the group about the pros and cons of government investigations. In the presentation, Hart agreed with the purposes for the Dies Committee and actually praised the informational

³⁶ Ibid., 3:1024-27.

value of their final reports. However, Hart announced that the Dies Committee had fallen short of “judicial procedure” in gathering the evidence, persecuting witnesses, and delivering the most sordid details to the press. While on the stand, Hart explained that his thought provoking presentation was not intended to criticize the Dies Committee, but rather to examine the issues. Barker found Hart’s testimony helpful, but demanded that Hart reveal the names of other CP members in Knoxville who were connected to TVA. Hart remained firm, denying that any of his associates were CP members, even if they all participated in the same meetings, social gatherings, and organizations. Hart reemphasized that no official organization of the CP existed in Knoxville and that he had been the only TVA representative.³⁷

TVA exhibits designer David Stone Martin next appeared before the subcommittee. During his brief testimony, Martin explained that he was aware of CP activities in Knoxville, but claimed that he never officially joined. Martin confirmed that his brother Francis was an avowed member and even admitted that he had sympathy for certain parts of the CP’s program. When pressed for more information on the Knoxville CP, Martin admitted that he had attended several “open meetings.” Based on information from Roxie Paris, Barker asked Martin about his reported attendance at a January 1939 meeting at the Chicken Shack in Knoxville. Martin explained that he did attend the by-invitation-only meeting, which concerned the fate of a black teacher accused of rape and at the time he did not know that it was also a CP meeting. Chairman Starnes asked Martin about his support of the Spanish Civil War. Martin testified that his actions were

³⁷ Ibid., 3:1031-33.

merely to support a democratic government in Spain and had nothing to do with the Communist Party.³⁸

The subcommittee heard a number of other TVA witnesses that week, including Hugh Urban. The former leader of TVA's white-collar UFWA chapter, Urban denied membership in the CP, but explained that he had been invited to their meetings. Like the previous witnesses, Urban confirmed knowing that a small CP cell existed in Knoxville labor circles but could not confirm any specific members. Urban admitted that he had heard rumors about a CP unit within TVA, but could not name its members. Five blue-collar TVA employees followed Urban on the witness stand, all denying their membership in the Communist Party. This testimony concluded the Chattanooga phase of the subcommittee's investigation, but Starnes remained intent on following the leads about the alleged TVA CP unit.³⁹

On July 26, 1940, the subcommittee to investigate un-American organizations in Tennessee and Alabama reconvened in Washington, D.C. Joseph Starnes once again chaired the session, with Robert Barker serving as the government's investigator. Building on previous testimony and collected evidence, the subcommittee called Muriel Williams to testify about her alleged radical activities while a TVA employee in Knoxville.⁴⁰

³⁸ Ibid., 3:1034-40.

³⁹ Ibid., 3:1040-57.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 3:1265-66.

Williams, still a TVA employee in Chattanooga, proved to be a difficult witness for the committee. Once on the stand, Williams explained that she was unclear why the committee required her testimony and demanded that Barker and Starnes define “subversive and un-American” behavior. Williams also questioned the committee’s ability to keep the sessions truly closed from the press by citing the then-recent case of her husband, Stillman Williams. Just a week before her testimony, the *Chattanooga Times* reported on the subcommittee sessions, and claimed that as a result of the testimony, TVA General Manager Gordon Clapp suspended Stillman Williams for making a “communistic speech” in Knoxville. Williams explained that her husband had never been suspended for any action. Starnes reassured Williams of the sanctity of the sessions by explaining that the hearings were designed to gather information, not incriminate those who testified. He again emphasized that the transcripts of the sessions would go unpublished and that the witnesses were obliged to keep their testimony secret. Williams agreed to cooperate.⁴¹

The committee asked Williams about her CP activities and those surrounding her. When questioned as to whether she was ever a member of the CP, Williams confirmed that she had belonged for about two years. The Communist Party appealed to Williams because it offered the potential to better distribute wealth, resources, and products across the nation. Further, Williams supported the CP’s platform on abolishing the poll tax and extending the vote to younger citizens. But in Knox County, Williams described the CP group as a very loose organization with little leadership. With only about twenty-five

⁴¹ Ibid., 3:1266-68.

members, the Knox County branch was more a social group than a political minority group, which Williams claimed was the same for the even smaller CP chapter within TVA. In fact, Williams explained that by early 1939, she left the CP because the unorganized nature of the TVA group made it difficult to accomplish any of their goals. Since having left the CP, Williams explained that she had “turned into mostly housewife” but remained interested in causes such as voting rights, decreasing unemployment, and economic readjustment.⁴²

The committee expected Williams to be the key witness on the alleged CP cell within TVA, but quickly found her testimony unclear and questionable. The committee pressed Williams for information on CP meetings, such as who attended, what the group discussed, and if they were loyal to the official party line coming from the Soviet Union. But Williams provided very little information on meetings, denied the committee names of associates, and again questioned the nature and charges of conducting un-American activities. Williams did confirm that Henry Hart, Kenneth McConnell, and Francis Martin had attended CP meetings, but refused to identify other attendees on the grounds that she did not want to wrongfully incriminate the innocent. Starnes warned Williams about filing contempt charges against her, but the threat did little to encourage the witness. Unlike the other TVA witnesses, the committee asked Williams more than once about knowing regional planner Benton MacKaye. Williams explained that she arrived in Knoxville about a year after MacKaye had left TVA. This became the government’s first and only mention of MacKaye as a possible subversive while with TVA. The

⁴² Ibid., 3:1270-75, 1296-1301, quote from 1301.

committee also asked Williams about her affiliation with the Highlander Folk School.

Williams confirmed that she knew Myles Horton and supported the educational programs at the school, but when asked if she had seen any communists at Highlander, she replied: "That is like saying did I see a cow out in the orchard." Unable to extract additional information from Williams about TVA, the CP, and other possible subversives, the committee released her from the stand.⁴³

Williams became the last witness called before the Dies Committee to discuss radicalism within TVA. After a relatively brief investigation and hearing only a handful of additional witnesses, the committee reported that a very small number of CP members had worked for TVA during the late 1930s. With the help of uncovered documents, especially Kenneth McConnell's 1937 report, the committee connected these radicals with Communist Party activities in the South. But as none of the witnesses admitted to still belonging to the CP and could provide little information on current initiatives in the South, the Dies Committee ended its inquiry into TVA's brief connection to the Communist Party. In November of that year, the FBI summarized the results of the inquiry with a letter to TVA chairman Harcourt Morgan. J. Edgar Hoover sent the chairman a list of forty-five suspected CP members employed by TVA. The list named eight of the "Knoxville Fifteen," including Mabel Abercrombie, Muriel Williams, John Frantz, Howard Frazier, Henry Hart, David Stone Martin, Burton Zien, and Elizabeth

⁴³ Congress, House, *Un-American Activities, Executive Hearings*, 3:1272, 1278-80, 1285-87, 1290, 1296-1302, 1305-07, quote from 1301; Muriel Williams to Myles Horton, 30 July 1940, folder 4, box 1, Mather Papers, UT Special Collections.

Todd. In the end, TVA determined that out of nearly 18,000 employees in 1940, only three individuals, Hart, Martin, and Williams, had been confirmed CP members.⁴⁴

For another four years, the Dies Committee continued its hunt for alleged Fifth Columnists. During 1940, the FBI waged a successful publicity campaign to discredit the activities of the Dies Committee. President Roosevelt also encouraged Dies to refrain from interfering with other government investigations of potential subversives. By 1941, the number of public hearings declined and Dies attracted little public attention. On October 19, 1941, Dies sent Attorney General Francis Biddle a list of 1,124 federal employees alleged to belong to subversive organizations and demanded a full investigation. Dies began preliminary work on the list, but the public remained focused on events overseas. During World War II, the Dies Committee conducted a small number of investigations into the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the Ku Klux Klan, German spies, Japanese Americans released from internment camps, and the communist leadership of the CIO. Although the transcripts of the hearings were expected to remain closed, in 1943 the government printing office published a majority of the Committee's hearings. Only a few public hearings occurred during the war years, and in 1944, with Dies declining to run for re-election due to poor health, the entire committee dissolved.

⁴⁴ Copy of Attachment to J. Edgar Hoover to Harcourt Morgan, 6 November 1940, folder 4, box 82, Joseph C. Swidler Papers, 1931-1997, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. [hereinafter Swidler Papers, LC]; "Notes on the Dies Committee Investigation of TVA," [1943], box 102, David E. Lilienthal Papers, 1900-1981, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey [hereinafter Lilienthal Papers, Princeton]; Congress, Senate, *Nomination of Gordon R. Clapp, Senate Committee on Public Works* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1947), 173-75; Congress, Senate, *Confirmation of Atomic Energy Commissioner and General Manager, Hearings Before the Senate Section of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1947), 132-33.

In the midst of a world war against fascism, Dies' message of fighting communism at home fell mostly on deaf ears.⁴⁵

The war years changed America and Americans in innumerable ways. Under the leadership of President Franklin Roosevelt, the nation galvanized the Allied Powers into an unstoppable military force. Between 1942 and 1945, hundreds of thousands of American soldiers fought and died to defeat the Axis Powers on numerous fronts. On the homefront, the massive domestic mobilization effort to support the war brought new groups into the industrial workforce and resulted in untold social and cultural changes. The war drew large numbers of women into working roles, to replace male workers serving in the military. At the same time, shortages, restrictions, regulations, and family dislocations affected the home front. The end of the war created new social problems. Many women left the workplace, students flooded colleges and universities, thousands of disabled soldiers returned to an uncertain future, and an unexpected "baby boom" began. Mobilization for the war had erased any remnants of the economic depression from the previous decade and replaced it with a strong industrial base. The creation of a nuclear device also brought a high-tide to American ingenuity and further established the nation's hegemony. The United States emerged from World War II with a strong sense of optimism about its role as a world power.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ogden, *The Dies Committee*, 247, 250-52, 277-79, 289-95; Carr, *Committee on Un-American Activities*, 17-19; O'Reilly, "FBI vs. Dies Committee," 87-90.

⁴⁶ See, David M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); and John Morton Blum, *V Was For Victory: Politics and American Culture During World War II* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976).

As the demands of wartime changed the focus of TVA, the agency's workers also adapted. Like other Americans, the war years offered diverse experiences for the "Knoxville Fifteen." At the conclusion of the Dies Committee inquiry into the agency's radical past, all of the fifteen individuals resumed their lives to start families, volunteer for military service, complete graduate school, or secure better employment. Whether a government employee, soldier, factory worker, or a housewife, their activities reveal an ongoing social consciousness for causes such as labor reform. Later testimony confirmed that several of the "Knoxville Fifteen" maintained loose communication during this period with Christmas cards, unexpected visits, or phone calls, but for the most part by 1945 the "Knoxville Fifteen" no longer existed as such and the individuals had scattered across the country.

Only a few months after the Dies Committee hearings, witnesses John Frantz and Muriel Williams left TVA and headed in different directions. Frantz chose to continue his career as a civil servant. On October 28, 1940, Frantz, a Junior Administrative Assistant with TVA, resigned to accept a position in the employment division of the National Youth Administration. That fall, John and his wife Dorothy moved to Arlington, Virginia and re-kindled friendships with former TVA associates Harry Alber and Kenneth Cameron, who also worked for the federal government and lived nearby. Frantz joined a number of organizations, including the Washington Cooperative Book Shop. Once in Washington, D.C., Frantz moved through a series of government jobs. In addition to a brief tenure with the National Youth Administration, Frantz worked for the Civil Aeronautics Administration, the Office of Price Administration, and the Housing and Home Finance Agency. By 1943, Frantz served as a Principal Administrative

Analyst with the latter organization and planned to move to a higher post. But his publicly available Dies Committee testimony and new laws about controlling subversives during wartime made advancement in the federal government difficult.⁴⁷

In early 1942, the Dies Committee gave the FBI a confidential list of former TVA employees who had been engaged in communist activities. John Frantz appeared on the list, and in early 1942 the FBI investigated Frantz under the purview of the Appropriation Act of June 28, 1941, which allowed Congress to order the investigation of government employees suspected of belonging to subversive organizations. After speaking to more than a dozen associates, the FBI interviewed Frantz. The resulting discussion focused on his TVA tenure and his radical affiliations. When asked by the agent, Frantz denied ever having joined, contributed to, or attended meetings of the Communist Party. The interview resulted in an FBI report suggesting that the Frantz matter deserved additional investigation. In October 1942, a second report from the FBI's Knoxville office determined that "there is no basis for finding that Mr. Frantz is or has been a member of the Communist Party. Furthermore, his records contain no showing of improper activities on his part."⁴⁸

⁴⁷ FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 17 June 1948, John Frantz FBI file #121-7423-23; FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 16 November 1954, John Frantz FBI file #121-7423-49; Woodrow W. Bousman, "Report of Investigation," 7 July 1947, 47-56, J. Edgar Hoover to Wayne Coy, 8 July 1942, folder 2, J.F. Edwards, "Appeal of John M. Frantz," 3 February 1945, folder 1, box 627, all in John Frantz, Oversize Personnel Security Investigation Case Files, 1928-1982, Civil Service Commission and Office of Federal Investigations, Records of the Office of Personnel Management, Record Group 478, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland [hereinafter Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park].

⁴⁸ Report of FBI Special Agent Concerning John Marshall Frantz, 11 March 1942, folder 2, quote from FBI Knoxville Report, 28 October 1942, folder 3, box 627, all in Frantz Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park; United States, House of Representatives, *State, Commerce, Justice, and the Judiciary Appropriation Bill, Fiscal Year 1942*, 77th Congress, 1st Session, 1941-1942, House Report 760, Serial 10555, 8.

In 1943, cleared by the FBI of the subversive charges, Frantz continued as an employee with the Housing and Home Finance Agency and prepared to enter military service. But in March 1943, based on past investigations, the Civil Service Commission rated him ineligible for federal employment, meaning that he would be unable to transfer or advance to a different position. Frantz appealed the decision and for the next two years argued that the federal government had exonerated him from all charges. An appeals board met in January 1945 to review Frantz's petition to reverse the decision. The committee found that despite the FBI's findings, Frantz had "voluntarily associated with organizations that he must have known were regarded with suspicion." As an example, Frantz had joined the Washington Cooperative Book Club after the Dies Committee had labeled it a CP-front organization, claiming that he wanted the discount on books and records. But on the central issue of Communist Party membership, the board found inconclusive evidence and cleared Frantz of the charge. In February 1945, the Civil Service Commission reversed its decision and rated Frantz as eligible for federal employment. One month later, John Frantz enlisted in the United States Navy as an Apprentice Seaman. After basic training in Illinois, Frantz completed a military radio program and by the end of 1945 the Navy assigned him to his former employer, the Housing and Home Finance Agency in Washington, D.C.⁴⁹

Muriel Williams also experienced effects from her appearance before the Dies Committee. In the fall of 1940, TVA transferred Stillman Williams from Chattanooga to

⁴⁹ C.F. Niles, "Post-Audit Case for John Marshall Frantz," 28 May 1953, quote from Elizabeth P. Tracy, "Board of Appeals and Review for John Marshall Frantz," 26 January 1945, J.F. Edwards, "Appeal of John M. Frantz," 3 February 1945, folder 1, John Frantz to Civil Service Commission, 12 April 1944, Woodrow W. Bousman, "Report of Investigation," 7 July 1947, 1-2, J. Edgar Hoover to Wayne Coy, 8 July 1942, folder 2, box 627, all in Frantz Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park.

Knoxville but the agency refused to re-employ Muriel Williams because of her testimony. After over four years of TVA service she officially resigned on November 8, 1940. Of the five TVA witnesses from the 1940 hearings, only Muriel Williams lost her job for speaking about the CP in Knoxville. However, Williams quickly secured a part-time position with the TVA Credit Union and actually worked in a downtown Knoxville TVA building. A year later, the Williams family returned to Chattanooga, where Stillman worked for TVA and Muriel gave birth to a son. In addition to motherhood, Muriel joined the League of Women Voters, volunteered for the Red Cross, and learned to play the piano.⁵⁰

But with the nation on the verge of war, the FBI kept a close watch on Muriel Williams. In November 1941, the Special Defense Unit of the FBI recommended that Williams “be considered for custodial detention in the event of a national emergency” based on her past activities. After further investigation, the FBI declared that Williams was no longer active or affiliated with the Communist Party. In March 1942, the FBI revoked the custodial detention classification, but maintained that her activities would be restricted and that she would be subjected to general surveillance. During World War II, tracking Williams became more difficult. In 1943, Stillman Williams took an appointment as Lieutenant in the United States Navy and served in the Pacific theater. For the next two years Williams lived a transient life, staying with her parents in New

⁵⁰ Selma Williams, “Muriel W. Mather Interview,” March 1981, [transcript] 2-3, folder 6, box 1, Selma Williams, “Interview with Muriel Williams Mather,” 22 November 1983, [transcript] 18, folder 2, box 1, all in Mather Papers, UT Special Collections; Arthur S. Jandrey to Muriel Williams, 29 November 1940, folder, Williams, Muriel S., box 16, TVA RG 142, NARA Southeast; Selma R. Williams, *Red-Listed: Haunted by the Washington Witch Hunt* (Reading, MA.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1993), 113.

Jersey, with friends in Connecticut, and at their home in Chattanooga. At the end of the war in 1945, Williams and her son waited for her husband to complete his military service and return to their Tennessee home.⁵¹

By 1940, Dies Committee witness David Stone Martin found that TVA limited his artistic abilities. To maintain his professional standing, Martin entered his art work in a variety of competitions and attracted attention from other federal agencies. In 1940 and 1941, the Department of Commerce arranged for Martin to be placed on loan from TVA to make surveys, blueprints, and designs of the St. Lawrence Seaway for the Public Works Administration (PWA). At the same time, Martin's winning entry for the "Forty-Eight State Competition" resulted in contract offers from the Public Buildings Administration of the Federal Works Agency (FWA). However, his status as a federal employee prevented Martin from taking government contracts. In August 1941, after five years of service as an exhibits artist, Martin resigned from TVA to become a freelance contract artist. Unlike Muriel Williams, Martin did not leave TVA because of pressure and in fact he reported that TVA "attached no onus" to him after testifying before the Dies Committee. Martin did not know, however, that after his testimony TVA officials regarded him as a suspected communist and requested a FBI investigation. But by 1941,

⁵¹ J. Edgar Hoover to FBI Knoxville, 1 November 1941, Muriel W. Mather FBI file #100-17521-7; J. Edgar Hoover to L.M.C. Smith, 25 November 1941, Mather FBI file #100-17521-8; W.A. Murphy to FBI Director, 4 March 1942, Mather FBI file #100-17521-10; FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 4 March 1942, Mather FBI file #100-17521-11; Williams, "Muriel W. Mather Interview," March 1981, [transcript] 3, Mather Papers, UT Special Collections.

when Martin resigned, the FBI had produced no additional information on the artist and TVA dropped the matter.⁵²

After TVA, Martin found work with a variety of employers and agencies. In October 1941, Martin moved to Lambertville, New Jersey and worked out of his home studio as a contract artist for the Section of Fine Arts of the Public Buildings Administration. One of Martin's first assignments was to design a mural for the courtroom of the Mobile, Alabama Court House and Customs House. Martin visited Mobile in early 1942 to evaluate the space and met with United States District Judge John McDuffie. Martin explained to McDuffie that money for the project had already been allocated, but the judge believed the money would be better used for national defense, later stating that "we can't whip Hitler nor the Japs with murals." Nonetheless, Martin continued his contract work with the FWA and began making other connections in nearby New York City. With only a short commute to Manhattan, Martin took freelance work with CBS where he met William Golden, the designer of the network's CBS "eye" logo. While in New York also Martin met other artists, including Ben Shahn, and explored his interest in jazz music.⁵³ In the latter endeavor, during the early 1940s

⁵² FBI Chicago to FBI Washington, 19 June 1942, David Stone Martin, "Application and Personal History Statement," ca. 1940s, quote from "Attachment to Application of David Stone Martin," ca. 1940s, all in Martin FBI file #77-24191-5; "Government Exhibit #35 in U.S. District Court, S.D. of N.Y.," 19 January 1951, folder 1, box 1244, David Stone Martin, Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park; George Slover to Edward Bruce, 28 July 1941, Records of the Section of Fine Arts, Public Buildings Administration, 1933-1943, Record Group 121, NARA, Washington, D.C. [hereinafter Public Building Administration, RG 121, NARA]; M. Kerlin to William J. Hayes, 29 March 1941, folder 3, box, David Stone Martin Papers, 1939-1991, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. [hereinafter Martin Papers, AAA]; Congress, Senate, *Nomination of Gordon R. Clapp*, 173-75.

⁵³ Social realist painter and photographer Ben Shahn, 1898-1969, was one of the most significant artists of the New Deal Era. See, Howard Greenfield, *Ben Shahn: An Artist's Life* (New York: Random House, 1998), and Frances Pohl, *Ben Shahn: New Deal Artist in a Cold War Climate, 1947-1954* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989).

Martin designed album covers for the independent folk music label Asch Records and became good friends with jazz pianist Mary Lou Williams.⁵⁴

For artists, wartime offered unique opportunities. In early 1942, contract work with *Fortune Magazine* led Martin back to government service. The magazine's outgoing art director, Francis Brennan, recruited Martin for a new government agency to support the war through artwork. In April 1942, Martin accepted a position as graphic designer in the Office of Coordinator of Information in Washington, D.C., which quickly broke into the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and the Office of War Information (OWI). Brennan chose to work with the OSS and took Martin with him. In that position, Martin produced charts and maps for the war efforts, while splitting his time between his New Jersey residence and an apartment in Arlington, Virginia. When at the latter address, Martin often visited with Harry Alber, Kenneth Cameron, and John Frantz. In August, Brennan transferred to the OWI and again Martin followed. The move proved to be fortuitous for Martin. In addition to a promotion, in November 1942 the OWI relocated its main office to New York City and Martin returned to his New Jersey home. At the OWI under Brennan's direction, Martin worked with colleagues Ben Shahn and William Golden designing, editing, and publishing a variety of materials for the War Production Board. The next year, the War Department selected Martin to lead a War Art Unit to the Middle East, and in the summer of 1943, Martin arrived in Egypt to record

⁵⁴ "Government Exhibit #35," 19 January 1951, Martin, Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park; FBI Chicago to FBI Washington, 19 June 1942, David Stone Martin, "Application and Personal History Statement," ca. 1940s, all in Martin FBI file #77-24191-5; FBI Newark to FBI Washington, 22 May 1942, Martin FBI file #77-24191-2; Edward B. Rowan to David Stone Martin, 23 September 1941, David Stone Martin to Edward Bruce, 9 January 1941, quote from John McDuffie to Edward Bruce, folder 3, box 1, Martin Papers, AAA; Manek Daver, *David Stone Martin: Jazz Graphics* (Tokyo: Graphic-sha Publishing, 1991), 11.

scenes of war. The experience allowed Martin to become an artistic military correspondent for *Life* magazine later that year.⁵⁵

While Martin represented the United States overseas, the federal government took great interest in his past activities. Although Martin denied CP membership during his Dies Committee testimony in 1940, the government pursued the communist charge. In a 1941 report, the Office of Naval Intelligence listed Martin as having “Communitistic tendencies,” while the following year both the Military Intelligence Service and the Civil Service Security Index listed him as a “Suspected Communist.” The FBI followed up on these charges and during the war years issued over a dozen field reports on Martin. One FBI report claimed that just before Martin left TVA in August 1941, the agency ordered an investigation of Martin’s activities to see if he should be held in custodial detention in the event of a national emergency. But, unlike the case of Muriel Williams, the government did not pursue an investigation to determine Martin’s custodial detention potential. Instead, the Civil Service Commission reviewed and approved Martin’s eligibility for government service. Martin spent the rest of the war years working for the OWI and taking freelance work.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Selected David Stone Martin’s wartime art is available online through the exhibit, “Navy Medical Art of the Abbott Collection,” at <http://www.history.navy.mil/ac/medica/medic1.htm>. “Government Exhibit #35,” 19 January 1951, Martin, Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park; Daver, *David Stone Martin*, 11; “United States Civil Service Investigation of David Stone Martin,” 2 January 1943, folder 1, box 1244, Martin Security Case Files, Bousman, “Report of Investigation,” 7 July 1947, 47-56, folder 2, box 627, Frantz Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park; Howard Greenfield, *Ben Shahn: An Artist’s Life* (New York: Random House, 1998), 192-93; [Francis Brennan] to M.S. Eisenhower, 8 August 1942, E. Reybold to David Stone Martin, 2 June 1943, George Biggs to [Lambertville, New Jersey] Chief of Police, 26 May 1943, all in folder 3, box 1, Martin Papers, AAA.

⁵⁶ SAC New York to FBI Director, [5?] July 1953, Martin FBI file #77-24191-10; FBI Chicago to FBI Washington, 19 June 1942, Martin FBI file #77-24191-5; quotes from “Case of David Stone Martin,” January 1944, Alfred Klein, “Board of Appeals and Review for David Stone Martin,” 23 April 1943, all in folder 1, box 1244, David Stone Martin, Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park.

Of the TVA witnesses heard before the Dies Committee, Henry Hart had the least difficulty in immediately recovering. In fact, just a month after his testimony, in August 1940 TVA awarded Hart a slight promotion with a raise. As an administrative assistant, Hart worked for the Director of Personnel on the agency's labor budget. TVA gave Hart another advance two years later, with an upgrade to Assistant Specialist in the Training Division. In the position, Hart educated employees on the goals of TVA and organized rallies, contests, and radio program to raise awareness about the war effort.⁵⁷

Three years after testifying before the Dies Committee and being repeatedly interviewed by FBI agents, Hart believed the specter of subversive had passed. However, on June 27, 1943, the *Knoxville Journal* published a special *Cavalcade* section devoted to communism within the TVA. The newspaper, owned by Roy N. Lotspeich who had sponsored Josephus Remine's 1937 investigation of TVA communists, chronicled the Dies hearings, described CP meetings of the late-1930s, and labeled a number of individuals as communist sympathizers. The text of a January 31, 1939 letter from Henry Hart to Robert Hall appeared on the front page of the section and proved to be the most damaging for Hart.⁵⁸ The letter described the intentional removal of "reactionary-bourgeois supervisor" James Smith from the TVA Files Unit, named a number of active TVA "comrades," and articulated the CP's stronghold within the agency. Hart denied authorship and all knowledge of the letter in a July 9 affidavit. He sent the official statement to TVA in order "to protest, deny, and correct" the suspicious document.

⁵⁷ SAC Washington to FBI Director, 29 December 1948, FBI file #121-11415-8.

⁵⁸ One month later, the *Knoxville News-Sentinel* published a similar article about TVA's communists and included the text of the 1939 letter. *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, 25 July 1943.

Hart's statement seemed to extinguish the effects of the mysterious letter, and two months later in August 1943, the Army drafted Hart into the Air Corps at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia.⁵⁹

Hart escaped the communist label and found success in the military. After a year in the Air Corps, Hart applied for Officer Training School. Before admittance to the program, Army Intelligence questioned Hart about his radical past and he openly admitted that he had at one time been a member of the Communist Party. He completed infantry training at Fort Benning, Georgia and served as a corporal in the Twenty-Sixth Fighter Command. In April 1945, Hart accepted a commission as Second Lieutenant Infantry and for the rest of his military service he trained soldiers in Texas and Alabama.⁶⁰

Mabel Abercrombie, the only TVA witness before the Dies Committee who had left the agency prior to the hearings, maintained a low profile during the war years. After her summer 1940 testimony, Abercrombie returned to her job a senior clerk in Nashville. While there, Abercrombie met her future husband Harold Mansfield. During a recent interview, her recollections of the period were fuzzy. She said that she worked for the War Department while her husband-to-be served in the military. In the summer of 1945, following Mansfield's release from the military, the two made a visit to the Northeast. Abercrombie and Mansfield stopped in Milton, Massachusetts just outside of Boston to meet with former TVA colleague Howard Bridgman. According to Bridgman's later

⁵⁹ Congress, Senate, *Nomination of Gordon R. Clapp*, 182-84, 518-21; *Knoxville Journal, Cavalcade*, 27 June 1943.

⁶⁰ Congress, Senate, *Nomination of Gordon R. Clapp*, 519-21; SAC Washington to FBI Director, 29 December 1948, FBI file #121-11415-8.

testimony, at the meeting Abercrombie admitted that she had dropped out of the Communist Party because her views had changed. But Abercrombie remembered events differently, later testifying that she had never joined the CP and that her summer 1945 conversation with Bridgman focused on reminiscing and not politics. Shortly thereafter, Mabel and Harold married and the two settled near Atlanta.⁶¹

For several members of the “Knoxville Fifteen,” official investigations and inquisitive government agents abounded during the war years. Although Burton Zien did not testify before the Dies Committee in 1940, the brand of being a radical followed him. Because Zien’s name appeared on a Dies Committee list of alleged TVA communists, in 1941 the FBI investigated him. The FBI connected Zien to CP-front groups such as the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy and the Workers Alliance, and verified Zien’s 1930s Knoxville activities. After nearly a dozen reports and an interview with Zien, by 1942 the FBI determined that Zien had exhibited radical tendencies while with TVA, but found no evidence that he had ever joined the Communist Party. Still, the FBI placed Zien under the custodial detention classification and considered him dangerous enough to be interned during a national emergency. In spite of government investigations and labels, Zien advanced in the federal service and served his country overseas.⁶²

⁶¹ Author’s interview, Mabel Abercrombie Mansfield, Eureka, California, 23 August 2003; Congress, House, *Hearings Regarding Communism-Part I*, 1773-74; “Hearing Before the Un-American Activities Committee,” May 12, 1950, folder: Mabel Mansfield, box 11, HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA.

⁶² Matthew F. McGuire to J. Edgar Hoover, 17 July 1941, FBI file #100-10189-9; C.K. Fierstone to FBI Director, 17 July 1941, FBI file #100-10189-10; FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 11 June 1948, Burton Zien file #121-9839-37; J. Edgar Hoover to L.M.C. Smith, 2 April 1941, FBI file #100-10189-4; W.A. Murphy to FBI Director, 2 October 1941, FBI file #100-10189-21; J. Edgar Hoover to FBI Knoxville, 26 March 1942, FBI file #100-10189-[32?].

During the early 1940s, Burton Zien declined an opportunity to take over his father's plumbing business in Milwaukee and remained in the South. In April 1940 he resigned from the Tennessee Unemployment Compensation Division of the Department of Labor, only to take a position as an inspector with the United States Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division. For the next two years, Zien directed the Division's East Tennessee field office located in downtown Knoxville. In September 1942, only two months after his divorce from Jeanne Pinairre, Zien enlisted in the Army as a Private. Zien took military leave from his inspector position in November to begin the Air Corps Meteorology Training School at New York University. Nine months later, the Army commissioned him as Second Lieutenant, with the title of Weather Officer. Zien then took tactical training in Florida and in late-1943 deployed for New Caledonia, en route to Guadalcanal. Assigned to the Air Force as a Fighter Controller, Zien operated radar stations across the Pacific during the last two years of the war.⁶³

The wartime experiences of Howard Frazier proved similar. During the early 1940s Frazier maintained his vigor for labor rights while undergoing investigation. He spent the first part of the war years in Nashville. After two years as Inspector for the Wage and Hour Division with the United States Department of Labor, in March 1941 Frazier earned a promotion to Supervising Inspector. In this position he traveled across the state and supervised a number of employees, including Burton Zien. At the same time, Frazier appeared on a list of alleged CP members once employed by TVA. The list emerged from the Dies Committee and the FBI questioned the credibility of the

⁶³ FBI Washington Report, 28 June 1948, Zien FBI file #121-9839-32X; Zien, "Statement to the FBI," 2 June 1950, 38, 41-42, Zien HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA.

document. Nonetheless, in early 1942 the FBI launched an investigation into federal employee Howard Frazier's past. On March 17, 1942, FBI agents interviewed Frazier about his radical tendencies. Frazier denied membership in the Communist Party and stated that he had never attended a CP meeting. After a small number of interviews and reports, the FBI substantiated Frazier's claims and cleared him for federal employment.⁶⁴

Like many of his TVA colleagues, Frazier served his country during World War II. With government clearance from the FBI, in May 1942 Frazier enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Force and received a commission as Second Lieutenant. He attended Officer Training School in Miami from May to August 1942 and spent most of the war as a labor relations officer. Frazier served overseas in New Guinea, the Philippines, and Korea and had domestic assignments in Alabama, Mississippi, Virginia, Massachusetts, and Maryland. He earned a number of awards for his service in the Pacific, including the American Campaign Medal, the Philippine Liberation Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal.⁶⁵

The war years were a difficult period for Bernard Borah. After many successes as a regional organizer for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, in 1941 he resigned that position to direct the southern district of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). At the time the UMWA focused on unionizing chemical plants and Borah wanted to expand the initiative to support other domestic industries in the South,

⁶⁴ FBI Washington Report, 3 March 1965, Howard T. Frazier FBI file #121-10515-28; Report of FBI Special Agent Concerning Burton Zien, 3 June 1948, folder 1, box 2097, Security Case Files, RG 478; SAC Knoxville to FBI Director, 7 June 1948, Frazier FBI file #121-10515-1X; J. Edgar Hoover to Special Assistant to the President, 5 August 1965, Frazier FBI file #161-3997-30.

⁶⁵ Howard T. Frazier, "Security Investigation Data for Sensitive Position," 7 July 1965, Frazier FBI file #161-3997-1; FBI St. Louis to FBI Washington, 26 July 1965, Frazier FBI file #161-3997-17.

such as dairies. By 1942, Borah grew frustrated with the union, especially the leadership of UMWA leader and labor giant John L. Lewis. After consulting with labor colleagues and secretly with Lewis's daughter, Borah concluded that Lewis cared less about the war effort and more about pushing union agendas. Convinced of the need to support the country, that summer Borah applied for a military commission. On July 6, 1942 as a protest against Lewis, Borah resigned as Regional Director of the United Mine Workers of America. He publicly denounced Lewis and immediately the National Council of Gas, Coke, and Chemical Workers (CIO) offered Borah a position as Southern Regional Director. Borah accepted the position and also joined a group to fight the League for White Supremacy, a rapidly growing southern group espousing the dangers of a coming race war.⁶⁶

Borah believed that the defeat of the Axis power would be a victory for labor and next focused his energies on military service. On August 31, 1942 the Army inducted Borah at Fort McPherson, Georgia, and the following week transferred him to Keesler Field in Biloxi, Mississippi for basic training. Borah ceased nearly all communications with civilians during his military career, but made an exception to correspond with Myles Horton at the Highlander School. In October 1942, Borah wrote Horton about his progress, saying that "unless racial and labor prejudice enter[s] the picture" he expected to be a second lieutenant by March 1, 1943. Borah's Jewish ancestry, background as a labor organizer, and reputation as a suspected communist did indeed slow his military

⁶⁶ FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 25 September 1942, Bernard Borah FBI file #100-81707-2; [Name redacted] to Officer in Charge, 9 February 1943, 47-48, Borah Army File; Bernard Borah to Myles Horton, 8 June 1942, Bernard Borah to Kathryn Lewis, 5 July 1942, all in folder 5, box 7, Highlander Collection, Wisconsin; *New York Times*, 6 July 1942.

advancement. The military launched a lengthy investigation into Borah's past and learned that the FBI regarded him as a communist with radical tendencies. By December, Borah had completed basic training, but the military informed him that he could not attend Officer Training School until given security clearance. In the meantime, Borah became a drill instructor at Keesler Field.⁶⁷

Borah's awarding of his commission as an officer continued for another year. In January 1943, he wrote Horton, saying that he had been cleared and expected to leave the following week, but at the end of month the investigation continued and Borah reported that "my path toward a commission is slightly rocky." The military investigated every angle of Borah's life and in report after report found that he was potentially subversive and unfit for a commission. Borah wrote Horton that the delay resulted from a divided opinion among the higher officers. By December 1943, the military finally cleared Borah of all restrictions and admitted him to Officer Training School in Miami. Borah completed the training and during the next year earned the rank of Lieutenant. With a background in labor, the military assigned him to an assistant Civilian Personnel Officer post for bases on the West Coast. In the summer of 1944, Borah transferred to Kirtland Field, Albuquerque, New Mexico. But by August, Borah had developed hyperthyroidism, a thyroid condition where part of the gland must be removed, and

⁶⁷ Borah to Lewis, 5 July 1942, quote from Bernard Borah to Myles Horton, 1 October 1942, folder 5, box 7, Highlander Collection, Wisconsin; FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 25 September 1942, Bernard Borah FBI file #100-81707-2; [Name redacted] to Officer in Charge, 24 October 1942, 2-3, [Name redacted] to Officer in Charge, 9 February 1943, 48, Memorandum to the Officer in Charge, 2 January 1943, 31, all in Borah Army File.

entered the Army hospital for an operation. His health quickly declined and the thirty-one-year-old Borah died on August 29, 1943, just before the procedure.⁶⁸

For others members of the “Knoxville Fifteen,” the government launched minimal or no investigations into their TVA tenure, even though the 1940 Dies Committee had identified nearly all of them. During the war years Elizabeth and Pat Todd re-invigorated their labor activism. In the spring of 1941, the Todds left Charlotte for New York City and found an apartment near Greenwich Village. Elizabeth enrolled in the American School of the Air at Columbia University to study radio broadcasting, while Pat secured work as an electrical contractor for the C.W. Wood Electric Company. A year later, Elizabeth finished the program and in June 1942 she secured a position at CBS Radio. The Todds remained active in their community by promoting unionism and supporting liberal candidates for office. The FBI took careful note of their activities throughout this period, and reported that the Todds supported Communist Party candidates, joined the pro-CP Greenwich Village Club, subscribed to the *Daily Worker*, and held communist sympathies.⁶⁹

Similar to the Todds, during the war years Kit Schryver maintained some radical ties while avoiding significant government inquiry. The Schryvers spent the first two years of the decade in New York City working as assistant editors, participating in liberal

⁶⁸ Bernard Borah to Myles Horton, 4 January 1943, Bernard Borah to Myles Horton, 26 January 1943, Bernard Borah to Myles Horton, 28 March [1943], “Buck Borah Press Release,” ca. August 1943, folder 5, box 7, Highlander Collection, Wisconsin; Military Intelligence Division Report on Bernard Borah, 25 February 1943, 71-76; Stacy Knopf to Military Intelligence, 12 June 1943, 203-205, Stacy Knopf to Military Intelligence Report, 27 October 1943, 240, Stacy Knopf to Military Intelligence, 13 December 1943, 272, all in Borah Army File.

⁶⁹ FBI New York Report, 7 April 1951, Elizabeth Todd FBI file #100-440310-5; SAC New York to FBI Director, 7 March 1951, Elizabeth Todd FBI file #100-440310-4; FBI New York Report, 24 October 1955, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-10.

causes, and keeping friends of the “Greenwich Village type.” Kit, who stayed at Viking Press until January 1941, took an interest in voting rights for African Americans. Her husband, Elliott, had also secured work at Viking Press and took classes at the League of American Writers School. Elliott also belonged to the Book and Magazine Guild of the United Office and Professional Workers of America (CIO) and gave lectures to the group on manuscript reading. In January 1942, the Schryvers moved upstate to Croton-on-Hudson. Officially, Elliott reduced his time at Viking to part-time because of his allergies, but it is more likely that he began job hunting. His supervisors at Viking later reported that Elliott desperately wanted a “war job” to help support the nation. A few months later, Elliott took a position as Associate Economic Editor in the Office of Coordinator of Information in Washington, D.C.—the same agency that employed artist David Stone Martin.⁷⁰

In May 1942, the Schryvers moved to Alexandria, Virginia and began a new phase of their lives. As with other government employees during wartime, the FBI began an extensive background check on Elliott. The FBI reports that followed listed Elliott’s union activity and participation in liberal organizations, but with no real evidence of dangerous affiliations the agency end its inquiry in November. Elliott thrived in government work, earning two promotions that year. Likewise, Kit found great opportunity in the Washington area. In June 1943, she secured a position as the Executive Secretary for the National Committee to Abolish the Poll Tax. As chief

⁷⁰ FBI Albuquerque to FBI Washington, 4 April 1952, Katherine Buckles FBI file #100-353259-42; quote from FBI Washington Report, 7 November 1942, Elliot Schryver FBI file #77-24514-9; FBI Washington Report, 21 January 1944, Elliot Schryver FBI file #77-24514-10; FBI New York to FBI Washington, 2 July 1942, Elliot Schryver FBI file #77-24514-6; FBI Washington Report, 21 January 1944, Elliot Schryver FBI file #77-24514-10.

organizer for the committee, Kit contacted legislators, worked with African American groups, and scheduled a nationwide tour to promote the cause of ending the poll tax. Just as Kit found success, Elliott took a new government assignment as an Economist in the Europe-Africa branch of the Office of Strategic Services (the predecessor agency of the CIA), one of the replacement organizations for the Office of Coordinator of Information. The extensive travel strained their marriage and in 1944, while Elliott was overseas, Kit filed for divorce. Thereafter, Kit launched a national effort to promote awareness for African American voting rights, and traveled across the country rallying support. She garnered national attention for the Committee and the cause and in the summer of 1945 received a medal from her alma mater, the University of Colorado, for "Contributions to American Culture and Fight Against the Vicious Poll Tax." That same year, Dr. Mary Bethune, the President of the National Council of Negro Women, named Kit Schryver one of their "Sixteen American Women" who made the most significant achievements of the year.⁷¹

During the early 1940s, Howard Bridgman accumulated diverse experiences while avoiding government investigations. After finishing a teaching assignment at Brown University, in the fall of 1941 he accepted an economics instructor position at Connecticut College in New London, Connecticut. In the fall of 1942, Bridgman moved to Washington, D.C. to work for the War Manpower Commission. For the next nine

⁷¹ FBI Washington Report, 21 January 1944, Elliot Schryver FBI file #77-24514-10; J. Edgar Hoover to FBI New York, 16 May 1942, Elliot Schryver FBI file #77-24514-1; FBI Albuquerque to FBI Washington, 19 March–19 April 1951, Katherine Buckles FBI file #100-353259-38; FBI St. Louis to FBI Washington, 8 May 1950, Katherine Buckles FBI file #100-353259-2; FBI Knoxville to FBI St. Louis, 2 September 1950, Buckles FBI File #100-353259-7; FBI Washington Report, 12 July 1950, FBI file #100-353259-5.

months, Bridgman served as an associate economist working on labor issues for the agency. In June 1943, he entered the Navy as a Lieutenant Junior Grade and attended communication school. For the next two years, Bridgman served as a communications officer on the attack transport *U.S.S. Gillian, APA 57* in the Pacific. During his impressive Navy tenure, Bridgman participated in the Okinawa, Leyte Gulf, and Lingayen Gulf campaigns, earning four battle stars and the Philippine Liberation ribbon. In the summer of 1945, the Navy transferred Bridgman to an office assignment at the First Naval District Headquarters in Boston. Bridgman remained in the Navy for another year working on personnel issues at the District Headquarters.⁷²

During the war years, the FBI took little if any interest in Howard Bridgman. None of the TVA witnesses before the Dies Committee in 1940 mentioned or received questions about Bridgman. Perhaps because Bridgman had left TVA and Knoxville in the fall of 1937, long before Roxie Paris arrived, his brief CP activities went unrecorded. Bridgman's CP activities while in New York and as a student at Harvard also stayed below the government's radar. Only because of later testimony and investigations was Bridgman forced to reveal his CP past.

In early 1940, another academic, William Remington, flirted with returning to Tennessee. Beginning in late 1939, Remington wrote to TVA officials about his on-going interest in the agency and hopes of applying for a position after completion of his master's degree at Columbia University that summer. At the same time, Columbia

⁷² Congress, House, *Hearings Regarding Communism-Part I*, 1754-55; "Howard Bridgman Testimony," in *United States vs. William Walter Remington*, Cr. 138-289, Stenographers Minutes, 1953, 53-54, Records of the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, Record Group 21, NARA Northeast [hereinafter Remington Trial, RG 21, NARA Northeast]; "Howard Bridgman Testimony," 688, Remington Trial, RG 276, NARA Northeast.

awarded Remington a fellowship to begin a doctoral program in economics. Although he accepted the fellowship, in April 1940 Remington submitted a second application for employment with TVA. He emphasized his scholastic honors and understanding of economic planning, but admitted that because of his studies he could not possibly begin a position until June 1941. Remington further stated that he would renew his application from time to time and asked that TVA keep him in mind for relevant positions as they developed. In late-1940 he again expressed an interest in returning to TVA.⁷³

Ultimately, the Remingtons chose Washington, D.C. over Knoxville. In May 1940, Remington accepted a part-time position as junior economist with the National Resources Planning Board. He and his wife Ann found an apartment in the District. Unable to find challenging employment, Ann became active in pro-peace groups and organized the American Peace Mobilization Committee. Remington maintained his job in Washington and for the next two semesters he commuted to New York each week to attend classes. He passed his comprehensive exams in April 1941, and three months later accepted a transfer to the Office of Price Administration as a full-time associate industrial economist. The advancement required a background check, both because the position was defense-related and a confidential source had informed the FBI of Remington's past involvement with alleged CP groups.⁷⁴

⁷³ "Background of Defendant at Knoxville, Tennessee, 1936-1937, From TVA File," Remington FBI file #74-1379-48, 6-11; George Slover to William Remington, 2 January 1941, folder REJ-REO, box 176, General Manager's Files 1933-1957, TVA RG 142, NARA Southeast.

⁷⁴ May, *Un-American Activities*, 61-64; Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 7-8; J. Edgar Hoover to Matthew F. McGuire, 23 July 1941, Remington FBI file #101-1185-1; Leon Henderson to Matthew F. McGuire, 19 August 1941, Remington FBI file #101-1185-2.

The investigation of William Remington dragged into the following year and included agents from the Civil Service Commission. In the meantime, in February 1942 Remington secured another transfer to the War Production Board as a member of their Planning Committee. That month, new information from the FBI hinted at the possible radical nature of Remington's TVA years. Remington's name appeared in the FBI investigations of Pat Todd and Harry Alber, both former TVA employees and suspected security risks. The landlord of the Remingtons' Washington apartment also informed the FBI that the couple had been active in the American Peace Mobilization, a CP-front group whose aim was to keep the United States out of war. With extensive evidence from the FBI, on June 29, 1942 the Civil Service Commission conducted an official hearing with Remington.⁷⁵

During the Civil Service interview, Remington focused on his wife's activities and denied that he had ever been a member of the Communist Party. Several questions focused on Remington's TVA tenure and especially his involvement in labor organizations. Remington explained that he had belonged to the Workers' Education Committee of TVA's white-collar union, which he claimed was a political group designed to promote the New Deal and TVA within already existing unions. As for his role in the group, Remington claimed that he conducted research on and wrote letters in support of Roosevelt's expansion of the Supreme Court and WPA appropriations. Remington described his TVA experience as a typical white-collar New Deal assignment.

⁷⁵ May, *Un-American Activities*, 64-65; Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 8; J. Edgar Hoover to SAC Washington, 21 February 1942, Remington FBI file #101-1185-3; Report of D.A. Hruska, 1 April 1942, Remington FBI file #101-1185-4, 2, 4; Lee W. Jones, "The William W. Remington Case" (Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York, 1989), 30-31.

By the summer of 1942, the final report on William Remington's background and loyalty exonerated him of all charges of disloyalty and subversive behavior. For the rest of the war years, government investigators paid little attention to him.⁷⁶

However, the period following Remington's Civil Service investigation proved to be his most radical. In early 1942, Remington contacted Kit Schryver to re-establish ties with the Communist Party. But another acquaintance, Joseph North, who edited the CP publication *New Masses* and lived next door to Remington's mother-in-law in New York, suggested that Remington meet some of his New York friends. In the spring of 1942, the Remingtons met "John" and "Helen" to discuss how they could support the CP cause. The mysterious couple, Soviet spy Jacob Golos and his lover and later CP informant Elizabeth Bentley, arranged for William Remington to provide them with information from the War Production Board in exchange for CP updates. Over the next two years, Remington met with Bentley in Washington, D.C. as many as ten times, usually during his lunch hours near public parks and art galleries. Remington delivered information on small scraps of paper to Bentley about aircraft production schedules, gasoline tests, and synthetic rubber production. In return, Bentley gave Remington summaries of the CP activities and literature to read. Remington believed that since the Russians were allied with the United States, he could support the war by sharing secrets. It is unclear exactly what or how much information Remington shared with Bentley but as the likelihood of

⁷⁶ May, *Un-American Activities*, 66-67; United States Civil Service Commission, Investigations Division, "Report of Partial Interview and Special Hearing," [ca. 29 June 1942], 8-10, folder 1, box A280, William Remington Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park; Wayne Coy to J. Edgar Hoover, 6 June 1942, J. Edgar Hoover to SAC Washington, 20 June 1942, all in Remington FBI file #101-1185-5.

being drafted increased, Remington grew uneasy with the arrangement. In early 1944, Remington broke off all ties with his CP contacts.⁷⁷

William Remington took on a variety of government jobs and service during World War II, all of which moved him to higher ranks and security clearances. In May 1943, he moved into a position as Assistant to the Director of the Orders and Regulations of the War Production Board. Remington remained in that post until April 1944, when he enlisted in the United States Navy. Assigned to the Navy's Oriental Language School in Boulder, Colorado, Remington completed the training in November 1944 with a commission as an Ensign. He then attended Advanced Naval Intelligence School in New York and in February 1945 took an assignment in Washington as a Russian translator for the Navy. In July, his language skills then took him overseas, working for the Mission for Economic Affairs in the American Embassy in London. Remington returned to Washington in November 1945, still in the Navy, to work for the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion.⁷⁸

By the end of the war, only one of the "Knoxville Fifteen" remained with TVA. Forrest Benson, who began as an entry level clerk in 1936, had risen in TVA's ranks throughout the pre-war years. In 1940 he served as an Associate Personnel Officer at the Kentucky Dam site near Gilbertsville, Kentucky. In 1941, TVA promoted Benson to a

⁷⁷ May, *Un-American Activities*, 69-71; Lauren Kessler, *Clever Girl: Elizabeth Bentley, the Spy Who Ushered in the McCarthy Era* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2003), 84-85; Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 12-13, 17, 22-25, 79, 140-45; Kathryn S. Olmsted, *Red Spy Queen: A Biography of Elizabeth Bentley* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 53-54.

⁷⁸ Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 8, 18; Robert Stripling to Louis Russell, 19 March 1948, folder: William Remington, box 38, HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA; John L. Sullivan to Attorney General, 3 August 1948, William Remington FBI file #121-6159-82.

position as Personnel Officer, only to be followed with two more advancements the following year. Forrest and his wife Christine, once a TVA employee herself, had two children during this period. But motherhood did not limit Christine's community involvement. While in Gilbertsville, she participated in the TVA Women's Club, taught dramatics courses, promoted the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, and served as vice-president of the Kentucky Consumers League. Nearly forty years old and with a checkered military past—three incomplete terms of service—Forrest Benson did not serve in the military during World War II. However, the Bensons displayed nothing but support for the war. In the TVA village in Gilbertsville, Christine served as chairman of a Red Cross group and provided training classes to other workers. In the fall of 1944, TVA completed the Kentucky Dam project and later that year TVA transferred Forrest Benson, then a Principal Personnel Officer, to agency headquarters in Knoxville to work in the Personnel Department. In early 1945, after nearly seven years in Kentucky, the Bensons returned to Knoxville.⁷⁹

The first half of the 1940s proved to be a watershed period in American history. The transition from peace to war and back to peace affected all Americans in variety of ways. Within a few short years, American politics, culture, production, and economics had shifted to reflect the nation's role on the international stage. The closing days of World War II hinted that the United States would become a world power, capable of

⁷⁹ FBI Knoxville Report, 3 November 1950, Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443-40; Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 438-39; "Christine E. Benson, Activities," ca. 1940, folder 25, box 6, Highlander Collection, Wisconsin.

shaping the second half of the twentieth century. However, growing concerns about nuclear weapons, threats of communism, and protecting the homeland served as the backdrop for the postwar 1940s and 1950s. These issues became central components of Cold War American culture.

Americans were caught in the middle of these important changes, especially those who supported the reform measures of the New Deal just a few years before. During the early 1940s, the members of the “Knoxville Fifteen” all revisited their participation in 1930s labor organizing and affiliations with alleged radical groups. The 1940 Dies Committee hearings and subsequent investigations represented the first significant inquiry into the subversive nature of TVA and its employees. But with war on the horizon, the government focused more attention on overseas events and dismissed most of the charges against TVA employees. Additional examinations of those in federal service during this period also confirmed that all were fit for government employment.

By the close of World War II in 1945, the “Knoxville Fifteen” no longer existed. Each member seems to have left the extreme parts of their TVA tenures behind them. Although a majority of the fifteen held radical beliefs, during the war years nearly all proved their American loyalty through military service, domestic employment, and cooperation with government investigators. The TVA itself emerged from World War II as a more focused agency with fewer ties to its idealistic past. But as the next chapter will chronicle, the Cold War climate put the TVA and the “Knoxville Fifteen” before a new cast of inquisitors, eager to explore past indiscretions.

Chapter 5

“Saw Plenty”

On August 7, 1945, the day after the United States dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, TVA board chairman David Lilienthal captured the magnitude of that moment in his journal. Writing from his modest home in Norris, Tennessee, Lilienthal recorded, “The story of the ‘Mystery Plant’ near Clinton is out. Whether or not the atomic bomb proves to be so devastating as to mean the end of the Japanese War in a few weeks, it is perfectly clear that here is one of the greatest events in American history. And it took place largely in the Tennessee Valley not ten miles away from where I am ticking off this journal.” Lilienthal well understood the significance of the atomic bomb and how the Tennessee Valley Authority helped contribute to Allied victory in World War II.¹

The beginning of the nuclear age in 1945 symbolized new directions for Lilienthal. At age forty-six, the board chairman had established himself as an expert in public administration and electric power. During the war years, Lilienthal expanded TVA well beyond New Deal expectations, with the agency producing nearly three times as much power in 1945 as it had in 1939. But at the end of the war, Lilienthal longed for a “fresh viewpoint” and considered “getting on to some other work” that was not with TVA. In his 1944 book *TVA: Democracy on the March*, Lilienthal sketched his optimistic vision for the postwar world. He found that “through the practice of

Title quote from caption of article in the *Washington Post*, 27 February 1947.

¹ Quote from David Lilienthal, *The Journals of David E. Lilienthal* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1964), II:1.

democracy the world of technology holds the greatest opportunity in all history for the development of the individual.” But he also cautioned that humankind had a choice, “to use science either for evil or for good.”²

Lilienthal’s great expectations for a marriage of technology and democratic ingenuity coincided with the splitting of the atom. The harnessing of atomic power fascinated Lilienthal, just as much as the control of this new technology concerned him. Lilienthal’s expertise in law, electric power, administration, and government service made him a natural for examining the postwar issues of nuclear energy. During early 1946, Lilienthal helped formulate international atomic policy for the United Nations and the State Department. Later that year President Harry S. Truman recommended that Lilienthal serve as chairman of a new agency, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC). This civilian agency would control all fissionable materials for both peacetime and military applications. Lilienthal agreed that he would accept the AEC nomination only if an appropriate successor for the TVA board chairmanship could be found. After a few weeks of searching, Lilienthal announced that Gordon Clapp, TVA’s General Manager, would fill his post as agency chairman. On October 28, 1946, Truman appointed Lilienthal as the first chairman of the AEC, and a few days later Clapp assumed the top spot on TVA’s board.³

² First two quotes from Lilienthal, *Journals*, I:707-8; Steven M. Neuse, *David E. Lilienthal: The Journey of an American Liberal* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 165-66; second two quotes from David E. Lilienthal, *TVA: Democracy On the March* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1944), xii; Howard Segal, “Down in the Valley: David Lilienthal’s *TVA: Democracy on the March*,” *American Scholar* 64 (1 June 1995): 423-27.

³ Lilienthal, *Journals*, II:88-103; Neuse, *Lilienthal*, 168-81; Richard G. Hewlett and Oscar E. Anderson Jr., *A History of the United States Atomic Energy Commission* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1962-1969), I:533-34, 620-23; David Lilienthal to Harry S. Truman,

The new appointments for TVA and the AEC required Senate confirmation, and during 1947 Lilienthal, Clapp, and other witnesses faced enormous obstacles. With Russian spies reportedly compromising the nation's nuclear monopoly and the American government sculpting a new policy of Cold War international relations, a new wave of anti-communism crested at home. The Senate confirmations of Lilienthal and Clapp resurrected the government's investigation of communism within TVA. During the lengthy sessions, numerous witnesses claimed that communism had infected even the highest levels of the agency. For the second time, government investigators took great interest in a small group of former TVA employees.⁴

From the end of World War II through 1947, two national hearings and several FBI inquiries followed the "Knoxville Fifteen." While for most of the group their time with TVA was behind them, but the Cold War intensified government investigations into the lives of Mabel Abercrombie, Christine and Forrest Benson, Howard Bridgman, Kit Buckles, John Frantz, Howard Frazier, Henry Hart, David Stone Martin, William Remington, Elizabeth and Pat Todd, Muriel Williams, and Burton Zien and their activities during the 1930s. This chapter argues that postwar anti-communist fear and Cold War politics resurrected government inquiries into former TVA radicals, making the "Knoxville Fifteen" easy targets.

[ca. September 1946], Gordon R. Clapp Papers, 1933-1963, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri [hereinafter Clapp Papers, Truman Library].

⁴ Neuse, *Lilienthal*, 184-87, 200.

David Lilienthal's departure from TVA in 1946 symbolized the end of an important phase of the agency's history. At the end of World War II, the agency had completed nearly all of its planned dams on the once uncontrollable Tennessee River, and had created a massive electric distribution network across seven states. Lilienthal's promotion of electric power in the region succeeded so well that demand quickly overcame supply. After World War II, TVA began to construct a series of coal-fired steam-electric generating plants to meet the increased demand for electric power from Valley residents and the AEC. When Gordon Clapp replaced Lilienthal on the TVA board in 1946, the agency's workforce looked far different than it had just five years before. Support for the war had led numerous TVA employees to military service and industrial work, and those who returned to TVA found a leaner, more pragmatic organization.⁵

At the end of World War II in 1945, just one of the "Knoxville Fifteen" worked for TVA and only a few attracted the FBI's attention. Forrest Benson worked for TVA, as a Principal Personnel Officer. Benson maintained a number of professional affiliations, including membership in the American Society for Public Administration, the Civil Service Assembly of the United States and Canada, Theta Xi Fraternity, Sigma Delta Chi Fraternity, and the Bridge Structural and Ornamental Iron Workers Union (AFL). His wife Christine Eversole Benson, once a TVA employee, lived in Knoxville and remained active in labor and national organizations. In addition to raising a family,

⁵ North Callahan, *TVA: Bridge Over Troubled Waters* (New York: A. S. Barnes and Co., 1980), 161-62.

she kept close ties to the Highlander Folk School and became active in home demonstration work sponsored by the Tennessee Extension Service.⁶

Tennessee resident, Burton Zien, returned to civilian life and government service in 1946. After extensive work for the military operating radar stations in the Pacific theater, Zien returned to the United States in February 1946. He left the Army with the commission of Captain in May 1946 and a few weeks later remarried. In June 1946, Zien resumed his position as a Senior Inspector for the Department of Labor at the Knoxville field office.⁷

At the end of World War II, Howard Frazier returned to Tennessee. After serving four years in the United States Army Air Corps, in March 1946 the military discharged Frazier from active duty. He joined the U.S. Army Officers' Reserve Corps and remained an inactive officer until 1947. In the spring of 1946, he returned to Nashville to resume his position as a Supervising Inspector for the United States Department of Labor. Frazier left Tennessee in January 1947, to accept a transfer to the Department of Labor's San Francisco office.⁸

In 1946, Muriel Williams made a final break from Tennessee. In February of that year, her husband Stillman Williams returned from service in the United States Navy. Stillman took a job in Atlanta as the Southeast Regional Director of the Migratory Labor

⁶ FBI Knoxville Report, 3 November 1950, Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443-40.

⁷ Burton Zien, "Statement to the FBI," 2 June 1950, 42, in folder: Burton Zien, box 52, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), Executive Session Transcripts and Investigative Name Files, Records of the United States House of Representatives, Record Group 233, Legislative Archives Center, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C. [hereinafter HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA].

⁸ FBI Director to SACs, 14 July 1965, Howard T. Frazier FBI file #161-3997-1; J. Edgar Hoover to Special Assistant to the President, 5 August 1965, Frazier FBI file #161-3997-30.

Health Association, a regionally based government organization to provide health care to migrant workers. In their new community, Stillman joined the American Veterans Committee while Muriel continued her work with the League of Women Voters. Williams recalled that "Atlanta had a wonderful liberal Jewish community," but the city's segregation created an uncomfortable racial bitterness between blacks and whites. Williams, who had admitted to being a CP member before the Dies Committee, supported black rights but not to the extent that government investigators took note.⁹

On the other hand, after World War II, Kit Buckles continued her political activism for expanded African American rights and spawned an active FBI file. Still living in Washington, D.C. in 1946, Buckles served as Executive Secretary for the National Committee to Abolish the Poll Tax. In the summer of 1946, she traveled across the country rallying support for African American voting rights. In June, she also taught classes in Washington D.C. for the School of Political Action Techniques, sponsored by the National Citizens Political Action Committee (CIO). Buckles also joined the Capital Press Club, which supported African American journalism. After completing her nationwide tour in August, she left the National Committee to Abolish the Poll Tax to take a position as a Public Relations Secretary for the National Council of Negro Women. The FBI compiled numerous reports on Buckles during this period, especially related to her alleged communist ties and African American rights activities.¹⁰

⁹ Selma Williams, "Muriel W. Mather Interview," March 1981, [transcript] 3-4, folder 6, box 1, Selma Williams, "Interview with Muriel Williams Mather," 22 November 1983, [transcript] 18-19, folder 2, box 1, all in Muriel Williams Mather Papers, 1939-1990, MS 2585, Special Collections Library, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee [hereinafter Mather Papers, UT Special Collections].

¹⁰ SAC St. Louis to FBI Director, 19 December 1947, Katherine Buckles FBI file #100-353259-1; FBI St. Louis to FBI Washington, 8 May 1950, Katherine Buckles FBI file #100-353259-2; FBI

Although just as radical as Buckles, Elizabeth and Pat Todd seemed to fade into obscurity right after World War II. At the close the war, the Todds found professional success in New York City. While Pat held an electrician job with C.D. Wood Electric Company, Elizabeth moved up the ranks at CBS. By the end of the decade, she had become Assistant Director of Network Operations for CBS Radio, directing popular radio broadcasts such as the “Arthur Godfrey Show.” It is unclear if the Todds continued to participate in labor organizing and associate with radical Greenwich Village groups, as they had done in the early 1940s.¹¹

Another New Yorker, David Stone Martin, thrived as an artist following World War II. After completing his wartime work for the Office of War Information and *Life* magazine, Martin concentrated on freelance work. By 1946, Martin had left government service altogether and worked as a commercial artist in the fields of illustration and advertising. He also taught art classes and conducted workshops in the New York area. In April 1946, the FBI did file a report on Martin concerning his past membership in the Communist Party, but government investigators exhibited no additional interest.¹²

Washington Report, 12 July 1950, Katherine Buckles FBI file #100-353259-5; William A. Wheeler to Louis J. Russell, 15 September 1950, folder: Katherine Schryver, box 42, HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA.

¹¹ FBI New York Report, 24 October 1955, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-10; Gary May, *Un-American Activities: The Trials of William Remington* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 147; FBI New York Report, 7 April 1951, Elizabeth Todd FBI file #100-440310-4.

¹² “David Stone Martin Testimony,” in United States vs. William Walter Remington, Cr. 132-344, Transcripts of Record, 1950-1953, 2210-11, Records of the United States Courts of Appeals, Record Group 276, NARA Northeast [hereinafter Remington Trial, RG 276]; Manek Daver, *David Stone Martin: Jazz Graphics* (Tokyo: Graphic-sha Publishing, 1991), 11; SAC New York to FBI Director, [8?] July 1953, David Stone Martin FBI file #77-24191-10.

Federal service still appealed to John Frantz after the war. Despite having been a Dies Committee witness and suspected communist, he advanced in government positions during the postwar years. In 1945, the United States Navy assigned Frantz to his previous employer, the Housing and Home Finance Agency in Washington, D.C. On April 1, 1946, the Navy discharged Frantz and he resumed full-time responsibilities with the agency. He first worked as an Administrative Analyst and in May, one month after returning to the agency full-time, the agency promoted Frantz to an Executive Assistant position with the Office of the Administrator. In that role he attended to the needs of the agency's top officials. Cleared for federal advancement by the Civil Service Commission the previous year, the FBI found no reason to further investigate Frantz.¹³

Returning veteran and intellectual Henry Hart pursued an academic route after World War II. In 1946, Hart worked as an infantry training director at Camp Walters, Texas. The Army awarded him an honorable discharge from active duty in May of that year and Hart headed to graduate school. He believed in the ideals of democratic self-determination and natural resource development for emerging regions or nations as outlined in David Lilienthal's 1944 book *TVA: Democracy on the March*. His interests in economics, international relations, public administration, and regional planning drew Hart to a master's degree program in political science at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. His wife Virginia moved to Madison in 1945 to pursue a master's degree and

¹³ Woodrow W. Bousman, "Report of Investigation," 7 July 1947, 1-4, folder 2, box 627, John Frantz, Oversize Personnel Security Investigation Case Files, 1928-1982, Civil Service Commission and Office of Federal Investigations, Records of the Office of Personnel Management, Record Group 478, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland [hereinafter Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park]; FBI New York Report, 16 June 1948, John Frantz Navy FBI file #121-7423-2; FBI Washington Report, 14 July 1948, John Frantz FBI file #121-7423-3X8.

waited for her husband to join her. Only a few weeks after his release from the Army, Hart moved to Madison and enrolled for the summer semester. Still on inactive service in the Army Officers Reserves, in summer 1946 Hart secured veteran's benefits to help subsidize costs. Hart also received a graduate assistantship from the University of Wisconsin to pay his tuition.¹⁴

During the process of hiring Hart for the assistantship, the University of Wisconsin conducted a thorough background investigation. As a result, University officials were fully aware of Hart's Dies Committee testimony in 1940 and his previous membership in the Communist Party. The University's report declared that Hart's decision to join the CP in the 1930s was a "youthful immature" mistake, and asserted that at the time of his application Hart had realized the past errors of joining the CP.¹⁵

Howard Bridgman also continued on an academic path after military service. At the beginning of 1946, Bridgman was serving in the Personnel Department of the First Naval District Headquarters in Boston. That summer the Navy discharged Lieutenant Commander Bridgman from active duty and he joined the Naval Reserves. Within a few weeks of his military release, Bridgman secured a position as an Assistant Professor of Economics at Tufts College in Medford, Massachusetts. He began teaching economics at

¹⁴ SAC Washington to FBI Director, 29 December 1948, FBI file #121-11415-8; FBI Milwaukee Report, 2 October 1969, FBI file #121-11415-14; FBI St. Louis Report, 7 October 1969, FBI file #121-11415-18; Author's interview with Henry Hart, Madison, Wisconsin, 27 April 2002 [transcript], 2, 4.

¹⁵ The University's report is part of, FBI Milwaukee Report, 2 October 1969, FBI file #121-11415-14.

Tufts that fall and developed courses in personnel problems and production and price analysis.¹⁶

One of Bridgman's and Hart's former hiking gurus, Mabel Mansfield, largely disappeared from the historical record during this period. After World War II, she lived with her husband in Atlanta. Her 1940 testimony before the Dies Committee did not result in later contempt or perjury charges. Instead she assumed a quiet life.¹⁷

Mansfield's close friend and self-proclaimed labor activist William Remington continued in federal service after World War II. At the beginning of 1946, while still in the Navy, he worked in the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion. In March of that year, the Navy released Remington from active service, and he secured a full-time position as a Program Analyst with the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion. The agency gave him assignments such as researching polling techniques.¹⁸

Despite William Remington's success in Washington D.C. and a bright future, after World War II he suffered a variety of personal and professional difficulties. By 1945, the Remingtons' marriage had begun to crumble. Long working hours, separation due to William's Navy service, Ann's fragile mental health, and a mutual emotional

¹⁶ "Howard Bridgman Testimony," in United States vs. William Walter Remington, Cr. 138-289, Stenographers Minutes, 1953, 52-54, Records of the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, Record Group 21, NARA Northeast [hereinafter Remington Trial, RG 21, NARA Northeast]; "Howard Bridgman Testimony," 971, Remington Trial, RG 276; Congress, House, Committee on Un-American Activities, *Hearings Regarding Communism in the United States Government—Part I* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1950), 1754-55, 1775.

¹⁷ Author's interview, Mabel Abercrombie Mansfield, Eureka, California, 23 August 2003.

¹⁸ FBI Summary Report, 27 August 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 8; Congress, House, *Hearings Regarding Communism-Part I*, 1780; John L. Sullivan to Attorney General, 3 August 1948, William Remington FBI file #121-6159-82; FBI Washington Report, 28 May 1948, William Remington FBI file #121-6159-66.

distrust created a wedge between the Remingtons. In November of that year, while William was in London serving as a translator, Ann gave birth to a child that was stillborn. William immediately returned to Washington to console his wife. Together they attended marriage counseling, while Ann continued psychiatric sessions for herself. By the summer of 1946, the couple discussed divorce and in January 1947 the Remingtons separated.¹⁹

While Remington attended to his personal life, FBI agents were nearby. For nearly two years, the FBI had investigated Remington for suspected Soviet espionage, largely based on information from Remington's former confidant "Helen" (Elizabeth Bentley). Just as World War II concluded in August 1945, CP informant Bentley approached the FBI about her dealings with a number of rising government employees. In subsequent statements to the FBI that fall, Bentley explained that during the war Remington had supplied her with information on activities of the War Production Board. Bentley also claimed that Remington gave her money to cover his CP membership dues. Based on Bentley's information, in late-1945 the FBI tapped Remington's telephone, arranged to intercept his mail, and dispersed agents to collect information on the Program Analyst. Throughout 1946, FBI agents monitored Remington's activities and compiled a voluminous record of his past actions, without Remington being aware of the surveillance.²⁰

¹⁹ May, *Un-American Activities*, 73-75; Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 66-67.

²⁰ May, *Un-American Activities*, 77, 85-91; J. Edgar Hoover to Attorney General, 17 November 1945, William Remington FBI file #65-56402-27X; D.M. Ladd to FBI Director, 26 November 1945, Nathan Gregory Silvermaster FBI file #65-56402-108X12; Re: William Walter Remington, Summary, 5 December 1945, Silvermaster FBI file #65-56402-118; FBI New York to FBI Washington, 29 November

By early 1947 the “Knoxville Fifteen” had moved well beyond their initial tenures with TVA to find professional, personal, and academic success. Ten years after their small group of TVA employees had first coalesced and then split apart, each believed that their 1930s activities while with the agency would be important to no one except themselves. The Dies Committee’s investigation of an alleged CP cell in TVA yielded no conclusive evidence of extensive disloyal behavior and seemed to symbolize the end of the issue. The FBI’s files from the period also reflect that at the beginning of 1947 the Bureau was only interested in Kit Buckles and William Remington. The FBI found Buckles dangerous because of her pro-African American rights activities and believed that federal employee Remington might be involved in Soviet espionage, which he was. In both investigations, FBI agents did not focus on any previous inquiries, testimony, or employment with TVA. However, by 1947 events of the Cold War spurred new investigations of communism within TVA.

The seeds of a Cold War planted by the United States and the Soviet Union blossomed after World War II. The end of the war spawned the short-lived Grand Alliance, a worldwide coalition of anti-Fascist powers controlled by Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union. Internal squabbles, poor communication, and an inability to compromise from all parties involved eroded any good intentions and trust built up during the war. After a series of unsuccessful international meetings, by 1946 the Grand Alliance had divided Europe into two hostile camps which pitted capitalism

1945, Silvermaster FBI file #65-56402-219, 84-87; FBI New York Report, 5 December 1945, Silvermaster FBI file #65-56402-220, 47-48; Lee W. Jones, “The William W. Remington Case” (Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York, 1989), 22.

against communism. In March 1946, with strong encouragement from economist George F. Kennan, Truman reoriented American foreign policy toward the view that the Russians were a potential enemy whose vital interests and possible expansion endangered the very principles of democracy.²¹

In June 1946, Truman submitted an atomic-energy plan to the United Nations. The pact required the Soviet Union to cease work on atomic weapons and allow inspections by the UN before the United States would destroy its nuclear stockpile. The Soviets, predictably, rejected the plan and offered their own agreement, which proved unacceptable to the United States. As a result, both nations set out to build their own nuclear arsenals. In August 1946, Truman signed the McMahon Act which prevented the United States from sharing atomic secrets and established the Atomic Energy Commission to direct the largely military use of atomic materials. Protecting America's atomic secrets lay at the heart of the AEC's mission, and Congress believed that the leaders of the agency would demonstrate the highest level of trust, restraint, and confidentiality. In January 1947, the politics of anti-communism and Cold War foreign policy spilled over into the confirmation hearings for the AEC and TVA.²²

The AEC confirmation hearings for David Lilienthal and the following TVA confirmation hearings for Gordon Clapp, Truman's nominee to replace David Lilienthal

²¹ Randall B. Woods, and Howard Jones, *Dawning of the Cold War: The United States' Quest for Order* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), viii-xi, 98-99, 128, 133; John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 282-84, 312-16; Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 100, 140.

²² Gaddis, *US and the Origins of the Cold War*, 244-48; Hewlett and Anderson, *History of the AEC*, I:620; Robert K. Carr, *The House Committee on Un-American Activities, 1945-1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952), 19, 37-38.

as chairman, in early 1947 proved to be more difficult than they should have been. While with TVA, both nominees had exhibited strong leadership and a commitment to public service. But in the Cold War anti-communist climate, old and new foes emerged to paint a far different picture of the early TVA tenures of Lilienthal and Clapp. Long-time TVA opponent Tennessee Senator Kenneth D. McKellar (D) used the hearings to air his fifteen years of grievances against the agency. With help from former TVA lawyer L.B. Bolt, ousted TVA files chief James Smith, private investigator Josephus Remine, and former CP operative Roxie Paris, McKellar aimed to prove that Lilienthal and Clapp were the nucleus of a communist cell within TVA. Despite vindication from the Dies Committee seven years before, in early 1947 the issue of communism within TVA appeared as a national front-page story.²³

Since the 1930s Kenneth McKellar, who served as congressman from 1911-1916 and then as senator from 1917-1952, had raised objections about many components of the Tennessee Valley Authority. Hailing from West Tennessee, Senator McKellar found few redeeming qualities in an electric power agency centered in the eastern and middle parts of the state. Despite McKellar's general misunderstanding of TVA's original purposes, during the 1930s he frequently supported congressional appropriations for the agency and even claimed that he, not Roosevelt or George Norris, had founded the agency. McKellar's first direct challenge to TVA occurred in 1941, when he attempted to stop the construction of Douglas Dam, in favor of dam projects on other parts of the Tennessee River. In early 1942, Lilienthal, who had just assumed the TVA chair position,

²³ Hewlett and Anderson, *History of the AEC*, II:1-2; Francis H. Thompson, *The Frustration of Politics: Truman, Congress, and the Loyalty Issue, 1945-1953* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University

convinced President Roosevelt that national defense in the Tennessee Valley depended on the building of Douglas Dam. McKellar never recovered from the defeat and thereafter launched a number of attacks against the agency, including attempts to make TVA return any power earnings to the U.S. Treasury Department and to require mandatory Senate confirmation for all TVA employees who made over \$4,500 per year. After World War II, McKellar re-focused his bile on outgoing TVA chairman David Lilienthal and the incoming chairman Gordon Clapp.²⁴

Building a case against Lilienthal and Clapp became a personal quest for McKellar. Following President Truman's October 1946 announcements of the new leadership for the AEC and TVA, the FBI conducted preliminary background surveys on the two appointees. The FBI held no previous reports on either individual. The first FBI investigations of Lilienthal and Clapp revealed that each had a loose affiliation with the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, a suspected CP organization. The FBI's first search and previous disinterest seem peculiar considering that Clapp and Lilienthal were responsible for labor and personnel relations in such a reportedly "radical" organization. Therefore, with little ammunition from the FBI, McKellar was forced to find his own informants to tarnish Lilienthal and Clapp. Lewis B. Bolt, Jr., a former TVA lawyer and

Presses, Inc., 1979), 28-29.

²⁴ Callahan, *Bridge Over Troubled Waters*, 120-21; Marguerite Owen, *The Tennessee Valley Authority* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 86-93; Neuse, *Lilienthal*, 132-33; Lilienthal, *Journals*, I:396-97, 402, 572.

self-proclaimed “Red Hunter,” proved to be McKellar’s chief insider. But for McKellar the true target was neither Lilienthal nor Clapp, but TVA itself.²⁵

After twelve years of service in TVA’s Legal Division, in September 1946 the agency terminated L.B. Bolt, thus creating a potentially dangerous adversary. A graduate of the University of Tennessee Law School, Bolt had begun at TVA as an Assistant Law Clerk in 1935. After promoting him to Associate Attorney, TVA transferred Bolt to Chattanooga where he worked until 1941. Bolt returned to Knoxville just before the outbreak of war. During the war, as other lawyers left for military service, Bolt returned to Knoxville and advanced to the position of a Principal Attorney, working on cases of resettlement, adjustment, condemnation, and property disputes. By 1946, Bolt had reached the position of Attorney VI in the Administrator General’s Office under the supervision of Joseph Swidler. Despite a strong performance record, that summer Swidler informed Bolt that two reductions in the Legal Division were necessary to accommodate returning veterans. Bolt and the other attorney also facing termination, James Eldridge, wrote a memo to the TVA board with thirty charges of impropriety. The document criticized Swidler for making discriminatory and arbitrary decisions. In late June 1946, TVA General Manager Gordon Clapp referred the grievance to Director of Personnel, George Gant. After a hearing in July, Gant dismissed the charges contained in Bolt’s and Eldridge’s memo and upheld the decision to terminate Bolt. As a further

²⁵ During a 2002 site visit to examine Bolt’s papers, Bolt’s grandson referred to his grandfather as a proud “Red Hunter.” The resulting papers contain a wealth of information on Bolt’s investigation of Lilienthal and Clapp which McKellar used during the two confirmation hearings. FBI Background Report on David Lilienthal, 29 October 1946, David Lilienthal FBI File #100-348063-X; FBI to Clark M. Clifford, 17 October 1946, Gordon Clapp FBI File #62-82131-1; E.G. Fitch to D.M. Ladd, 15 October 1946, Gordon Clapp FBI File # 62-82131-2.

insult to Bolt, in August Swidler offered Eldridge contract legal work for TVA. But no such offer to Bolt ever arrived and on September 30, 1946 TVA officially terminated him.²⁶

Even before leaving TVA, Bolt made it clear that he sought to discredit the agency and those who were trying to oust him. During his exit interview on the last day of September 1946, Bolt stated that he was “not satisfied with the [termination] decision and planned to take the matter further outside of TVA (via the courts, most possibly).” In an ironic twist, Forrest Benson served as the Personnel Officer conducting Bolt’s last interview. Benson recorded that Bolt “felt personally that the three top superiors of [the] Legal [Division] and the Director of Personnel had combined to misinterpret legal requirements of the Selective Service Law.” Bolt’s vow “to pursue the matter further” proved to be a real threat to TVA. In the fall of 1946, L.B. Bolt started his own legal practice in Knoxville and searched for individuals or groups opposed to TVA. That fall Bolt met other disgruntled former-TVA employees, including deposed Files Head James L. Smith, joined an anti-TVA section of the Knox County Young Democratic Club, and found a hero and patron in Senator Douglas McKellar. Bolt’s anger caused him to view those at TVA who had ousted him as communists and dangerous subversives, thus

²⁶ Harry L. Case to Glenn A. Dooley, 17 October 1946, L.B. Bolt, Jr., “Position Description,” 18 August 1943, all in L.B. Bolt Jr. file, Employee Records, Tennessee Valley Authority [hereinafter TVA Employee Records]; “Lewis B. Bolt Jr.,” ca. 1947, folder L.B. Bolt, box 15, Washington Correspondence Files, 1933-1970, Records of the Tennessee Valley Authority, Record Group 142, NARA—Southeast Region (Atlanta) [hereinafter TVA RG 142, NARA Southeast]; Thomas J. Griffin, “Discussion With L.B. Bolt Jr.,” 14 July 1946, “Termination in Reduction in Force—L.B. Bolt Jr., and James H. Eldridge, [ca. October 1946], all in folder 9, box 82, Joseph C. Swidler Papers, 1931-1997, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. [hereinafter Swidler Papers, LC]; L.B. Bolt Jr. and James H. Eldridge to TVA Board of Directors, 17 June 1946, Gordon Clapp to L.B. Bolt Jr. and James Eldridge, 24 June 1946, Joseph Swidler to L.B. Bolt, 27 June 1946, George Gant to L.B. Bolt Jr. and James Eldridge, 30 September 1946, all in box 13, L.B. Bolt, Jr. Papers, 1930s-1960s, MS 2677, UT Special Collections [hereinafter Bolt Papers, UT Special Collections].

linking his own personal grievances to a growing trend in American thought. By the beginning of 1947, Bolt's grievances against TVA centered more on rooting subversives out of a communist-led agency and less on his dismissal.²⁷

In early January 1947 Bolt and McKellar, both hungry for revenge against TVA, prepared for an assault on David Lilienthal and Gordon Clapp. McKellar hoped to connect the Reds in the mailroom with the Reds in the boardroom. Convinced that TVA harbored communists at all levels, McKellar and his staff contacted possible witnesses, examined the Dies Committee transcripts of TVA employees' testimony, searched FBI records, and even contacted Martin Dies to get the investigative files from the 1940 TVA inquiry. McKellar formulated a theory that Clapp and Lilienthal not only knew about a CP cell within TVA during the 1930s, but had encouraged and protected its development. Bolt first uncovered potential ethics violations by TVA employees, but after learning more from deposed TVA Files Division head James Smith, he embraced McKellar's CP theory. Throughout the hearings, Bolt contacted potential witnesses and gathered information from James Smith, Roxie Paris, and Josephus Remine to document the rise of a TVA CP group. Bolt then delivered this information to McKellar, who, out of senatorial courtesy, was allowed to unofficially participate in the two Senate confirmation committees. In addition, McKellar relied on testimony and privileged documents from

²⁷ Quotes from Forrest M. Benson, "Exit Interview Record for L.B. Bolt," 30 September 1946, Bolt file, TVA Employee Records; "Bolt is Official in McKellar Unit: TVA Witness has Sniped at Authority Since Dismissal," 3 July 1947, Joseph Swidler, "Notes on Bolt," [ca. 1947] all in folder 9, box 82, Swidler Papers, LC; "Mr. Bolt and Communism," ca. 1947, folder L.B. Bolt, box 15, TVA RG 142, NARA Southeast.

the 1940 Dies Committee investigation of TVA employees as well as his political savvy and connections to influence the direction of the two public hearings.²⁸

As he built his case, news of McKellar's dissatisfaction with Lilienthal, Clapp, and TVA rapidly circulated throughout Washington D.C. On January 16, Truman submitted Lilienthal's nomination to the Senate and newspaper reporters predicted that the only possible opposition would be from McKellar. The Tennessee Senator capitalized on the publicity and the next week told reporters that "I will do everything in my power to lick him [Lilienthal], he is not the kind of man we want in that job." At the same time the Senate's Committee on Public Works announced that it would begin public hearings to consider Clapp's nomination to the TVA board of directors. Suspicious of the connection between the two nominees, McKellar told reporters that Clapp "would only be a nominal head of TVA," still serving under the policies, activities, and control of Lilienthal. With help from Bolt, McKellar compiled a list of questions for Clapp and requested that he be allowed to cross-examine the nominee. McKellar, however, did not announce his charges of communism in TVA until the hearings actually began.²⁹

²⁸ L.B. Bolt Jr. to Kenneth McKellar, 15 January 1947, folder TVA 1947 B, box 22, Kenneth McKellar to Martin Dies, 31 January 1947, folder TVA 1947 L, box 23, Kenneth McKellar Papers, 1898-1952, Memphis and Shelby County Public Library, Memphis, Tennessee [hereinafter McKellar Papers, Memphis]; J. Edgar Hoover Memorandum for Mr. Tolson, 23 January 1947, Gordon Clapp FBI File #62-82131-4; D.M. Ladd to FBI Director, 21 January 1947, Gordon Clapp FBI File #62-82131-7; J. Edgar Hoover Memorandum for Mr. Tolson, 30 January 1947, David Lilienthal FBI File #100-348063-9; J. Edgar Hoover Memorandum for Mr. Tolson, 10 February 1947, David Lilienthal FBI File #100-348063-3; [L.B. Bolt], "Communism in TVA," ca. February 1947, binder 1, box 12, Bolt Papers, UT Special Collections.

²⁹ *New York Times*, quotes from 23, 16-17 January 1947; Kenneth McKellar to Chapman Revercomb, 15 January 1947, folder Nomination of Gordon Clapp, Exhibits, Committee on Public Works 1946-1968, Nomination Files 1947-1968, Records of United States Senate, Record Group 46, Legislative Archives Center, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C. [hereinafter Public Works Nominations, RG 46, NARA].

With little fanfare, on January 21, 1947, the Senate's Committee on Public Works began confirmation hearings for Gordon Clapp. In addition to the twelve-member committee chaired by West Virginia Senator Chapman Revercomb (R), on that first day Tennessee congressmen Estes Kefauver (D), Albert Gore (D), and Percy Priest (D) joined McKellar as a show of the state's interest in the hearings. Clapp began with a general statement on his background, qualifications, and TVA tenure. Satisfied with Clapp's introduction, Chairman Revercomb offered McKellar a chance for questions.³⁰

McKellar spent the rest of the day quizzing Clapp about potential communistic activities within TVA. The senator first asked Clapp questions about TVA's suspicious participation in the Lend-Lease program and wartime partnerships with the Soviet Union. Clapp confirmed that during 1943 the agency sent engineers to Russia to design powerhouses and after the war received payment for those services, but denied McKellar's accusation that the agency had worked directly with Joseph Stalin. McKellar then moved to questions about specific employees at different levels. The Senator asked Clapp if one of his engineers, Harry Wiersema, and TVA board member James Pope had made recent speeches in Knoxville supporting the Soviet Union's expansion into Eastern Europe. Clapp denied that either TVA official had made any such statements. McKellar accused other TVA employees of being communists, including General Counsel Joseph Swidler, Assistant General Manager Arthur Jandrey, and Director of Labor Relations E.B. Schultz. Clapp declared that none of TVA's mid-level or high-level administrators supported communism. McKellar asked Clapp if he were or had ever been a communist,

³⁰ Congress, Senate, *Nomination of Gordon R. Clapp, Senate Committee on Public Works* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1947), 1-3.

and if while Director of Personnel and later General Manager he had ever supported CP activities within TVA. Clapp emphatically denied the two charges and reviewed the American nature of his background.³¹

But McKellar had only begun his accusations of communism within TVA. McKellar's direct questioning of Gordon Clapp before the Senate's Public Works Committee stretched throughout the last week of January 1947. On January 25, McKellar asserted that Clapp had supported communism within TVA and named twenty-two suspected individuals, that Clapp had either hired or supported. The list ranged from middle managers to entry-level clerks, including David Stone Martin, Burton Zien, John Frantz, Bernard Borah, Mabel Abercrombie, Muriel Williams, and Henry Hart. McKellar especially focused his questions on the TVA tenure of Henry Hart and asked Clapp why the agency had retained an admitted communist for seven years. Clapp answered that when Hart began as a TVA personnel clerk in 1936 he was "a boy who had pronounced liberal, or you might say, radical leanings." However, Clapp added that Hart matured into a competent employee and by 1939 had renounced his CP membership. Clapp explained that Hart's openness and sincerity before the Dies Committee in 1940 led to the decision to retain the research assistant in TVA's Personnel Department. Later testimony from Joseph Starnes, the chair of the 1940 Dies subcommittee investigating TVA, supported Clapp's recollection of Hart, calling the young employee only "guilty of fuzzy thinking."³²

³¹ Congress, Senate, *Nomination of Gordon R. Clapp*, 3-6, 11-12, 29-30, 40-44, 162; *New York Times*, 22 January 1947.

³² Congress, Senate, *Nomination of Gordon R. Clapp*, quotes 33 and 221, 32-34; *New York Times*, 24, 26, 29 January 1947.

McKellar remained dissatisfied with testimony vindicating Hart and continued his assault on Clapp. The Senator based much of his inquiry on a suspicious January 31, 1939 letter from Hart to Secretary of the Alabama CP Robert Hall. McKellar used a mimeographed copy of the Hart letter from the Dies Committee files, the same text that had been reprinted in the June 27, 1943 *Cavalcade* section of the *Knoxville Journal*. McKellar believed that the letter confirmed Hart's CP membership, his involvement with the dismissal of James Smith, and his close connection to high-level officials like Gordon Clapp. But the uncertain authenticity of the letter proved to weaken McKellar's arguments.³³

On January 30, 1947, Robert Barker, the Dies Committee investigator assigned to TVA in 1940, appeared before the committee to discuss the Hart letter. Barker testified that during an April 1940 raid on CP headquarters in Birmingham, Alabama, he had discovered Hart's letter and a number of official documents from their file cabinets. Barker's mission, however, had been to serve subpoenas and did not have a search warrant. Instead of waiting for official approval, Barker took about fifty items to a nearby blueprint company and made photostatic copies. Barker testified that later that day he had returned the originals to the CP offices and informed Martin Dies of the discovery. Because of its questionable acquisition, the Dies Committee did not introduce the letter and other seized documents during its 1940 investigation of TVA. The text of the letter surfaced three years later in the 1943 *Knoxville Journal*—much to the surprise of Henry Hart, who immediately issued an affidavit denying authorship. Three years

³³ McKellar to Dies, 31 January 1947, folder TVA 1947 L, box 23, McKellar Papers, Memphis; *Knoxville Journal*, *Cavalcade*, 27 June 1943.

later, in early 1947, McKellar and the Committee searched the files of the Dies Committee for the letter and discovered that only a mimeographed copy, not the original or even the photostatic copy, could be located. Without an official copy of the document available, the Public Works Committee could not establish the authenticity of letter attributed to Hart.³⁴

Regardless of these setbacks, McKellar convinced the Public Works Committee to hear testimony from James Smith and L.B. Bolt. McKellar believed that the two former TVA employees would reveal the truth about Clapp's connection to CP organizations. While on the stand, James Smith explained that a group of TVA communists, led by Henry Hart, conspired to remove him as Head of the Files Division in the fall of 1938. Smith further stated that Gordon Clapp, who had finalized Smith's termination, supported Hart and his comrades on CP causes such as fundraising for the North American Committee for Spanish Democracy. Disgruntled former TVA lawyer L.B. Bolt also took the stand to confirm that Clapp had full knowledge of CP activities in the TVA ranks and explained that many employees knew Clapp as "the very good friend of the communist element." Bolt's testimony further expanded the TVA CP charges by stating that Clapp was "a 100-percent stooge for David E. Lilienthal." The former TVA lawyer then compared David Lilienthal to Joseph Stalin, by calling the young director the "great commissar of the TVA" who held a "vise-like grip" over the agency. McKellar

³⁴ Congress, Senate, *Nomination of Gordon R. Clapp*, 30-31, 70-72, 227, 267-70; *New York Times*, 31 January, 19 February 1947; Chapman Revercomb to J. Parnell Thomas, 31 January 1947, Robert Barker to Kenneth McKellar, 22 January 1947, Ollie F. Osborne to Kenneth McKellar, 3 February 1947, all in folder Nomination of Gordon Clapp, Exhibits, Committee on Public Works 1946-1968, Nomination Files 1947-1968, Public Works Nominations, RG 46, NARA; Ollie F. Osborne to Robert Barker, 31 January 1947, Martin Dies to Kenneth McKellar, 22 February 1947, all in folder TVA 1947 L, box 24, McKellar Papers, Memphis; *Knoxville Journal, Cavalcade*, 27 June 1943.

hoped that the unflattering portrayal of Lilienthal would affect the direction of the AEC confirmation hearings, which had just commenced in late-January.³⁵

By early February 1947, the first sessions of the Clapp confirmation hearing yielded inconclusive proof of communism within TVA's upper ranks. The agency examined its files for information on the Dies Committee investigation, including a sweeping investigation of any employee remotely mentioned during the 1940 proceedings. In comparison, McKellar's documentary evidence from the Dies Committee files, especially the supposed Hart letter, proved to be questionable. Testimony from Joseph Starnes and Robert Barker, officials in the 1940 investigation of TVA, hindered McKellar's efforts to connect Clapp with known communists. In particular, Starnes told McKellar that the 1940 investigation uncovered little evidence of communism in Knox County and had confirmed only a handful of CP members in TVA. Starnes explained that the small numbers of CP members in the agency at that time offered no large threat, and since that time held no connection to the high-level policy makers of TVA.

Gordon Clapp, a frequent witness before the Committee, handled McKellar's questions with precision and built his own counter-arguments. Using the findings of the Dies Committee, Clapp established that in November 1940, only three TVA employees (Hart, Williams, and Martin) out of some 18,000 individuals admitted to having been members of the Communist Party and two of them (Williams and Martin) had since left the agency. Further, by the time of the hearings in 1947 Clapp stated that Hart had also

³⁵ Congress, Senate, *Nomination of Gordon R. Clapp*, quotes 291, 329, and 330, 228-37, 328-30; *New York Times*, 24 January, 2 February 1947.

left TVA. Clapp challenged the Committee to weigh that percentage against the record of any other government agency or private business of similar size. Clapp also reminded the committee that Barker's work for the Dies investigation consisted of "searching wastebaskets, using binoculars to observe employees at work[,] and eavesdropping."³⁶

Just as the Clapp hearings cooled and faded from the newspaper headlines, the AEC confirmation hearings for David Lilienthal took center-stage. McKellar refocused his efforts on David Lilienthal's AEC confirmation. On January 25, just days before his eighty-sixth birthday, McKellar announced that he would not run for a seventh senate term. Two days later, as he actively participated in the Clapp TVA confirmation hearings, he appeared as a guest before the nine-member Senate Section of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy. Chaired by Iowa Senator Bourke B. Hickenlooper (R), the Joint Committee discussed the confirmation of AEC members and introduced the public to the pioneering field of atomic energy. Revealing his tenacity and intentions, McKellar asked the Chairman if the Joint Committee could meet on days opposite of the Clapp hearings. Hickenlooper recognized McKellar's request, but did not offer any promises on scheduling.³⁷

On January 27, 1947, TVA board chairman and AEC nominee David Lilienthal appeared as the first witness before the Joint Committee. Lilienthal first reviewed his

³⁶ Congress, Senate, *Nomination of Gordon R. Clapp*, 173-75, 218-22; *New York Times*, 29, 31 January 1947; "Notes on the Dies Committee Investigation of TVA," [1943], box 102, David E. Lilienthal Papers, 1900-1981, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey [hereinafter Lilienthal Papers, Princeton]; quote from "Motion with Respect to Certain Errors of Fact Shown by the Testimony of Robert B. Barker," ca. February 1947, folder Robert Barker, box 15, TVA RG 142, NARA Southeast.

³⁷ *New York Times*, 25, 26 January 1947; Congress, Senate, *Confirmation of Atomic Energy Commissioner and General Manager, Hearings Before the Senate Section of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1947), 1-2.

background and then clarified his philosophy on atomic energy. He argued that this great new source of energy might be used for human welfare just as easily as it could be used for destruction. In his opinion, the AEC viewed “atomic energy as interchangeably useful for peaceful development, industrial development, and so on, and as a weapon of war.” Lilienthal believed that the civilian agency would protect the nation’s atomic secrets and work with the military, while searching for non-military uses for atomic energy. During the last week of January 1947, the other five AEC nominees, Sumner T. Pike, Robert F. Bacher, Lewis L. Strauss, William Wesley Waymack, and Carroll Wilson, followed Lilienthal before the Joint Committee. Newspapers reported that after the first sessions any previous opposition to the nominees had disappeared. However, because of the Clapp hearings, Senator McKellar had only attended the opening session of the Joint Committee and during that first round had little opportunity to question the AEC candidates.³⁸

On Friday, January 31, 1947, Kenneth McKellar began his “long-promised heckling” of David Lilienthal. McKellar first focused on Lilienthal’s concept of government. After the Senator accused Lilienthal of not believing in a government of law, the young appointee retorted that “we must have a government of law rather than by hearsay and suspicion and innuendo and rumor.” McKellar then tried to link Lilienthal to communism through his Eastern European heritage. The Senator questioned the background of Lilienthal’s aged parents, both in their 70s who had hailed from a small

³⁸ Congress, Senate, *Confirmation of Atomic Energy Commissioner*, quote 24, 3-7, 35, 38, 43-44, 49-50, 65-67; *New York Times*, 31 January 1947.

village near Pressburg, Czechoslovakia. Lilienthal responded that the unfounded accusation had only hurt and mistreated his elderly parents.³⁹

On the last day of January 1947, the AEC released the first report on its activities and revealed a startling number of initiatives. The agency took responsibility for the legacies of the Manhattan Project, which included eight facilities, technical data needed to build an atomic bomb, ongoing production of fissionable materials, and several postwar atomic research programs. In the latter category, the AEC inherited efforts to distribute radioactive isotopes to qualified institutions, build electric generating nuclear reactors, declassify selected nuclear secrets, and design nuclear powered airplanes.

With such massive responsibilities before the AEC chairman, McKellar questioned Lilienthal's knowledge of atomic technology. The Senator asked Lilienthal when he had become an expert on atomic energy. Lilienthal replied that he, like almost all Americans, knew nothing about the Manhattan Project or atomic capability until Hiroshima. But the Senator charged that Lilienthal should have grasped the possibility of splitting the atom even before World War II. McKellar elaborated that "Alexander the Great had his Macedonian scientists trying to make this discovery" over 2,000 years before and Lilienthal should have been cognizant of atomic theory. Lilienthal reminded McKellar that his precocious knowledge of atomic policy, control, and administration, more than compensated for his limited technical and scientific skills.⁴⁰

³⁹ *New York Times*, first quote 1 February 1947, 4 February 1947; Congress, Senate, *Confirmation of Atomic Energy Commissioner*, second quote 81, 93, 121-22; Lilienthal, *Journals*, II: 132-33.

⁴⁰ *New York Times*, 1, 5 February 1947; Congress, Senate, *Confirmation of Atomic Energy Commissioner*, quote 20, 122; Lilienthal, *Journals*, II: 134-35.

On February 4, 1947, McKellar renewed his accusations against Lilienthal. The nominee, however, countered with an eloquent oration that largely ended any doubts about his confirmation. After over an hour of questioning, McKellar asked Lilienthal for an opinion on communist doctrine. Lilienthal answered that he did not hold leftist sympathies and would share his opinions on communism with the Joint Committee. Lilienthal began saying, "This I do carry in my head," and launched into an elaborate statement on democracy, communism, individuality, credibility, and Americanism. He defined democracy as an affirmative doctrine based in the tenet that the individual comes first, while Lilienthal found that communism supports the state as the highest power over all individuals. Lilienthal did believe that the government should ferret out subversives who supported communism and opposed democracy, but only in a legal and fair manner. He contended that resorting to unfortunate tactics, such as innuendo and smears, violated democratic principles and robbed individuals of their good names. For his closing, Lilienthal stated, "This I Deeply Believe." The stunned Joint Committee congratulated Lilienthal on his moving speech, while newspapers reprinted the statement to high acclaim. Within the week, reporters suggested that copies of Lilienthal's "This I Deeply Believe" credo be given to all American school children.⁴¹

Lilienthal's brilliant presentation of democratic principles created division in the Joint Committee. In early February, McKellar asked that unanimous support from all Senators be required for AEC confirmations. The Senator argued that the AEC positions were too important in the fight between communism and "pure, unadulterated

⁴¹ *New York Times*, 5, 6 February 1947; Congress, Senate, *Confirmation of Atomic Energy Commissioner*, 130-2; Lilienthal, *Journals*, II:139; Neuse, *Lilienthal*, 186-87.

Americanism.” Joint Committee member Connecticut Senator Brein McMahon (D) called the suggestion “quaint” and unrealistic. McKellar’s accusations against Lilienthal affected the mood of the Joint Committee. Several members of the group stopped attending the sessions. McKellar found this behavior unacceptable, and when only two of the nine Joint Committee members attended the February 7 session, he publicly complained. Newspapers reported that several members of the Joint Committee found McKellar’s questions repetitious, irrelevant, and creating a filibuster situation. But even with the internal discord, McKellar held enough political sway to convince the Joint Committee to call five more witnesses, including former TVA chairman Arthur Morgan.⁴²

Following the success of Lilienthal’s “This I Deeply Believe” speech, the press took less interest in the AEC confirmation hearings. Nevertheless, McKellar pursued the subject of communism within TVA. Lilienthal had admitted that the Dies Committee investigation in 1940 uncovered three communists (Hart, Williams, and Martin) out of a work force of over 18,000, but challenged the relevance of the seven-year-old information. McKellar then asserted that as a TVA board member, Lilienthal should have paid closer attention to the list of suspected TVA radicals generated by the Dies Committee. Lilienthal contested McKellar’s logic, explaining that Martin Dies had operated outside of accepted legal parameters when he conducted a survey of TVA. With little proof behind the charges, the Dies Committee had relied on gossip, innuendo, and

⁴² *New York Times*, quote 6 February 1947, 8 February 1947; Congress, Senate, *Confirmation of Atomic Energy Commissioner*, 149; Kenneth McKellar to Bourke Hickenlooper, 5 February 1947, folder Confirmation Committee TVA 1947 L, box 23, Kenneth McKellar to Arthur Morgan, 5 February 1947, folder TVA 1947 M, box 24, McKellar Papers, Memphis.

suspicion, Lilienthal claimed. The Senator moved beyond the Dies Committee findings and charged that a group of communists on Lilienthal's TVA legal team facilitated the 1938 removal of James Smith from the Files Division. Lilienthal denied that communists had anything to do with Smith's termination and explained that the agency followed its own labor relations protocol for such actions. McKellar plodded on, covering then-familiar ground by detailing the questionable Henry Hart letter, reviewing the long-standing personal feud between Lilienthal and former TVA chairman Arthur Morgan, and announcing the names of several entry-level TVA employees alleged to have once had communist leanings. With Lilienthal proving to be a powerful nominee and orator, McKellar returned his focus to the Clapp confirmation hearings, which were still in session. In short, Lilienthal had trumped McKellar, not the other way around.⁴³

In early February, several important witnesses appeared before the Clapp hearings. On February 6, Knoxville nightclub owner Jack Comer took the stand to discuss his work as a TVA messenger during the 1930s. Following his TVA tenure, Comer had unsuccessfully run for state representative in 1944 on the platform of legalizing the sale of liquor and Sunday movies. McKellar asked Comer about his knowledge of CP activities in the agency. Comer answered that the majority of TVA employees were loyal Americans, but during the late 1930s a small group of communists rose up in Clapp's Personnel Division and "finally grasped control of the entire structure of TVA." In particular, Comer remembered Henry Hart as the ringleader of the CP clique who made great efforts to recruit other sympathizers. Comer also confirmed that

⁴³ Congress, Senate, *Confirmation of Atomic Energy Commissioner*, 132-35, 142-44, 149-68; *New York Times*, 7 February 1947; "Notes on the Dies Committee Investigation of TVA," [1943], box 102,

under Clapp's supervision, employees stood the best chance for promotion if they carried the "red card." Despite this accusation, two days later Tennessee congressmen Albert Gore, John Jennings, Jr., Estes Kefauver, and Percy Priest delivered ringing endorsements for Clapp. The nominee then followed their testimony with his own statement. He asserted that the CP presence in TVA was so small that it never affected policy, neither at the board level nor with personnel issues such as the James Smith case. As to the much-discussed Hart letter, Clapp believed that even if it were proven authentic, the document had little bearing on Smith's dismissal and his own confirmation. Senator McKellar then requested that the alleged author of the letter appear before the confirmation committee.⁴⁴

While Clapp's committee considered the request for Henry Hart's testimony, the Lilienthal confirmation hearings took on larger political implications. By the middle of February, McKellar's anti-communist assault on Lilienthal had attracted support from several Republican senators. The Republican faction, which had gained a majority of seats in the 1946 elections, saw an opportunity to fight the centralized government tendencies of New Deal agencies. After joining McKellar's anti-Red bandwagon, these Republicans vowed to fight "New Dealism" and challenge the Truman administration. While McKellar questioned witnesses, including L.B. Bolt, Jack Comer, Arthur Morgan, and James Smith, about Lilienthal's mismanagement of an agency dominated by communists, the Republican senators pushed to make "New Dealer" synonymous with

Lilienthal Papers, Princeton.

⁴⁴ Congress, Senate, *Nomination of Gordon R. Clapp*, quote 354, 355-64, 394-423, 437-42, 452, 460 469-75; *Knoxville Journal*, 2 February 1947; "Jack Comer," ca. 1947, folder: Jack Comer, box 15, TVA RG 142, NARA Southeast.

the labels “radical,” “subversive,” and even “communist.” Nonetheless, Truman declared Lilienthal “thoroughly equipped” to direct the AEC and urged Congress to disregard the unfounded partisan charges and rumors.⁴⁵

In mid-February 1947, Henry Hart took center stage before both proceedings. Then a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin, Hart had paid close attention to the two hearings in Washington, D.C., especially McKellar’s charges of communism in the early TVA. Hart found McKellar’s use of the unauthenticated 1939 letter the most troubling and in late January he wrote Chairman Revercomb to deny authorship of the forged document. The publicity also renewed communication between Hart and his former TVA colleagues. In a January 31, 1947 letter, Muriel Williams told Hart that “if Jimmie Smith has done one thing, he had made the already firm bond between all of us more secure.” A few days later Evaline Frantz, the mother of John and Laurent, wrote Hart to encourage strength during such a difficult situation and reassured him that she would make sure the Knoxville newspapers told Hart’s side of the story. Hart wrote his former manager Gordon Clapp to explain that he did not intend, consciously or unconsciously, to jeopardize the integrity of the agency. Clapp replied that he believed Hart’s denial of writing the 1939 letter and did not consider him guilty of wrong-doing.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *New York Times*, 12, 13, 14, 16, February 1947; Congress, Senate, *Confirmation of Atomic Energy Commissioner*, 223-35, 263-73, 328-32, 371-95.

⁴⁶ Henry Hart to Chapman Revercomb, 24 January 1947, quote from Muriel Williams to Henry Hart, 31 January 1947, E.[valine] F.[rantz] to Henry Hart, 4 February 1947, Henry Hart to Gordon Clapp, 29 January 1947, Gordon Clapp to Henry Hart, 14 February 1947, all in folder 1, box 1, Henry C. Hart Papers, 1939-2002, MS 2575, UT Special Collections [hereinafter Hart Papers, UT Special Collections]; Congress, Senate, *Nomination of Gordon R. Clapp*, 460.

On February 18, Hart reported to Room 324 of the Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C. for the AEC confirmation hearings. Hart stated that he had openly joined the Communist Party in 1936 for philosophical reasons, but had resigned three years later when those principles greatly conflicted with democracy. He declared that his membership in the CP was a “youthful mistake.” Eager to clear his name, Hart denied authorship of the January 1939 letter to Robert Hall, calling it “a fabrication out of whole cloth.” Hart pointed out that the signature on the letter appeared as Henry C. Hart, Jr., but as his middle name was different from his father’s middle name, he argued that there was no Henry C. Hart, Jr. before the committee. Without an original document to review, Chairman Hickenlooper declared that “there is still no evidence whatsoever that Hart ever wrote, authorized or signed that [1939] letter” to Robert Hall. The Joint Committee then asked Hart about other TVA employees, but the witness only acknowledged that already accused Dies Committee witnesses Muriel Williams, Mabel Abercrombie, and David Stone Martin (but not federal employee John Frantz) had participated in CP activities. Hart’s convincing testimony caused Lilienthal to write Hart’s parents in Nashville later that month, congratulating them on having such a fine son.⁴⁷

It is unlikely that Hart wrote the 1939 letter to Robert Hall. First, the style and content of the letter did not resemble anything written by any member of the “Knoxville Fifteen” either in the 1930s or 1940s. The 1930s CP members within TVA never referred to themselves as “comrades” as demonstrated in the document. The behavior of

⁴⁷ Congress, Senate, *Confirmation of Atomic Energy Commissioner*, first quote from 500, second quote from 495, 483, 497, 499-505, 527, 551-55; *New York Times*, third quote 19 February 1947; “Henry Hart,” Preliminary Statement Read to Joint Committee on Atomic Energy,” 25 February 1947, folder 2, box 1, Hart Papers, UT Special Collections; David Lilienthal to Mr. and Mrs. Hart, 27 February 1947, box 118, Lilienthal Papers, Princeton.

government investigators also cast great suspicion on the letter. In addition to never producing an original document, only a mimeographed copy, the government relied on the threat of the letter, rather than content of the actual document, to pressure Hart.

Finally, Hart maintained that he never wrote the letter long after authorship would have been damaging. During a telephone interview fifty-five years later Henry Hart, who admitted to numerous youthful indiscretions, still denied writing the letter, explaining that its generation “remained a mystery.”⁴⁸

One day of testimony proved to be Hart’s only appearance before the Joint Committee. However, McKellar arranged for Hart also to testify at the Clapp hearings. Two days later, on February 20, 1947, Hart appeared before another confirmation committee in Room 412 of the Senate Office Building. Hart continued to deny authorship of the January 1939 letter to Rob Hall and pointed out numerous contextual errors in the document. The date of the letter fell on the same day that TVA terminated James Smith, an action that Hart claimed he had nothing to do with and knew nothing about until a full month later. Hart admitted that he had been a member of the Communist Party but had left the small TVA group several weeks before the date of the letter. Building on his statements from two days before, Hart declared that his membership in the CP “was a youthful mistake,” and in hindsight an error of judgment. Again, Hart limited his discussions of other TVA members who might have been communists, mentioning only that Muriel Williams, David Stone Martin, Mabel Abercrombie, Katherine Buckles, and Laurent Frantz had once been friends and “fellow

⁴⁸ Quote from author’s telephone interview with Henry Hart, 18 July 2002.

travelers.” But Hart believed that all of them came to same conclusion that he did—generally that the philosophy and organization of the Communist Party ran counter to worldwide democratic development.⁴⁹

On the same day of Hart’s testimony, John Frantz reported to Room 457 of the Senate Office Building as a witness before the AEC Joint Committee. Frantz, then an Executive Secretary with the Housing and Home Finance Agency, limited his statements to three main points. Frantz declared that the Communist Party had nothing to do with the removal of James Smith, had no great influence over TVA, and, most importantly, had no hold over his own ideas and philosophy. Similar to his Dies Committee testimony, Frantz reviewed his background, duties with TVA, friendships, military service, and post-TVA federal work, but said little about Communist Party membership within the agency. His concise answers irritated McKellar, but the Senator planned for another attack with a special witness.⁵⁰

On February 21, 1947, former CP operative and FBI informant Roxie Paris appeared before the AEC Joint Committee. With her unique story, Paris hoped to expose TVA as an organization dominated by radicals. She explained to the Joint Committee that CP membership ensured employment with TVA, and when her son faced that ultimatum, posed by Henry Hart, she decided to join in his place with the intention of infiltrating the cell. Paris described several CP meetings held by the TVA branch unit, which were attended by party members Henry Hart, David Stone Martin, Bernard Borah,

⁴⁹ Congress, Senate, *Nomination of Gordon R. Clapp*, quote 518, 514-18, 532-41, 655-62.

⁵⁰ Congress, Senate, *Confirmation of Atomic Energy Commissioner*, 561, 607, 655-89.

Mabel Abercrombie, John Frantz, Kenneth Cameron, and Muriel Williams. At these meetings, Paris reported, the group discussed the removal of James Smith, how to prepare for the coming revolution, and the support from upper administrators like Gordon Clapp. After delivering the specifics of the TVA CP branch to the Joint Committee, Paris explained that her American principles led to her to join the Communist Party and attempt to dismantle it. Those same American ideals, Paris asserted, led her to expose the truth about TVA before the Joint Committee.⁵¹

The following day Paris reported to Room 412 in the Senate Office Building to testify before the Clapp confirmation committee. Similar to her AEC testimony, Paris presented the committee with specifics on the structure and activities of the communist cell within TVA. Paris claimed that Hart had been her closest comrade on the inside. She described the group's efforts to raise funds for the Spanish Civil War, recruit new CP members, secure more civil rights for African Americans, and gain influence in the management of TVA. Paris again confirmed specific individuals belonging to the CP unit—nearly all the same as from the previous day's testimony—and explained that the CP members regarded Gordon Clapp as supportive of their efforts. With such a developed CP network, Paris believed that Clapp and Lilienthal should have known that a CP cell existed within the 1930s TVA, and if they did not “there was something seriously wrong in the managership of these two men.” Paris expressed great doubts that Clapp and Lilienthal could direct the agencies they had been chosen to command.⁵²

⁵¹ Ibid., 692-97, 702-707.

⁵² Congress, Senate, *Nomination of Gordon R. Clapp*, quote from 631, 599-610, 613-17, 623-24, 629, 632.

Three days later, on February 25, Henry Hart returned to testify before the Clapp confirmation hearings in what would be the final day of proceedings. Hart answered questions on his role in the TVA union, how he helped raise money for the Spanish Loyalists, and his military service. But most importantly, Hart spoke to many of the charges lodged by Roxie Paris during both hearings. Hart denied that he ever had a close friendship with Paris, doubted that he ever revealed his CP membership to her, and claimed that he never had spoken to her son about joining the CP in order to work for TVA. Instead, Hart believed that he first met Paris in the spring of 1939, several months after he had left the CP. Hart suggested that the committee investigate Paris's credibility before entering her accusations as fact. Following Hart's testimony, the committee adjourned its proceedings in the Clapp confirmation.⁵³

On the same day as Hart delivered his case before the Clapp committee, Muriel Williams appeared before the AEC Joint Committee. Williams opened her testimony with her philosophical reasons for joining the CP in 1937 and explained that after two years she grew disillusioned with the tenets of communism and in the spring of 1939 severed all ties with the party. Similar to the remarks of Henry Hart, Williams looked back on the experience as "an error of judgment of the gravest kind." The TVA CP group, Williams stated, consisted of only a few individuals, and was so small and insignificant that neither Lilienthal nor Clapp knew it existed. Williams described for the committee a handful of CP meetings she attended and emphasized that none of TVA's policy makers were aware of their activities. In fact, she refuted McKellar's claim that a

⁵³ Ibid., 643-44, 655-63, 674, 676.

CP cell existed during Lilienthal's chairmanship of TVA, saying that it had dissolved by 1940. When asked for the names of other TVA individuals involved in the Communist Party, Williams explained that she had refused to provide that information to the Dies Committee and would continue to withhold names, as revealing identities would malign reputations of the innocent. Williams later described to Henry Hart her appearance before the confirmation committee as having "gone through a wringer, and then been squeezed and rinsed several more times."⁵⁴

As a final trump-card, McKellar called Josephus Remine to testify before the AEC Joint Committee. On February 26, 1947, the seventy-five-year-old retired investigator and farmer, who had conducted a pseudo-official investigation of communism within TVA ten years prior, appeared in Room 457 of the Senate Office Building. Remine, called a "court-house character" by one reporter, delivered his fuzzy recollections of Knoxville's CP intrigue "amid gales of laughter from the audience." In particular, Remine described a 1937 CP meeting held at Reeve's Roost where the participants "gamboled nude" around a bonfire. Hidden in the nearby woods to observe the nude orgy, Remine explained that he "saw plenty." But as one example of his confusion, Remine reassured the Joint Committee that none of the naked dancers worked for TVA, which refuted his original 1937 assertion that most of the red gamblers worked for the agency. Still, Remine recalled that Henry Hart and John Frantz served as the leaders of the TVA CP group and helped unionize a number of textile mills in

⁵⁴ Congress, Senate, *Confirmation of Atomic Energy Commissioner*, first quote 760, 560, 758-63; *New York Times*, 26, February 1947; *The Atlanta Constitution*, 27 February 1947; second quote from Muriel Williams to Henry and Virginia [Hart], 4 March 1947, folder 1, box 1, Hart Papers, UT Special Collections.

Knoxville. He elaborated with names of other Knoxville CP members, including Bernard Borah, David Stone Martin, Francis Martin, Pat Todd, William Remington, Horace Bryan, Forrest Benson, Christine Benson, and Mabel Abercrombie. Remine provided locations for other CP meeting places, but his description of communists gamboling in the nude proved the most tantalizing. Much to McKellar's delight, the *Washington Post* featured an eye-popping story on Remine's testimony entitled "Reds in the Raw."⁵⁵

But if Remine's testimony generated new concerns about communism within TVA, David Lilienthal's closing testimony negated such worries. On March 3, Lilienthal returned to the witness stand to defend his name as a loyal public servant. After reviewing his Wisconsin background, Lilienthal explained that he was not before the Senate as a job candidate, but rather as a qualified individual for such an important task. Answering McKellar's accusations that Lilienthal only favored big business interests, the young nominee explained that as chairman of the AEC he would do his best to develop atomic energy for the public interest and not monopolize the technology. The next day, Lilienthal retook the stand to answer questions about his support of CIO unions and TVA electric power rates, but no new fireworks from McKellar ignited.⁵⁶

In early March 1947, the two confirmation committees took a preliminary vote and adjourned their proceedings. McKellar's accusations of communism proved to do the most damage at the Clapp hearings. In fact, the Committee on Public Works voted 7-5 against Clapp's nomination. On the other hand, Lilienthal's oratory had dispelled much

⁵⁵ *Washington Post*, quotes from 27 February 1947; Congress, Senate, *Confirmation of Atomic Energy Commissioner*, 796-804; *Chicago Sun*, 27 February 1947; *Nashville Tennessean*, 27 February 1947; *Knoxville Journal*, 27 February 1947.

⁵⁶ Congress, Senate, *Confirmation of Atomic Energy Commissioner*, 805-808, 825-26, 830-34.

of the Senator's anti-communism rhetoric and in early March the Joint Committee voted 8-1 for confirmation. Anticipating a partisan Senate vote and more attacks from McKellar, President Truman rallied support for both nominees. Truman believed in the integrated nature of the two appointments, arguing that only confirming one nominee would disrupt the future of atomic development. Senate discussion of Lilienthal's fitness began in late March, with McKellar leading the opposition. By early April, the Senate rejected a plan by Ohio Senator John W. Bricker (R) to conduct another FBI investigation of Lilienthal before taking a final vote. The rejection hinted that a majority of senators found McKellar's charges of communism against Lilienthal unfounded. On April 10, the Senate confirmed Lilienthal as AEC chairman with a vote of 50-31 (95 senators were eligible, but only 81 were present for the vote). The Senate then turned its attention to the Clapp nomination. McKellar found success in convincing the older senators that Clapp was a "very nice young man who would make a nice impression in a grocery store or meat shop," but as TVA chairman would only serve as a "stooge" for Lilienthal. With great help from Smith and Bolt, McKellar had appealed to a number of other senators, but on April 24 the Senate, during a late and poorly attended session, confirmed Clapp by a close 36-31 vote. The two confirmations ended a nearly three-month investigation, which together featured over 80 witnesses, produced dozens of exhibits, and resulted in over 1,600 pages of printed testimony.⁵⁷

Not dissuaded, two weeks later L.B. Bolt reassured Kenneth McKellar that "although we got licked, I am satisfied that a long range victory was won." Bolt may

⁵⁷ *New York Times*, quote 25 April 1947, 1, 9, 11, 25 March, 4, 10, 26 April 1947; *Washington Post*, 3 March 1947; L.B. Bolt to Kenneth McKellar, 21 April 1947, box 12, Bolt Papers, UT Special

have been partially right if he was referring to the increasing anti-communist mood that swept through the nation that spring. On March 12, 1947, President Truman presented to Congress the “Truman Doctrine,” which aimed to contain the spread of communism abroad. This US foreign policy of communist containment spilled over into domestic affairs and helped launch a new wave of anti-communist rhetoric at home. McKellar’s tactics in the two confirmation hearings proved an ample model for the revived House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), new investigations by the FBI, and Truman’s Federal Employee Loyalty Program which started that fall. During the rest of 1947, these three forces began to affect the lives of former CP and alleged CP members, including a few of the “Knoxville Fifteen.”⁵⁸

Following the confirmation hearings for Clapp and Lilienthal, witnesses John Frantz, Muriel Williams, and Henry Hart experienced little intrusion from investigators. Frantz maintained his employment with the Housing and Home Finance Agency and garnered no new FBI reports. Likewise, housewife Muriel Williams continued her life in Atlanta without the presence of government investigators. Her frequent correspondent Henry Hart completed a master’s program in Political Science in May 1947 and planned to continue his education. When his mentor, John Gaus, announced that he would be leaving Wisconsin to accept a position at Harvard, Hart considered moving to

Collections.

⁵⁸ L.B. Bolt to Kenneth McKellar, 7 May 1947, folder TVA 1947 B, box 22, McKellar Papers, Memphis; Walter Lafeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1975*, 3rd ed. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1976), 50; Richard M. Freeland, *The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism: Foreign Policy, Domestic Politics, and Internal Security, 1946-1948* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 11; Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 157-58; Thompson, *Frustration of Politics*, 27-30; Carr, *Committee on Un-American Activities*, 31, 37-39.

Cambridge. Hart passed on the Harvard opportunity and in the fall of 1947 he began a Ph.D. program in Political Science at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Although Hart had left TVA in 1943 for military service, he had never officially resigned from the agency. Perhaps Hart had once planned to return to TVA after the war, but in the fall of 1947 he resigned to begin his doctoral studies. Hart later recalled that once in the Ph.D. program he tried to convince his major professor at Wisconsin that his dissertation would be focused on TVA; however, his advisor replied “No, I will not approve it!” Not discouraged, Hart chose a similar topic and began researching the possibilities for a regional development authority for the Missouri River Basin.⁵⁹

Although the names of several other former TVA employees surfaced during the Clapp and Lilienthal confirmation hearings as alleged communists, none of them testified and nearly all of them escaped immediate government inquiry. Still employed by TVA as a personnel officer, Forrest Benson and his wife Christine lived in Knoxville.

Although Josephus Remine named both of them as once active in the CP, after the Clapp hearings the agency took no investigative action into the Benson family. During 1947, Howard Bridgman continued teaching economics at Tufts College and looked towards beginning a doctoral program. His former hiking companion Mabel Mansfield also faded from the government’s radar. In 1947, Mansfield and her husband ran the “As You Like It Inn,” a bed and breakfast facility in Waterville, Vermont. Labor activist Howard Frazier continued his work as a Supervising Inspector for the United States Department

⁵⁹ SAC Knoxville to FBI Director, 19 May 1948, FBI file #121-11415-2; FBI Milwaukee Report, 2 October 1969, FBI file #121-11415-14; Gordon Clapp to Henry Hart, 21 April 1947, Muriel Williams to Henry and Virginia [Hart], 21 May 1947, all in folder 1, box 1, Hart Papers, UT Special Collections; quote from Author’s interview with Henry Hart, 27 April 2002, [transcript] 2, 1, 4.

of Labor in San Francisco with little notice from the FBI or other government investigators.⁶⁰

Other TVA employees named during the Clapp and Lilienthal hearings, however, found that government investigators took a renewed interest in their past and present activities. Although no longer a federal employee, in early 1947 the FBI conducted an internal security report on freelance artist David Stone Martin. Following the confirmation hearings, Burton Zien also faced an FBI investigation. In May 1947, Zien transferred to the National Labor Relations Board as a Field Examiner for the East Tennessee region. But Zien's advancement in federal service would prove even more difficult than before the war. In 1947 the FBI re-opened an investigation into Zien's past. The following reports detailed Zien's 1930s activities while with TVA and reported that he had "associated with known Communists." In a similar manner, in late-1947 the FBI re-opened an inquiry into the activities of Pat and Elizabeth Todd. In December, Elizabeth's brother Patrick Winston informed the FBI that the Todds were CP members. He specifically charged that the Todds attended CP meetings, subscribed to the *Daily Worker*, belonged to subversive groups, and made a practice of defending the Soviet Union. The FBI took the letter very seriously and by the end of 1947 had begun a preliminary investigation into Pat and Elizabeth Todd.⁶¹

⁶⁰ FBI Knoxville Report, 3 November 1950, Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443-40; Congress, House, *Hearings Regarding Communism-Part I*, 1754; T.J. Griffin to Robert Marquis, 17 February 1947, folder Employment Records and Figures, box 15, TVA RG 142, NARA Southeast; FBI Director to SACs, 14 July 1965, Howard T. Frazier FBI file #161-3997-1.

⁶¹ SAC New York to FBI Director, [8?] July 1953, David Stone Martin FBI file #77-24191-10; quote from FBI Washington Report, 28 June 1948, Burton Zien FBI file #121-9839-32X; SAC Knoxville to FBI Director, 21 December 1955, FBI file #101-10189-38; FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 11 June 1948, Burton Zien file #121-9839-37; [Patrick Winston] to Department of Justice, 11 December 1947, SAC

During 1947, the FBI also took great interest in Kit Buckles, but not for her TVA past. Buckles' reputation as a supporter of African American voting rights grew in 1947. In December of the previous year, she joined the Executive Board of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and took an active role in the Washington chapter. Early in 1947, she worked on organizing the NAACP conference in the nation's capital. At the same time, Buckles and three other employees asked the National Council of Negro Women for stable work contracts. However, in February the National Council of Negro Women denied the contracts and dismissed Buckles and the other three employees. Buckles' brother, who also lived in Washington, brought his sister further attention. In 1946, Harold Buckles served as a secretary to Illinois Representative Adolph Sabath (D). In August of that year, Sabath and others accused Harold of being a secret member of the Communist Party and dismissed him from service on Capitol Hill. With dwindling prospects in Washington, sometime in the summer of 1947 Kit Buckles moved to St. Louis. By the end of the year, the FBI's St. Louis branch began compiling a file on her civil rights and political activities.⁶²

Although only briefly mentioned during the Lilienthal hearing, during this period suspected Soviet informant William Remington proved to attract the most attention of government investigators. At the end of 1946, the young government employee searched for a new federal position. In December, President Truman abolished the Office of War

Charlotte to FBI Director, 30 December 1947, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-[4?]; SAC New York to FBI Director, 11 May 1956, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-26.

⁶² SAC St. Louis to FBI Director, 19 December 1947, Katherine Buckles FBI file #100-353259-1; FBI St. Louis to FBI Washington, 8 May 1950, Katherine Buckles FBI file #100-353259-2; FBI Albuquerque to FBI Washington, 19 March–19 April 1951, Katherine Buckles FBI file #100-353259-38.

Mobilization and Reconversion. John Steelman, that agency's director and Assistant to the President, worked to transfer his best employees to other government positions.

Unaware of the FBI's espionage investigation, Steelman considered offering Remington a staff position at the White House. Steelman spoke with FBI agents about Remington's background and changed his mind about transferring the young analyst. But instead of taking any action against an alleged Soviet informant, Steelman allowed Remington to remain with the defunct Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion, expecting him to leave government service once the agency finally disbanded in early 1947. Unaware of the FBI's investigation and desperate to keep a government job, Remington applied for positions in the Commerce Department and the Atomic Energy Commission. Because of his background in economics, on March 31, 1947 Remington secured a position as a Business Economist with the Council of Economic Advisors. This agency prepared economic studies and reports for the President.⁶³

Remington's transfer to another government position occurred with little notice or opposition from investigators. Just a week before the transfer, however, a confidential informant advised an FBI agent of Remington's new employment. But the Bureau reacted slowly to the information and only recorded information on Remington's successful transfer in early April, after a State Department official alerted them to an April 1, 1947 article in the *Washington Post* announcing Remington's new position. Steelman also did not know of Remington's transfer and had assured the FBI that he

⁶³ May, *Un-American Activities*, 87-88; E.G. Fitch to D.M. Ladd, 23 December 1946, William Remington FBI file #65-56402-2097X1; E.G. Fitch to D.M. Ladd, 24 January 1947, William Remington FBI file #65-56402-1997; FBI Washington Report, 18 May 1948, William Remington FBI file #121-6159-66, 15; Guy Hottel to FBI Director, 28 April 1947, Silvermaster FBI file #65-56402-2381; Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 8.

would get “rid of the undesirable individuals” left in the defunct Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion. Throughout all this, the only government action restricting Remington’s advancement in any kind of federal service came from the U.S. Navy. After Remington’s transfer, the FBI expanded its investigation into his naval career. When the Office of Naval Intelligence learned that the FBI believed Remington to be a Soviet agent, in mid-April the Navy issued the reservist an honorable discharge.⁶⁴

Unable to verify all of the charges made by Elizabeth Bentley, in the spring of 1947 the FBI began interviewing many of the subjects under investigation. On April 15, FBI agents interviewed Remington for just over three hours. Shocked that the FBI had been investigating him for possible espionage, Remington cooperated with the agents. The FBI interviewers began with questions about Remington’s TVA tenure, Workers’ Education activities, and union membership while in Knoxville. Remington admitted to associations with Henry Hart, Buck Borah, Pat Todd, and David Stone Martin, but had no knowledge in the 1930s and at the time of the interview that any of them were Communist Party members. Remington next answered questions about his connections with the American Student Union, the American Youth Congress, and the American Peace Mobilization. Considering that Remington had faced similar questions during his

⁶⁴ FBI Washington to FBI Director, 18 March 1947, William Remington FBI file #65-56402-2318; Hamilton Robinson to J. Edgar Hoover, n.d. [ca. early April 1947], J. Edgar Hoover to Hamilton Robinson, 16 April 1947, all in William Remington FBI file #65-56402-2290; J.C. Strickland to D.M. Ladd, 21 March 1947, Silvermaster FBI file #65-56402-2456; quote from D.M. Ladd to FBI Director, 16 April 1947, William Remington FBI file #65-56402-2343; E.G. Fitch to D.M. Ladd, 16 April 1947, William Remington FBI file #65-56402-2306; D.M. Ladd to E.G. Fitch, 14 April 1947, William Remington FBI file #65-56402-2308; May, *Un-American Activities*, 88.

1942 Civil Service Commission background interview, he answered the first set of queries with confidence.⁶⁵

After the preliminary questions, FBI agents then asked Remington about his whereabouts during the early years of World War II. Agents inquired about Remington's visits to New York City in the early 1940s. Remington answered that he visited his mother-in-law in New York once a year and while there often spoke with her neighbor Joseph North. Agents then asked Remington if North had ever introduced him to a couple named "John" and "Helen," and produced a picture of the latter individual. The FBI report noted that Remington "was visibly shaken and noticeably upset emotionally" when asked about the couple and "blanched completely" when asked if he had ever had lunch with John and Helen. Remington confirmed that North had arranged a lunch meeting. North had also told Remington that Helen worked as a newspaper reporter for the communist newspaper *PM*, and wanted a story about the War Production Board (WPB). Remington recalled that he had met the couple at a New York restaurant, possibly on Lexington Street, and identified Helen "as being in her late thirties, of medium height, and having yellow hair." He explained that he met the couple to discuss the work of the WPB, because articles in *PM* had criticized the agency for its nonchalant attitude towards mobilization. The FBI agents followed with inquiries about his meetings with Helen in Washington. Remington first denied additional meetings with Helen, but then admitted to a number of encounters in the capital. He claimed that Helen wanted more information about the WPB, especially airplane production statistics, the number of

⁶⁵ May, *Un-American Activities*, 89-91; Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 76; FBI Washington Report, 21 April 1947, Silvermaster FBI file #65-56402-2349, 31-32.

expected industrial jobs, mobilization schedules, and biographies of the agency's leaders.

Remington told the agents that he supplied Helen with this information to help her produce a positive *PM* article on the War Production Board.⁶⁶

The remainder of the April 15, 1947 FBI interview focused on Remington's loyalty and political sympathies during the war years. The agents questioned Remington about any additional connections with Helen. Although vague on the total number of meetings, Remington explained that he had not spoken with the *PM* reporter since he joined the Navy in 1944. The agents then pressed Remington on whether he had ever been, or was then, a member of the Communist Party, and if he had ever paid CP dues to Helen. Remington "emphatically denied" both accusations of Communist Party membership, but he did admit to giving Helen "a nickel or a dime" for copies of *PM* and the *Daily Worker* on a handful of occasions.

Near the end of the session, Remington hoped to set the record straight on the charges of espionage against him. He first stated that the FBI "had every reason to suspect him of being a Communist and that he considered the Agents entirely justified in calling on him for information." In an effort to establish his 1947 loyalty, Remington added that he was "very strongly opposed to Communism" and expected a war between the United States and the Soviet Union. In the likely event of such a war, Remington believed that "every Communist in this country was a potential agent for Soviet Russia." At the end of the interview, Remington attempted to cast himself as an innocent

⁶⁶ May, *Un-American Activities*, 90; quotes from FBI Washington Report, 21 April 1947, Silvermaster FBI file #65-56402-2349, 33, 34; Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 79-80, 88-89; Jones, "Remington Case," 44-49, 56.

informant. He told the agents that he “did not deserve such good treatment” and encouraged any further Bureau inquiries or interviews.⁶⁷

Only three days after his April 15 FBI interview, and even before the FBI could confirm Remington’s information with Bentley, Remington called the Bureau to request another session. By volunteering as a confidential informant on alleged CP members, Remington hoped to trade information for leniency. On April 21, FBI agents shared Remington’s statements with Bentley. She confirmed that at their New York lunch meeting Remington had probably mistaken her for a newspaper reporter for *PM*. But later FBI reports on Remington disregarded Bentley’s confirmation that Remington believed he was “helping” the War Production Board when he first met Helen. Regardless of original intentions, Remington appeared before FBI agents on April 22. Remington began by informing the FBI that he had withdrawn his application for a position with the Atomic Energy Commission, believing that he would have been unable to clear the background investigation conducted by the FBI. During the rest of the session, Remington clarified his relationship with John and Helen, discussed his affiliation with the American Veterans Committee, and his impression that former TVA co-worker Harry Alber “might be a Communist.”⁶⁸

During the second interview, Remington’s sudden frankness about his CP associates and associations baffled even the FBI agents. He even offered to contact

⁶⁷ May, *Un-American Activities*, 90-91; Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, quotes 82-83; FBI Washington Report, 21 April 1947, Silvermaster FBI file #65-56402-2349, 34-35; Jones, “Remington Case,” 49-50.

⁶⁸ Jones, “Remington Case,” 56-57; May, *Un-American Activities*, 91; quotes from Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 85, 83-84; Guy Hottel to FBI Director, 28 April 1947, Silvermaster FBI file #65-56402-2381, 1-3.

Joseph North in an effort to locate other individuals involved in Soviet espionage. The interviewers met Remington's general offer to help the FBI ferret out CP members with a sobering question: "What conclusions would he make regarding a person who associated with the type of people he had been associating with, and who had been affiliated with various organizations which had been considered Communist front organizations?"

Remington replied that he would classify himself as a "misguided liberal and possibly a Communist." At the end of the session, FBI agents asked if Remington would be willing to sign a statement confirming the details and affiliations mentioned in his interviews.

Remington agreed and returned the next day to read and sign the FBI's prepared statement. After a quick glance for accuracy, Remington signed the document and told the agent, "that the reason for his present predicament could be based on two mistakes he had made; namely a bad marriage, and the fact that he always took an abstract view of things; and he expects to pay for these mistakes either directly or indirectly the rest of his life." If Remington hoped to clear his name, he certainly had not impressed the FBI with his initial admissions and statements.⁶⁹

Two weeks later, on May 9, 1947, Remington reacted to the confirmation of Gordon Clapp by writing the new TVA chairman. Remington congratulated Clapp for surviving the personal and partisan nature of the senatorial ordeal. Still proud of his brief TVA tenure, Remington expressed satisfaction that the agency would continue forward in the "liberal tradition of a Norris or a Roosevelt." Remington also thanked Clapp for the

⁶⁹ Quotes from Guy Hottel to FBI Director, 28 April 1947, Silvermaster FBI file #65-56402-2381, 4 and 5; Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 87-94; Jones, "Remington Case," 59; May, *Un-American Activities*, 91; Guy Hottel to FBI Director, 23 April 1947, Silvermaster FBI file #65-56402-2451.

agency's cooperation during an Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion project from the previous year. Three days later, Clapp responded with a casual acknowledgment letter to Remington expressing thanks for his previous cooperation with TVA. Although Remington's name surfaced during Clapp's hearings, it is unlikely that the new TVA chairman knew that the FBI was pursuing the young analyst for espionage. Further, the available evidence suggests that Clapp and the agency knew nothing about Remington's statements to the FBI regarding communism within the 1930s TVA.⁷⁰

Throughout the rest of 1947, Remington kept in close contact with the FBI. His communications, however, did little to establish Remington as a useful informant. In a May 31 letter, Remington explained that "a Communist clique" dominated the American Veterans Committee chapter at George Washington University, and that a company called Washington Associates conducted unethical business practices. Later that year, Remington offered to contact Joseph North in order to learn the names of other radical CP operatives. Remington explained that he wanted to help the FBI because he believed "so strongly that the Communist Party is a menace" and that his past associations would prove useful to the Bureau. Into the fall of 1947, the FBI took no action on Remington's offer to contact North and found his information questionable. In fact, after his April Bureau interviews, the FBI conducted little surveillance and received no new information on Remington. But Remington's fate lay before a grand jury that was formed late that

⁷⁰ William Remington to Gordon Clapp, 9 May 1947, Gordon Clapp to William Remington, 12 May 1947, folder: Council on Economic Affairs, box 289, General Manager's Files 1933-1957, TVA RG 142, NARA Southeast.

year to consider Elizabeth Bentley's charges of espionage.⁷¹

At the end of 1947, many former New Dealers found themselves at odds with the national political climate. Gains by Republicans during the elections of the previous year, a tougher foreign policy against Soviet-bloc countries, and efforts to uncover domestic subversives formed the bedrock layers of a Cold War culture that would last for decades. The once young radicals of the 1930s had grown into contributing members of this society during the following decade, but many of them could not escape their past deeds and sympathies. Likewise, New Deal agencies like TVA faced the same scrutiny during the postwar period. As the nation focused its Cold War lens on the previous decade, New Deal agencies, individuals, and ideas suddenly appeared radical.

Postwar anti-communist fear and Cold War politics had resurrected government inquiries into TVA and its former radicals. Seen by conservatives and some Republicans since its inception as a radical agency, what President Dwight Eisenhower not too many years later described as "creeping socialism," TVA withstood the attack on the agency leveled during the Clapp and Lilienthal confirmation hearings. Thanks largely to Lilienthal's uplifting "This I Deeply Believe," to say nothing of the rambling and apoplectic McKellar and the weak testimony of his stooges (who, as it turned out, did not "see plenty"), the Tennessee Valley Authority was stronger and generally more accepted than it had been before.

⁷¹ Quotes from Summary Report, 1951, Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 94 and 97, 95-100; May, *Un-American Activities*, 91-92; Guy Hottel to FBI Director, 4 June 1947, Silvermaster FBI file #65-56402-2492; SAC Washington to FBI Director, 3 September 1947, Remington FBI file #65-56402-2801; FBI Washington Report, 9 September 1947, Silvermaster FBI file #65-56402-2850, 124; Guy Hottel to FBI Director, 6 November 1947, Silvermaster FBI file #65-56402-2949.

As for the “Knoxville Fifteen,” FBI investigations, appearances at various hearings, and decidedly unwanted attention from the press in the immediate postwar years became a temporary irritant, whether the once young and naïve men and women thought so or not at the time. Hart, Williams, and Frantz stood courageously and for the most part were allowed to pursue their careers. William Remington in general became a pest, eager to trade real and imagined information for his own skin. And yet Remington proved to be the spark that set off still another round of investigations and charges. These would not be so genteel.

Chapter 6

“You Mean the Square Dancing?”

In July 1950 Forrest Benson, a TVA personnel officer with nearly fifteen years of experience with the agency, prepared to appear before a federal employee loyalty board. That month Benson wrote a letter to his supervisor to explain his checkered past. A 1930s supporter of labor reform and colleague of known members of the Communist Party, Benson searched for the right words to explain his past actions. Unashamed of his youthful indiscretions, Benson wrote: “I feel that 1936 data interpreted in the light of 1950 knowledge and attitudes, would fail of objectivity.”¹ His statement satisfied the members of the loyalty board, but for many former New Deal activists, including a handful of his former TVA colleagues and his own wife, the results were far different.

From 1947 to 1954 a new wave of government investigations fed by a fear of communism gripped the nation. A government loyalty program started by President Harry S. Truman in 1947 aimed to cleanse the federal government of subversives. In conjunction with this program, the FBI and other official investigators targeted the leaders of the Communist Party, former CP members from the 1930s, and those with suspected ties to the Soviet Union. By the early 1950s, Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy (R) had risen to the occasion to fan the fires of anti-communism rhetoric.

Title quoted from author’s interview with Mabel Abercrombie Mansfield, Eureka, California, 23 August 2003.

¹ Quote from Forrest Benton to Glenn Dooley, 17 July 1950, in FBI Knoxville Report, 3 November 1950, Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443-40.

During this period, New Deal agencies and their employees suffered attacks and unjustified accusations as being too “radical” for postwar America.

The Tennessee Valley Authority again encountered national criticism. Heralded in the 1930s as the future of government agencies, by the 1950s many Congressional leaders, newspapers reporters, and Americans agreed with President Dwight Eisenhower’s 1953 summation of TVA as an example of “creeping socialism.”² New and re-opened government investigations into several former TVA employees with suspected Communist Party ties brought additional negative attention to the agency. Steady handed TVA chairman Gordon Clapp, who himself suffered accusations of being a communist, defended the agency’s past while securing Congressional appropriations for new projects. During Clapp’s chairmanship, 1946-1954, the agency achieved many of its original goals. By the time Clapp left the agency, TVA had built twenty dams in twenty years, all constructed within one percent of estimated costs. An administrative man, Clapp focused on creating an agency that combined expertise and organizational purpose. Although not as politically adept as David Lilienthal, Clapp found success in separating the early idealistic TVA from the modern, postwar agency focused on electric power production.³

Still, Clapp’s ability to protect TVA and its legacies proved no match for the anti-communist mentality of the McCarthy Era and the Red Hunters that dominated the late 1940s and early 1950s. For a handful of former TVA employees, this period was

² *New York Times*, 18 June 1953.

³ Erwin C. Hargrove, *Prisoners of Myth: The Leadership of the Tennessee Valley Authority, 1933-1990*, 2nd ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 117-20.

especially difficult. Government inquiries into the past and current lives of Mabel Mansfield, Christine and Forrest Benson, Howard Bridgman, Kit Buckles, John Frantz, Howard Frazier, Henry Hart, David Stone Martin, William Remington, Elizabeth and Pat Todd, Muriel Williams, and Burton Zien came in several forms. Between 1947 and 1954, members of the “Knoxville Fifteen” appeared before federal loyalty review boards, FBI agents, House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) inquisitors, and several courts during the trials of William Remington. These latter legal proceedings brought the government’s inquiry to a more individual level, with less of a focus on TVA as a radical agency. Participation by each of the fourteen individuals (Buck Borah died in 1943) varied, but each found himself/herself suddenly responsible for events some fifteen years past. Several cooperated by offering names or information, some provided limited assistance, while others refused to talk.

By the mid-1950s, nearly all fourteen had testified or had been named in official government investigations, resulting in extensive FBI files. This chapter will examine these investigations, the results of the findings, and how each of the TVA witnesses reacted during the most intense period of government inquiry into their past lives, concluding with the whereabouts of each of the individuals at the end of the trials in 1954. While reconstructing their lives and trials, this chapter argues that the 1930s activities of these individuals, including the perceived advocacy of black enfranchisement, southern unionization, communist governance, redistribution of wealth, industrial education, and overthrow of the government made them easy targets. The “Knoxville Fifteen” stood no chance against the anti-communist forces of the McCarthy Era. With more advanced legal and investigative mechanisms in place, during the 1950s

the government could better prosecute individuals from TVA's past. By the 1950s, the focus of the anti-communist investigations had also changed. Finding communists at any level of TVA proved to many that the entire agency was tainted, even if no clear link between the mailroom and the boardroom could be found. In fact, the forces of McCarthyism were so strong that Red Hunters (even those of questionable character) needed no proof of such connections to make their charges.

By 1947, deteriorating postwar relations between the United States and the Soviet Union brought on a new fear of communism on American soil. In January, HUAC announced that its primary mission was to identify, expose, and investigate known communists. The committee hoped to target subversives in the federal government, in Hollywood, and in academia. To protect the innocent, the committee offered to launch a counter-educational program against the subversives and their propaganda. Later that month, Senate confirmation hearings for David Lilienthal and Gordon Clapp began amid accusations that TVA harbored communists. The two hearings produced several confirmed communists who talked of other government officials participating in subversive activities. FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover joined the fight against communism, stating in March that the Communist Party had the sole intention of overthrowing the government. Hoover declared that because of the highly organized nature of the Communist Party, all members should be barred from government service.⁴

⁴ Robert K. Carr, *The House Committee on Un-American Activities, 1945-1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952), 37-38; Alan D. Harper, *The Politics of Loyalty: The White House and the*

While Truman forged the difficult postwar foreign policy with the Soviet Union, his administration faced the persistent accusation that communists had infiltrated the federal government. In late 1946, Truman appointed a committee to study employee loyalty and its final report recommended establishing a formal program to protect the nation against internal subversive activity. With growing pressure and national attention on the issue, in March 1947 Truman signed Executive Order 9835, which launched a loyalty program for all employees in the Executive branch. The program required a nominal check of over two million government workers, and full investigations of those with evidence indicating possible disloyalty. In an effort to supersede the efforts of HUAC and the FBI, the Executive Order specified how government investigations of possible subversives would be conducted. The mandate assigned the Civil Service Commission the responsibility of conducting the investigations of current employees and working with agencies to form loyalty boards. The Executive Order gave the investigators full access to the FBI files, military and naval intelligence records, criminal files, HUAC materials, academic transcripts, and records from past employers. The boards then would measure loyalty based on any activities (including treason, espionage, and being connected to groups advocating violent revolution) or associations that might breach the security of the interests and secrets of the United States government. Fighting communism and protecting atomic secrets lay at the heart of Truman's mandate.⁵

Communist Issue, 1946-1952 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Corporation, 1969), 60-63; Francis H. Thompson, *The Frustration of Politics: Truman, Congress, and the Loyalty Issue, 1945-1953* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1979), 28-29.

⁵ Thompson, *Frustration of Politics*, 7, 30-33; Eleanor Bontecou, *The Federal Loyalty-Security Program* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1953), 21-30, 272-81.

During the summer of 1947, the Truman Loyalty-Security program for federal employees took effect. Executive Department agencies organized loyalty boards, while the Civil Service Commission developed a system of regional loyalty boards to oversee the appeals process. Congress passed laws to remove employees or bar applicants from public positions if they were deemed disloyal to the United States. By March 1948, loyalty boards had reviewed over 420,000 government employees, with only 399 cases warranting further investigation and of that small number only eight cases of disloyalty emerged. Still, the issue of domestic communists became a centerpiece of the 1948 elections. Truman announced that HUAC hearings, led by a Republican Congress, had created unnecessary public hysteria about communism at home. He denounced “self-appointed guardians of the country” who used hearsay evidence to smear defenseless individuals. Instead, Truman favored a system of investigating potential subversives while protecting individual civil liberties described in the Bill of Rights and Constitution. Truman defended his government employee loyalty program as a better mechanism to identify and investigate subversives, while protecting their individual privacy.⁶

Loyalty boards, FBI investigations, and the anti-communist sentiment of the late 1940s affected the TVA. Following Truman’s mandates, board chairman Gordon Clapp established a loyalty program to investigate TVA employees. The names and fingerprints of all TVA employees appointed before 1947 were referred to the FBI for further investigation. Questionable employees underwent detailed background checks with the results sent to the TVA loyalty board. The board then rendered a decision, which an

⁶ Bontecou, *Federal Loyalty-Security Program*, 35-37, 40-47, 107; Thompson, *Frustration of Politics*, 36-39, 44-46, 62-63, 81, 93; quote from Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman* (Garden

accused employee could respond to first in writing and then in person before the loyalty board during an official proceeding with witnesses and lawyers. An adverse decision of the TVA loyalty board could be appealed to the regional loyalty board.⁷

In 1947 the TVA loyalty board asked the FBI to gather information on Forrest Benson. A personnel officer with over ten years of service to the agency, Forrest and his wife Christine resided in Knoxville and showed no signs of radical behavior. Earlier that year during the Atomic Energy Commission confirmation hearings for David Lilienthal, the highly suspect and senile former sheriff Josephus Remine named both Bensons as having been communists ten years prior. However, the FBI's background investigation of Benson yielded no significant results and later that year TVA cleared him for continued federal service.⁸

Benson's former TVA colleague Howard Frazier received similar results from a postwar loyalty board. A supervising inspector for the United States Department of Labor, Frazier lived in San Francisco. In May 1948, the FBI began a background investigation of Frazier. That summer, the FBI compiled multiple reports and conducted

City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1956), 270-71.

⁷ TVA Office of the General Manager, "Employee Loyalty to the United States," 9 June 1949, folder: Civil Obligations, Duties, Function, Rights, 1949-1950, box 270, General Manager's Files 1933-1957, Records of the Tennessee Valley Authority, Record Group 142, NARA—Southeast Region (Atlanta) [hereinafter TVA RG 142, NARA Southeast].

⁸ TVA to FBI, "Request for Report on Loyalty Data," 24 September 1947, Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443-5; FBI Knoxville Report, 3 November 1950, Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443-40; Congress, Senate, *Confirmation of Atomic Energy Commissioner and General Manager, Hearings Before the Senate Section of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1947), 796-804.

several dozen interviews. In November 1948, the United States Department of Labor's loyalty board declared that Frazier should be considered loyal and retained.⁹

After World War II, the academic setting protected two former TVA colleagues from government investigations, loyalty boards, and past allegations. Henry Hart, a former TVA messenger, continued his doctoral studies in political science at the University of Wisconsin. By 1948, Hart had started work on his dissertation to analyze the possibilities of a regional development authority for the Missouri River Basin. During this period, Hart purchased an old Chevrolet and drove around the seven-state region to better understand the Missouri River.¹⁰ Another former TVA messenger, Howard Bridgman, also spent the late 1940s in the college classroom. An associate professor of economics at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts, Bridgman taught classes in personnel issues and price and production analysis. In the late 1940s, Bridgman began a doctoral program at the Harvard University Business School with a particular interest in employee behavior.¹¹

In 1948, ten years after sharing an apartment in Fountain City (a township just outside of Knoxville), two former TVA employees found themselves far away from their 1930s lives. In the summer of that year, Mabel Mansfield and her husband sold their bed and breakfast in Vermont and moved to College Park, Georgia, an Atlanta suburb. She

⁹ J. Edgar Hoover to SAC San Francisco, 28 May 1948, Howard Frazier FBI file #121-10515-1; FBI Knoxville to FBI Director, 7 June 1948, Frazier FBI file #121-10515-1X; Loyalty Review Board to J. Edgar Hoover, 5 November 1948, Frazier FBI file #121-10515-13.

¹⁰ Author's interview with Henry Hart, Madison, Wisconsin, 27 April 2002 [transcript], 3.

¹¹ Congress, House, Committee on Un-American Activities, *Hearings Regarding Communism in the United States Government—Part I* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1950), 1754, 1775.

quickly found work as a dietician at the Georgia Military Academy.¹² Muriel Williams also lived in Atlanta, raising a family. But in early 1949, her husband Stillman accepted an appointment to the World Health Organizations and in March, the Williams family moved to Geneva, Switzerland.¹³

After World War II, David Stone Martin worked as a freelance graphic designer and illustrator in the New York area. In 1948, he accepted a position as art director for jazz producer Norman Granz's Clef record label. Because of past testimony and ongoing accusations that both he and his brother Francis were CP sympathizers, the FBI kept Martin's file active. In 1948 the Civil Service Commission asked the FBI to verify Martin's employment status for loyalty purposes. Three weeks later, the FBI reported that Martin no longer held a government position and halted any further investigation.¹⁴

In 1948, Pat and Elizabeth Todd lived in New York and suffered little intrusion from government investigators. Pat worked as an electrician for Western Electric, while Elizabeth worked as Assistant Director of Network Operations at CBS Radio. Because of an alarming letter from Elizabeth's brother the previous year, the FBI did make initial

¹² FBI Summary Report, 27 August 1951, William Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 476; FBI Atlanta Report, 14 June 1948, folder 1, box 2097, Burton Zien, Oversize Personnel Security Investigation Case Files, 1928-1982, Civil Service Commission and Office of Federal Investigations, Records of the Office of Personnel Management, Record Group 478, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland [hereinafter Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park].

¹³ Selma Williams, "Muriel W. Mather Interview," March 1981, [transcript] 4, folder 6, box 1, Selma Williams, "Interview with Muriel Williams Mather," 22 November 1983, [transcript] 18-19, folder 2, box 1, all in Muriel Williams Mather Papers, 1939-1990, MS 2585, Special Collections Library, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee [hereinafter Mather Papers, UT Special Collections].

¹⁴ Manek Daver, *David Stone Martin: Jazz Graphics* (Tokyo: Graphic-sha Publishing, 1991), 12; SAC Washington to FBI Director, 3 May 1948, SAC Washington to FBI Director, 26 May 1948, David Stone Martin FBI file #121-10717-1.

efforts to determine the Todds' CP sympathies. But with thousands of government employees to investigate, the Todds stayed off the FBI's radar screen.¹⁵

After World War II, the FBI took great interest in the political and civil rights activities of Kit Buckles. In 1948, Buckles served as Executive Secretary of the St. Louis chapter of the Progressive Citizens of America. This third party movement, heavily supported by communists and those against Cold War politics, nominated former Vice President Henry Wallace for President in the 1948 presidential campaign. The FBI reported that members of the CP had infiltrated the St. Louis chapter of the Progressive Citizens of America. According to the FBI, Buckles proved to be one of the leading CP activists in St. Louis and helped organize the Progressive Party of Missouri. After the unsuccessful fall elections, Buckles assisted the St. Louis chapter of the Civil Rights Congress, a group committed to racial equality. Known by many as "Anti-Poll Tax Kit," she organized rallies, lectured on the need for civil rights legislation, and spoke with the St. Louis mayor about racial difficulties within the city. While in St. Louis, Buckles furthered her reputation as a radical, but at this time the FBI recorded little on her TVA tenure.¹⁶

By 1948, the question of TVA communism appeared to be a closed issue, but three loyalty investigations that year re-opened the investigations like never before. John

¹⁵ FBI New York Report, 24 October 195[4?], Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-10; Gary May, *Un-American Activities: The Trials of William Remington* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 147; FBI New York Report, 7 April 1951, Elizabeth Todd FBI file #100-440310-4; [Patrick Winston] to Department of Justice, 11 December 1947, SAC Charlotte to FBI Director, 30 December 1947, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-[4?].

¹⁶ FBI St. Louis to FBI Washington, 8 May 1950, Katherine Buckles FBI file #100-353259-2; Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 35-36; Richard M. Freeland, *The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism: Foreign Policy, Domestic Politics, and Internal Security, 1946-1948* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 298.

Frantz and Burton Zien endured similar charges and hearings, but the loyalty hearing for William Remington symbolized the beginning of a massive expansion of the government's investigation of former TVA CP members. Remington's legal difficulties resurrected the bond between fourteen individuals who had once worked for TVA.

In 1948, John Frantz worked as an Executive Assistant for the Housing and Home Finance Agency. That year the FBI completed a loyalty investigation of Frantz and referred its findings to the Civil Service Commission. During 1948, the FBI compiled over three dozen reports on Frantz, with particular attention paid to his TVA tenure. One report found that Frantz had the "reputation of being communistically inclined while at TVA and closely associated with persons of radical tendencies." Agents combed through the details of his Dies Committee and Atomic Energy Commission Joint Committee testimony from earlier in the decade and interviewed a number of Knoxville informants, including James L. Smith, Roxie Paris, L.B. Bolt, Josephus Remine, and Jack Comer. The FBI also uncovered a 61-page unreleased report from the Civil Service Commission with summaries of interviews with Frantz's neighbors, co-workers, and acquaintances.¹⁷

In January 1949, the Housing and Home Finance Agency's loyalty board rendered its report on Frantz. The board declared that Frantz had been a member of the Communist Party while with the TVA, had been active in a number of subversive and pro-communist organizations, had associated with alleged communists from Tennessee,

¹⁷ C.F. Niles, "Post-Audit Case for John Marshall Frantz," 28 May 1953, Woodrow W. Bousman, "Report of Investigation," 7 July 1947, 1-66, folder 2, FBI Washington Report, 14 July 1948, FBI Knoxville Report, 17 June 1948, folder 3, FBI Knoxville Report, 24 June 1948, folder 4, all in box 627, John Frantz, Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park; J. Edgar Hoover to SAC Washington, 15 May 1948, John Frantz FBI file #121-7423-1; quote from FBI Washington Field Report, 10 June 1948, Frantz FBI file #121-7423-1X2.

had supported the Highlander Folk School, and had maintained the CP line by advocating its anti-capitalist philosophy. The board encouraged Frantz to respond to the charges and establish his loyalty.¹⁸

In response to these charges, the next month, Frantz sent the loyalty board a 31-page affidavit. Frantz categorically denied his membership in the Communist Party and refuted each of the accusations. Using his past sworn testimony on the matter, Frantz explained that he had not joined the CP while with TVA or at any other time. Frantz questioned the credibility of the individuals interviewed by the FBI, especially Roxie Paris who he called a woman of “unstable temperament and erratic judgment.” He thoroughly described past relationships with TVA colleagues, including Muriel Williams, Henry Hart, Mabel Mansfield, David Stone Martin, Pat Todd, and William Remington, but regarded none of them as communists or subversives. Frantz admitted to performing in a play at the Highlander Folk School, but believed that the pro-socialist school did not welcome communists. He urged the loyalty board to consider that many of the charges were taken out of the context of the 1930s and based on personal bias. Frantz reminded the board that he had served in federal positions of increasing responsibilities for over twenty years.¹⁹

A few weeks after receiving Frantz’s affidavit, the Housing and Home Finance Agency’s loyalty board cleared him for on-going federal service. In June, the agency’s loyalty board closed the case, saying that it found nothing to indicate any disloyal

¹⁸ Loyalty Board of the Office of the Administrator, Housing and Home Finance Agency, 11 January 1949, folder 2, box 627, Frantz Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park.

¹⁹ Affidavit of John M. Frantz, 9 February 1949, folder 4, box 627, Frantz Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park.

tendencies with their Executive Assistant. However, in September 1949, after William Remington admitted to associating with Frantz while in Washington, D.C., the loyalty review board re-opened Frantz's case.²⁰

The loyalty board system also brought Burton Zien before a host of inquisitors during the late 1940s. In 1948, Zien worked as a field examiner for the National Labor Relations Board in Knoxville and early that year the FBI investigated his loyalty. FBI agents once again interviewed Roxie Paris, who remembered Zien as an active CP member during the late-1930s and who associated with other known TVA communists, including David Stone Martin, John Frantz, Henry Hart, Muriel Williams, and Mabel Mansfield. She told FBI agents that Zien had associated with CP organizers, radical labor organizations, and Myles Horton of the Highlander Folk School. Agents then spoke with James L. Smith, who explained that in 1937 Zien and a group of other communist sympathizers infiltrated TVA's white-collar union.²¹

FBI agents also interviewed Zien's former supervisor and TVA colleague Howard Frazier. Drawing on ten years of social and professional interaction, Frazier had no recollection of Zien possessing any subversive literature and declared that he had no reason to question Zien's loyalty to the United States. The next week, FBI agents interviewed Mabel Mansfield, who remembered Zien as a member of the United Federal Workers of America TVA branch and a frequent attendee of hiking trips in the Smoky

²⁰ Niles, "Post-Audit Case for Frantz," 28 May 1953, Lewis E. Williams, "Agency Report on Closed Loyalty Case, John Marshall Frantz," 1 June 1949, all in folder 1, box 627, Frantz Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park.

²¹ J. Edgar Hoover to James E. Hatcher, 6 January 1949, FBI Knoxville Report, 11 June 1948, all in folder 1, box 2097, Burton Zien Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park.

Mountains. She considered Zien a loyal American, and stated that she knew no disloyal citizens.²²

In August 1948, the FBI completed its investigation of Burton Zien and issued a final report to the loyalty board. The report found Zien to have a radical streak, but the FBI based much of that assertion on information provided by Paris. The board declared Zien disloyal to the United States because of a possible CP membership, his statement in 1938 or 1939 before the Women's Auxiliary of the Knoxville Central Labor Union that "Marxism will come to be practiced in America," and his associations with known CP members while working for TVA. In March 1949, the board encouraged Zien to submit answers to the charges and deliver testimony at a loyalty hearing or be removed.²³

In early April 1949, Zien responded in writing. Zien explained that an interest in labor reform led him to join organizations which encouraged training and cooperation with unions. He denied that he ever joined or had sympathies for the Communist Party. Zien also denied that he ever made pro-Marxist statements before any group or individual. As to his relationships with the other named TVA employees, Zien explained that: "If these individuals were Communists I did not know it at that time." As proof of his loyalty to the United States, Zien closed with a review of his impressive military career during World War II.²⁴

²² J. Edgar Hoover to SAC San Francisco, 28 May 1948, Howard Frazier FBI file #121-10515-1; FBI San Francisco Report, 3 June 1948, FBI Atlanta Report, 14 June 1948, all in folder 1, box 2097, Zien Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park.

²³ James E. Hatcher to Pamela L. Adsit, 23 August 1948, folder 1, Pamela L. Adsit to Burton Zien, 25 March 1949, all in folder 2, box 2097, Zien Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park.

²⁴ Burton Zien to Pamela L. Adsit, 5 April 1949, Burton Zien Sworn Statement, 5 April 1949, all in folder 2, box 2097, Zien Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park.

On May 18, 1949, the loyalty board of the National Labor Relations Board held an official hearing in Knoxville to review Zien's case. The loyalty board heard from fifteen witnesses, including FBI agents, former TVA employees, labor leaders, detractors, and supporters. Max Friedman, a Knoxville jeweler, spoke of Zien's friendships within Knoxville's small Jewish community, while Harvey Broome, a Knoxville law clerk, talked about hikes with Zien in the Smoky Mountains. Lucille Thornburgh, a labor activist and former TVA employee, elaborated on Zien's participation in labor strikes during the 1930s. When asked if Zien had ever associated with known radicals such as Henry Hart or Francis Martin, she explained that Zien "wasn't part of that crowd." The lengthiest testimony came from Roxie Paris, who confirmed that Zien had promoted the ideas of Karl Marx, possessed a CP membership book, associated with known communists such as Henry Hart and Francis Martin, attended CP meetings, and supported CP front groups such as the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy. But while on the stand Paris appeared confused. When first asked to identify Zien, she pointed to a member of the loyalty board and could not pick Zien out of the crowd. She also was unable to confirm where and when she first met Zien. Her credibility suffered another blow when she admitted that since 1938 she had given a combined 277 statements to the FBI and official committees related to communists in Knoxville.²⁵

²⁵ For a description of Knoxville's Jewish community see, Wendy Lowe Besmann, *A Separate Circle: Jewish Life in Knoxville* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001). Reeves R. Hilton to Bernard [sic] J. Zien, 12 May 1949, folder 3, "Official Proceedings Before the National Labor Relations Board Loyalty Board in the Matter of Mr. Bernard [sic] J. Zien, 18 May 1949, vol.1, quote 258, 88-89, 106, 110-12, 195, 118, 120, 127-28, 144-45, 148, 153, vol.2, 257, all in box 2097, Zien Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park.

Burton Zien appeared as the last witness before his loyalty board. Zien's interest in labor education led him to Knoxville and TVA during the 1930s. He explained that teaching classes to workers in the printing, hosiery, and glove trades led to close relationships with labor organizers and union leaders. Within the context of educating workers, Zien again denied that he ever endorsed Marxism during conversations or lectures. When asked if he had associated with communists while in Knoxville, Zien explained that Mabel Mansfield, David Stone Martin, Henry Hart, and Pat Todd were his liberal friends but he had no idea that they might be or have been members of the CP. He fully denied that he ever joined or belonged to the Communist Party or one of its front organizations, attended CP meetings, or associated with known members. Zien then explained that during his post-TVA years, the FBI cleared him of all charges of CP membership and he served in the Pacific during World War II. He closed with a statement about his belief in free enterprise and the danger of communism expanding into Europe without American intervention.²⁶

On July 14, 1949, Zien's loyalty board declared that no reasonable ground existed to question his loyalty. The board found that the entire matter hinged on the suspicions, unfounded conclusions, and faulty and unreliable recollections of Roxie Paris. Instead, the board agreed with other witnesses who called Zien a "solid, civic minded citizen of the Knoxville community." The board judged Zien's testimony to be frank, complete, and credible. Zien's military record further impressed the members of the board, who

²⁶ "Official Proceedings, Zien," 18 May 1949, vol.2, 303-10, 317-18, 320-21, 328, 331-32, 338-43, 359, box 2097, Zien Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park.

declared that “he is loyal to the Government of the United States beyond all reasonable doubt.”²⁷

Despite postwar clearances, limited observation, or disinterest from the FBI, the trials of William Remington resurrected the “Knoxville Fifteen.” By summer 1947, Remington had completed several interviews with the FBI and even offered agents information on CP activities in Washington, D.C. But in early September, Remington received a subpoena to appear before a New York grand jury investigating criminal violations. The grand jury came into being in June 1947 to investigate the individuals named by CP informant Elizabeth Bentley. Remington learned that the charges against him included espionage, a crime punishable by death if committed during wartime. A few days later, Remington answered questions before the grand jury on his knowledge of suspected CP spies during World War II. The grand jury continued its work into the following year, interviewing over 100 witnesses initially named by Elizabeth Bentley. By the spring of 1948, the grand jury had issued no indictments in the Bentley inquiry.²⁸

Remington had escaped indictment from the New York grand jury, but in 1948 he faced a FBI loyalty investigation. Despite his growing FBI file and radical reputation, Remington continued to rise in government positions. In March 1948, he transferred to the Department of Commerce’s Export Program. With a background in international relations, economics, and the ability to speak Russian, Remington secured a position as director of the Department’s Office of International Trade. Among other sensitive duties,

²⁷ National Labor Relations Board Loyalty Board, “In the Matter of Bernard [sic] J. Zien,” 14 July 1949, quotes, 13-14, folder 1, box 2097, Zien Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park.

²⁸ May, *Un-American Activities*, 91-93; Lee W. Jones, “The William W. Remington Case” (Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York, 1989), 79-80.

in that role he determined the allocation of shipments to Russia. However, the transfer triggered a mandated loyalty investigation and in May the FBI delved into Remington's TVA years. Knoxville agents interviewed the handful of people who remembered Remington as a radical youth, including Josephus Remine, Roxie Paris, and former landlady Ruby Cox. Agents also spoke to Henry Hart, Mabel Abercrombie, and Muriel Williams, all of whom denied Remington's CP membership and upheld him as a loyal American citizen. Still, the FBI concluded that Remington had had consistent dealings with communists, especially during his work for TVA and the War Production Board. In June, the FBI sent its lengthy results to the Department of Commerce's loyalty board. The next month, the loyalty board invited Remington to defend himself or suffer an ineligible rating. Because of the severity of the charges, the Department of Commerce placed Remington on extended leave.²⁹

To complicate matters for Remington, that summer Elizabeth Bentley brought her story of international espionage to a national audience. In July, Bentley's agent arranged for her story to appear in a five-part series in the *New York World—Telegram*. On July 21, Bentley's story that more than fifty Soviet agents had worked in high-level government positions during World War II hit the newsstands. Remington was one of only three who had remained in government positions after the war.³⁰

²⁹ Fred Cook, "The Remington Tragedy: A Study of Injustice" *The Nation* 185 (28 December 1957): 489; Jones, "Remington Case," 74-75, 83, 169; May, *Un-American Activities*, 94-95; FBI Knoxville to FBI Washington, 29 May 1948, FBI Knoxville file #121-63-21; FBI Knoxville to SAC Atlanta, 21 May 1948, Remington FBI file #121-6159-[11?]; FBI Madison Report, 26 May 1948, Remington FBI file #121-6159-41; FBI Atlanta Report, 26 May 1948, Remington FBI file #121-6159-44; Chairman, Loyalty Board, "Case: William Walter Remington," 9 July 1948, folder 1, box A280, William Remington Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park.

³⁰ *New York World-Telegram*, 21 July 1948.

Congress reacted to the story with subpoenas for Bentley. Her first appearance came on July 30, 1948 before a subcommittee investigating Executive Department expenditures, which expanded to investigate alleged communists who had contacts with Russia. Led by Michigan Senator Homer Ferguson (R), the committee questioned Bentley about Remington. Bentley identified Remington as a CP member and explained that he had divulged secret information from the War Production Board on such things as aircraft production and a formula for creating synthetic rubber. Bentley asserted she had passed Remington's information to CP leader Earl Browder and the Russians.³¹

The following day, July 31, 1948, Remington appeared before the Ferguson Committee to answer "Helen's" charges. The committee informed Remington, who chose not to bring a lawyer, that its investigative task dealt with his government employment and not his loyalty. First, Remington answered numerous questions about his advancement in government positions and the kind of information that was available to him. The committee established that Remington did not hold a routine government position with the War Production Board. Rather, he had access to vital war information, such as airplane production data, details on radar systems, locations of naval craft and equipment, and many general aspects of the then top-secret "Manhattan Project." The committee also found Remington to be naïve about his own advancements and the allegations against him.³²

³¹ May, *Un-American Activities*, 95; Jones, "Remington Case," 90-93; Congress, Senate, Investigations Subcommittee of the Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments, *Export Policy and Loyalty*, 88th Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1948), 28-32, 47; Daniel Lang, "A Reporter at Large: The Days of Suspicion," *New Yorker* 25 (21 May 1949): 39.

³² Congress, Senate, *Export and Loyalty*, 68-69, 78-79, 85, 97, 179, 182-83, 189, 191-93, 226.

The committee also asked Remington about his relationship with Bentley.

Remington reconstructed his meetings with “Helen,” who he first thought was a reporter for *PM*, and stated that by 1943 he had become suspicious of her CP leanings. He admitted sharing information on synthetic rubber production with Bentley, but Remington assured the committee that he knew nothing about the Manhattan Project that would have breached national security. In an effort to present himself as a cooperative witness, Remington stated that he admired Bentley for talking to the FBI and believed her to be an honest woman. Remington then added that he held a hatred for communism since 1947 and had documents and witnesses to prove his anti-communist mentality. The skeptical committee reminded Remington that it was not out to destroy his character or reputation, but rather sought to help him clear his name by providing additional details and names. After two days of testimony, on August 3, 1948, the committee released Remington from the witness stand.³³

Two weeks later, Remington faced serious charges from the Civil Service Commission’s Fourth Region Loyalty Board. The board’s report concluded that Remington had been a member of the Communist Party, had associated with known communists while working for TVA, had intentionally shared confidential information with CP members, and had lied about his affiliations during employment checks. To prepare for the hearing, Remington wrote over seventy-five acquaintances asking for affidavits and for their testimony at the hearing.³⁴

³³ Ibid., 198, 110, 210, 202, 206, 222, 237, 241, 262-64.

³⁴ May, *Un-American Activities*, 101-104; Chairman, Loyalty Board, “Case: William Walter Remington,” 9 July 1948, folder 1, box A280, William Remington Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park; Lang, “Days of Suspicion,” 42.

Remington hoped to cover his TVA tenure with only two contacts—both people who had hardly known him. On August 13, 1948 he wrote similar letters to board chairman Gordon Clapp and former TVA employee and AFGE member Lee S. Greene. In the letters, Remington explained that while with TVA he “was just a youthful New Dealer and labor unionist” but not a communist. Remington asked Clapp and Greene to write letters explaining that nothing during his TVA tenure demonstrated “any Communistic activities or convictions.” Clapp referred the letter to L.J. Van Mol, the Assistant to the Director of Personnel, who reviewed Remington’s employment history and declared that TVA had no reason to believe that Remington had belonged to or had sympathies for the Communist Party. Greene, then a political science professor at the University of Tennessee, wrote the loyalty board a letter explaining that he hardly knew Remington during the 1930s, but had no reason to suspect his membership in the Communist Party.³⁵

On August 18, 1948, with numerous statements in-hand and seventeen sympathetic witnesses scheduled to appear, Remington was confident as he prepared to face the loyalty board. His written statement to the board asserted that he had never joined the Communist Party, had only briefly associated with communists, and “hate[d] communism and its adherents.” Remington addressed his TVA years by saying that he worked with Henry Hart, Pat Todd, and Horace Bryan to help organize steel and textile

³⁵ May, *Un-American Activities*, 106-107; William Remington to Gordon Clapp, 13 August 1948, Office of the General Manager to Harry L. Case, 16 August 1948, Subject “William Walter Remington,” 2 August 1948, L.J. Van Mol to William Remington, 16 August 1948, all in folder: REJ-REO, box 176, General Manager’s Files 1933-1957, TVA RG 142, NARA Southeast; William Remington to Lee Greene, 13 August 1948, Lee Greene to George Norris, 26 August 1948, Lee S. Greene Papers, 1938-1960, MS 1367, UT Special Collections [hereinafter Green Papers, MS 1367, UT Special Collections].

workers in Knoxville. But Remington claimed that only years later did he learn that these men were communists. For three days in August, Remington answered detailed questions about his radical past. The board took great interest in Remington's alleged CP membership and affiliations, his relationship with Elizabeth Bentley, and his access to sensitive material while with the War Production Board. Remington gave several examples of how he supported anti-communist causes, but later confessed that he thought his chances for vindication were "fifty-fifty."³⁶

The aftermath of the loyalty hearing brought even more difficulties for Remington. Following the hearing, the Department of Commerce placed him on leave without pay. Eager to reinstate his livelihood and to prepare for a possible appeal before a loyalty review board, in early September Remington hired Joseph Rauh, a prominent Washington, D.C. anti-communist lawyer who favored liberal causes. A few days later, Elizabeth Bentley appeared on NBC Radio's *Meet the Press* to discuss her communist allegations. During the interview she specifically named Remington as a communist. As a result, that fall Remington filed a \$100,000 libel suit against Bentley to force her to retract her public statements against his character. On September 20, 1948, the loyalty board ruled that Remington had demonstrated great disloyalty. Remington's past activities, including his association with known communists while with TVA, proved to be the basis for the ineligible ranking.³⁷

³⁶ May, *Un-American Activities*, 109, 111-15; Jones, "Remington Case," 184-87, 192-93; William Remington, "Reply to Interrogatory by the Fourth United States Civil Service Regional Office," 18 August 1948, folder 1, box A280, William Remington Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park; Lang, "Days of Suspicion," 45-48.

³⁷ May, *Un-American Activities*, 116-19; Jones, "Remington Case," 195, 198-99, 213; Cook, "The Remington Tragedy," 492; Lang, "Days of Suspicion," 48-49.

Despite the major setback, Remington appealed the decision. For his second loyalty hearing, Remington took much greater initiative. With Rauh's encouragement, he requested that Elizabeth Bentley attend the proceedings. She initially agreed to appear, but one week before the hearing she claimed to have a conflicting appointment and decided not to show up. Rauh also arranged for former assistant U.S. attorney Bethuel M. Webster to represent Remington. On November 22, 1948, Remington appeared before the loyalty review board. Webster focused the issue of Remington's loyalty on the charges made by Bentley, and emphasized that youthful mistakes before World War II should not be used to measure current loyalty.

Bentley's absence strengthened Remington's cause. Without cross-examination of the key accuser and little evidence to support the government's position, Remington's loyalty appeared uncontested. Webster presented the board with numerous affidavits and statements to defend Remington as a loyal American. With Webster's help Remington established that he had opposed communism since the end of World War II. As an example of pre-war activities, Webster described Remington's brief TVA tenure as a "kind of frontier for fellows with that longing for escape in an intellectual way," but certainly not a period of disloyalty. The chairman of the loyalty review board closed the hearing after only three hours of testimony, but agreed to re-open the case if Bentley chose to appear.³⁸

³⁸ May, *Un-American Activities*, 120-21, 124-25; Jones, "Remington Case," 212, 215-17, 220; quote Loyalty Review Board, "Transcript of Proceedings for the Hearing in the Appeal of Mr. William Walter Remington," 22 November 1948, folder 2, box A281, Remington Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park; Lang, "Days of Suspicion," 52-54.

On February 10, 1949, with no appearance from Elizabeth Bentley, the review board unanimously cleared Remington, thus reversing the decision of the lower loyalty board. Following the spirit of Truman's Executive Order, the board declared that determining present disloyalty, and not actions ten years prior, lay at the heart of its mission. Thus, in early February a vindicated Remington returned to work for the Department of Commerce.³⁹

During the weeks and months following the clearance, Remington experienced great highs and lows. First, Remington resumed his job as Director of the Export Program Staff, but within a few weeks his supervisors assigned him to a much less sensitive position and relocated him to a smaller office. Then, the publicity surrounding Remington led to a feature article in the *New Yorker* that spring and talk of a movie treatment from 20th Century Fox. Remington's ordeal with the loyalty process proved a remarkable story, but without a release from Bentley the motion picture option evaporated. At the same time, Remington waited for a decision in his libel case against Bentley, which had been argued before a federal judge in late-March. On a personal note, that summer Ann Moos Remington filed for divorce, which came at the end of 1949, ending their eleven-year marriage. Remington remained optimistic, however, stating in May 1949 that he hoped to draw a decent salary and return to the economics Ph.D. program at Columbia University.⁴⁰

³⁹ May, *Un-American Activities*, 128-31; Jones, "Remington Case," 227-29; Lang, "Days of Suspicion," 55-57.

⁴⁰ May, *Un-American Activities*, 133-41; Jones, "Remington Case," 232-35; Lang, "Days of Suspicion," 57; Joseph Rauh to James Allen, 26 May 1949, James Allen to Joseph Rauh, 8 June 1949, all in folder: Remington—Hollywood, Joseph Rauh Papers Accession, Manuscript Division, Library of

Following the loyalty review board's clearance, government investigators took even greater interest in Remington's TVA tenure and his all but forgotten TVA associates. For the next five years, the "Knoxville Fifteen" faced a host of inquisitors and proceedings. As the government's investigations on Remington escalated, the group of thirteen of Remington's former TVA colleagues interested in labor reform once again coalesced. But, under the strain of anti-communist rhetoric espoused by Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy and pressure from the FBI and HUAC, several individuals became witnesses against Remington and their former TVA colleagues.

Paul Crouch, a frequent ex-communist witness who had been CP state secretary for Tennessee from 1939-1941, proved to be a breakthrough informant. During Remington's 1948 FBI loyalty investigation, Crouch informed the FBI about the nature and membership of the TVA CP cell, but knew little about Remington. A year later, Crouch updated his story by telling the FBI, that while in Tennessee, Remington had associated with known CP members Pat Todd, Elizabeth Todd, Mabel Mansfield, and Kenneth McConnell and "may have belonged to the Communist Party." However, having dismissed Remington's TVA period during the loyalty hearings, the FBI took little interest and Crouch approached HUAC. In May 1949, Crouch appeared before HUAC and described his knowledge of a CP presence within TVA during the late-1930s. Later that month, Crouch informed HUAC investigators that Henry Hart, Mabel Mansfield, and Kenneth McConnell were former CP members who knew Remington. Crouch believed that McConnell would be a cooperative witness if called by the

committee. Thereafter, HUAC requested information on a number of former TVA employees and their current whereabouts. While HUAC investigators followed Remington's TVA connections during late 1949 and into early 1950, the FBI continued to ignore Crouch's information.⁴¹

In 1950, the burden of a previous affiliation with the Communist Party or other radical group proved extremely heavy. In late-January, a grand jury convicted Alger Hiss, a former State Department employee, of perjury. The conviction related to Hiss's denial of subversive activities, including a connection to the Communist Party. Two weeks later, on February 9, first-term Senator Joseph McCarthy seized the moment during a Lincoln Day dinner speech in Wheeling, West Virginia. McCarthy immediately captured national audiences with accusations that over 200 known communists worked in the State Department. As he continued to claim that other government agencies were also overrun with communists, McCarthy helped spawn a national anti-communist movement not seen since the "Red Scare" following World War I. Two years after the Wheeling speech, McCarthy became chairman of the Senate Committee on Government Operations. Once in that position, McCarthy appointed himself chairman of its

⁴¹ May, *Un-American Activities*, 146; Jones, "Remington Case," 243-44; SAC Miami to FBI Director, 25 May 1948, "Memo RE: Communist Party Leaders and Members in Knoxville During 1937," 24 May 1948, all in Communist Party Subfile, Knoxville Division, Headquarters Files, 1930s-1970s, file #100-3-58-121; quote from SAC Washington to FBI Director, 22 June 1949, Remington FBI File #101-1185-23; SAC New York to FBI Director, 19 May 1949, Remington FBI file #121-6159-[97?]; Congress, House, *Testimony of Paul Crouch* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1949), 199; William A. Wheeler to Frank S. Tavenner, Jr., 26 May 1949, folder: Paul Crouch, box 14, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), Executive Session Transcripts and Investigative Name Files, Records of the United States House of Representatives, Record Group 233, Legislative Archives Center, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C. [hereinafter HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA]; SAC Washington to FBI Director, 22 June 1949, Remington FBI file #101-1185-23. For a summary of HUAC findings see: Congress, House, *Annual Report of the Committee of Un-American Activities* 81st Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1951), 1-3.

Subcommittee on Investigations, which he used to interrogate possible communists and other un-Americans. Although his charges held little merit, McCarthy quickly became the nation's most prominent crusader against internal subversion.⁴²

With anti-communist rhetoric gaining in popularity, in 1950 FBI investigators reconsidered the Remington case. In early February 1950 a confidential informant in the Commerce Department told the FBI that Remington had been speaking to a young mysterious woman on the corner of 17th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue. With this news, Hoover ordered the Remington matter re-opened "carefully and discreetly." Instead of discovering another Elizabeth Bentley, however, the FBI learned that Remington had been meeting Jane Shepherd, his fiancée who worked at the Department of Agriculture. But on February 15, the FBI learned from HUAC investigators that while in Knoxville, Remington had shared post office box #1692 with suspected communists Howard Bridgman, Pat Todd, Bernard Borah, and Horace Bryan. HUAC also had discovered that pro-CP periodicals such as the *Southern Worker* and the *New South* were sent to that address.⁴³

⁴² G. Edward White, *Alger Hiss's Looking-Glass Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 73-79; Allen Weinstein, *Perjury: The Hiss-Chambers Case* (New York: Random House, 1978, paperback ed., 1997), 42-44, 442; Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*, 241-44; Robert Griffith, *The Politics of Fear: Joseph R. McCarthy and the Senate* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 47-51, 139-40; David Cate, *The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge Under Truman and Eisenhower* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 106.

⁴³ May, *Un-American Activities*, 145-46; quote from H.B. Fletcher to D.M. Ladd, 6 February 1950, Remington FBI file #101-1185-25X; SAC Washington to FBI Director, 10 February 1950, Remington FBI file #101-1185-26; William P. Rogers to Louis B. Nichols, 15 February 1950, Remington FBI file #101-1185-27; Guy Hottel, SAC Washington to FBI Director, 6 March 1950, Remington FBI file #101-1185-28; L.L. Langelin to A.H. Belmont, 15 March 1950, Remington FBI file #101-1185-34; A.H. Belmont to D.M. Ladd, 24 March 1950, Remington FBI file #101-1185-34X; John S. Wood to Homer Garrison, 19 October 1949, Donald T. Appell to HUAC Files, 27 March 1950, all in folder: Horace Bryan, box 8, HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA.

Although initially slow to follow TVA leads, in April 1950 the FBI began to focus on Remington's brief tenure both to contradict Remington's loyalty testimony and to upstage HUAC. On April 5, FBI agents learned that HUAC investigators had secured four witnesses who would testify that Remington had been "a Red" while with TVA. Further, the FBI learned that HUAC's spring session would focus on the Remington case and how the loyalty program had failed to identify subversives. Eager to find a CP connection, J. Edgar Hoover announced that the Remington "case be given immediate, vigorous and continuous attention." He ordered agents to follow any TVA leads related to Remington and to identify, locate, and interview the four witnesses before new HUAC sessions started. The FBI quickly confirmed that Remington had shared a mailbox in Knoxville with suspected communists and, with the help of Paul Crouch, agents began locating a number of former TVA employees.⁴⁴

Based on an earlier lead from HUAC, on April 11, 1950 FBI agents visited Pat and Elizabeth Todd in New York City. An electrician for the C.D. Wood Electric Company, Pat Todd admitted knowing, living, and working with Remington in 1937, but had no reason to suspect his loyalty. Pat offered little help to the FBI and told agents that his wife Elizabeth, who worked as Assistant Director of Network Operations at CBS Radio, did not wish to speak to them. With suspicions that the Todds had broken from

⁴⁴ L.B. Nichols to Mr. Tolson, 5 April 1950, Remington FBI file #121-6159-104X; quote J. Edgar Hoover to FBI Communications Section, 17 April 1950, Remington FBI file #121-6159-194; FBI Knoxville to FBI Director, 7 April 1950, Remington FBI file #121-6159-165; FBI Laboratory Work Sheet, 26 April 1950, Remington FBI file #121-6159-106; SAC San Francisco to FBI Director, 8 April 1950, Remington FBI file #121-6159-166X.

the CP and might have some knowledge of Remington's TVA years, the next day HUAC sent subpoenas to the Todds.⁴⁵

On April 14, Hoover learned from Louis J. Russell, HUAC's chief investigator, that HUAC planned to call Pat Todd, Elizabeth Todd, Howard Bridgman, and Kenneth McConnell to testify that Remington had been a communist while at TVA. Hoover ordered the Bureau to make another attempt to interview Elizabeth Todd and also to locate and interview Bridgman and McConnell. In the process, during this intense period of investigation, nearly all of the "Knoxville Fifteen" (including the deceased Buck Borah) were mentioned in official reports, with several interviewed by FBI agents.⁴⁶

The FBI first located and interviewed Howard Bridgman at his home in Medford, Massachusetts. On April 17, FBI agents spoke with the Tufts economics professor and Harvard doctoral student about his knowledge of Remington. Bridgman admitted to joining a small CP cell in December 1936, which consisted of Pat Todd, William Remington, and either Kit Buckles or Christine Benson. For fear that he might lose his teaching position, initially Bridgman declined to furnish a signed statement or appear before a loyalty board. FBI agents returned to interview Bridgman on April 19, 20, and 22, at which point he grew increasingly more willing to cooperate. During these sessions Bridgman explained that while with TVA he belonged to a socially minded

⁴⁵ SAC New York to FBI Director, 20 February 1950, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-6; J. Edgar Hoover to FBI Communications Section, 6 April 1950, Remington FBI file #121-6159-164; FBI New York Report, 11 April 1950, Remington FBI file #121-6159-169; May, *Un-American Activities*, 147; Congress, House, *Hearings Regarding Communism-Part I*, 1707-8; Donald T. Appell to Alvin W. Stokes, 2 February 1950, Alvin W. Stokes to Donald T. Appell, 17 March 1950, all in folder: Merwin S. Todd, box 47, HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA.

⁴⁶ May, *Un-American Activities*, 147; J. Edgar Hoover to FBI Communications Section, 14 April 1950, Remington FBI file #121-6159-176; C.H. Stanley to A.H. Belmont, 14 April 1950, Remington FBI file #121-6159-177.

group who were particularly interested in labor organizing. Bridgman recalled that Remington took an active part in labor activism and at the time considered him a “faithful, active and leading member” of the Communist Party. During the last session, Bridgman signed an official statement confirming Remington’s CP membership, but he urged agents to keep his name out of the newspapers.⁴⁷

On April 19, FBI agents met with Kenneth McConnell in Washington, D.C. A guest at the Wardman Park Hotel, McConnell was scheduled to appear before HUAC the following day. After losing his job as a CP organizer in 1939 because of a drinking problem, McConnell retreated to Weaverville, North Carolina and became a chicken farmer. During the interview, McConnell claimed that a “contractual obligation” with HUAC made it difficult for him to supply the FBI information about Remington. However, after FBI agents agreed that their discussions would remain closed until after the HUAC proceedings, McConnell “ordered two bourbon highballs” and began talking. The resulting signed statement explained that as regional CP organizer for East Tennessee McConnell had only known Remington for three weeks and remembered him attending only one CP meeting. McConnell believed that Remington had belonged to the CP, but qualified his statement, saying: “I have no documentary evidence, nor have I seen such evidence indicating that he was a member of the Communist Party.” With the vague information recorded, the FBI agents left McConnell to finish his drinks and prepare for the House Committee. Similar to the Bridgman interviews, two days after his

⁴⁷ May, *Un-American Activities*, 147-48; Jones, “Remington Case,” 246-47; FBI Boston Report, 20 April 1950, FBI Knoxville Division Files #121-63-67; FBI Boston Report, 23 April 1950, FBI Knoxville Division Files #121-63-70.

first FBI encounter McConnell grew more cooperative and agreed to supply the Bureau with additional information.⁴⁸

HUAC proceedings in the Remington matter started on April 20, 1950 and lasted into early June. On the first day, McConnell confirmed that Remington had belonged to the CP, had attended at least one meeting of communists, and had discussed with him party discipline and activities. McConnell identified other Knoxville CP members, including Muriel Williams, Bernard Borah, Pat Todd, Elizabeth Todd, John Frantz, Mabel Mansfield, Henry Hart, and possibly David Stone Martin. The next day, Pat and Elizabeth Todd appeared before the House Committee with their lawyer Bella S. Abzug. Pat Todd, who had already been suspended from his job because of the hearing, declined to answer questions on the grounds that it might incriminate him. His wife Elizabeth followed on the stand, giving nearly the same blanket statement of Fifth Amendment rights. That afternoon, the Todds returned to New York only to discover that CBS Radio had fired Elizabeth because of her refusal to answer questions before HUAC. A few weeks later, C.D. Wood Electric Company fired Pat Todd, also for refusing to testify. Pat Todd, who had a history of mental illness, checked into the Hall-Brook Hospital, a mental institution in Westport, Connecticut later that year.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ May, *Un-American Activities*, 147-48; Kenneth O'Reilly, *Hoover and the Un-Americans: The FBI, HUAC, and the Red Menace* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 152-53; Jones, "Remington Case," 246-47; FBI Washington Report, 27 April 1950, Remington FBI file #121-6159-434.

⁴⁹ Congress, House, *Hearings Regarding Communism-Part I*, 1700-705, 1707, 1712, 1718; May, *Un-American Activities*, 151; FBI New York Report, 24 October 1955, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-10; FBI New York, 11 May 1956, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-26; FBI New Haven Report, 30 March 1963, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-[33?].

On April 29, 1950, Howard Bridgman appeared before HUAC. Bridgman stated that, while a TVA employee, he had been recruited into the Communist Party by Pat Todd. Their small cell, Bridgman explained, also included Remington, Mabel Mansfield, Elizabeth Todd, Muriel Williams, David Stone Martin, Bernard Borah, Horace Bryan, Francis Martin, and Henry Hart. Bridgman testified that the Knoxville CP branch fluctuated between 12 and 20 members. With a focus on Remington, Bridgman confirmed that the Dartmouth student did belong to the CP, attended five or six meetings, and took an active part in holding branch meetings. Bridgman explained that the handful of CP meetings took place in Elizabeth McConnell's Highland Avenue home in Knoxville. The committee thanked Bridgman for his cooperation and commended him for his stand against the "serious menace" of communism.⁵⁰

During the first week of May 1950, Remington appeared before HUAC. Recalling his Knoxville period, Remington described his involvement with local labor organizing, confirmed visiting the Highlander Folk School, and remarked that his interest in TVA's employee union was greater than his interest in carrying mail. He reaffirmed that he had never joined the CP, never attended any such meetings while in Knoxville, and at the time had no reason to believe that any of his friends were communists. Remington testified that during a 1939 visit, two years after leaving Knoxville, he learned that several of his TVA associates had been communists. He explained that if a TVA CP cell secretly existed, he had merely been the "kid member" of the group. On the issue of attending meetings at the home of Elizabeth Todd, Remington denied ever visiting the

⁵⁰ *New York Times*, 27 April 1950; Congress, House, *Hearings Regarding Communism-Part I*, 1754-61, 1767, 1775; May, *Un-American Activities*, 151; FBI Washington to FBI Director, 26 April 1950,

residence and believed that she had moved to Knoxville just a few weeks before he returned to Dartmouth. When asked about post office box #1692, Remington declared that he never received mail at that address and certainly never had a key for the box.⁵¹

The May 1950 HUAC sessions in the Remington matter also focused on his relationship with Elizabeth Bentley. With Remington's libel suit against Bentley settled earlier in the year, Remington could freely discuss the original charges. Remington covered familiar territory, again claiming that he thought Bentley worked for the press and that the information he provided her did not jeopardize national security. On May 6, the day after Remington left the stand, Bentley reappeared from lecturing and writing to elaborate on her past spy activities. She expressed no doubt that Remington and his ex-wife, whose divorce had been finalized in February, both had belonged to the Communist Party during the early 1940s. Bentley explained that Remington's information from the War Production Board proved valuable for Russian intelligence.⁵²

During and following the spring 1950 HUAC sessions, a new wave of investigations began. Based on the new TVA evidence, in late April HUAC re-opened Remington's loyalty case, a grand jury in Washington, D.C. heard testimony on the matter, and another grand jury in New York also considered the case. The loyalty case ended quickly, as the review board found no connection between Bentley's espionage charges and Remington's alleged radicalism while with TVA. Likewise, after brief

Remington FBI file #121-6159-285.

⁵¹ Congress, House, *Hearings Regarding Communism-Part I*, 1785-88, 1791-94, 1804-806, 1813, 1817-18.

⁵² Jones, "Remington Case," 237, 257-59, 267; Congress, House, *Hearings Regarding Communism-Part I*, 1826-27, 1832-38, 1849-52, 1858-59, 1862.

proceedings the grand jury in Washington, D.C. issued no indictments against Remington. But another grand jury, in New York, took great interest in Bentley's charges, for unique reasons. In early 1950, John J. Brunini, the grand jury's foreman, had agreed to help Bentley write and publish her memoirs, tasks which yielded book royalties. A writer and executive director of the Catholic Poetry Society, Brunini had little preparation for grand jury duties. Despite the conflict of interest, on May 4, 1950, with encouragement from Senator Joseph McCarthy, Brunini announced that the New York grand jury would investigate Remington.⁵³

In the meantime, the FBI followed several of Remington's TVA associates named by McConnell and Bridgman. On April 28, FBI agents visited Remington's former roommate Henry Hart in Madison, Wisconsin. The freshly-minted Ph.D. told agents that while a TVA messenger he had never revealed his CP membership to Remington.⁵⁴ Further, Hart had no reason to believe that Remington had ever joined the small Knoxville group of communists. The next day, on April 29, Atlanta FBI agents spoke with dietician Mabel Mansfield about Remington. She remembered that Remington took great interest in improving working conditions through labor organization during the 1930s, but she had no recollection that he actually joined the Communist Party. On May 1, FBI agents interviewed Christine Benson, a former TVA employee and wife of TVA

⁵³ Jones, "Remington Case," 264-67; O'Reilly, *Hoover and the Un-Americans*, 155-56; L.L. Laughlin to A.H. Belmont, 3 May 1950, Remington FBI file #121-6159-344; D.M. Ladd to A.H. Belmont, 4 May 1950, Remington FBI file #121-6159-360; May, *Un-American Activities*, 155-57; John G. Brunini, "The Three 'Spy Grand Juries,'" *Catholic World* 176 (March 1953): 422; Fred Cook, *The FBI Nobody Knows* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), 334-35.

⁵⁴ Henry Hart successfully defended his dissertation on the Missouri River Basin in January 1950. See, Henry Hart, "The Missouri Basin" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1950).

personnel officer Forrest Benson, in her Knoxville home. Benson denied that she had belonged to the CP and had no reason to believe that Remington had joined. Two days later, FBI agents met with artist David Stone Martin in Roosevelt, New Jersey. Martin described Remington as an “intelligent, vehement, and impressionable young man,” with a great interest in labor unions. He remembered Remington’s involvement in raising funds for the Spanish Civil War and other “Left Wing moves of the day,” but believed him to have been a loyal American while with TVA.⁵⁵

The FBI continued to monitor the breakthrough HUAC witnesses. On May 1, FBI agents re-interviewed Howard Bridgman. He expanded his list of TVA CP members by adding Christine Benson and Harry Francis Alber. Bridgman also identified Howard Frazier and John Frantz as Remington’s associates, but claimed that both were confirmed socialists but not communists. Later that week, FBI agents delivered a discouraging report on Kenneth McConnell. A search of FBI files yielded a 1942 report in which an informant had described McConnell “as being a rather weak character, physically disabled internally, who drank to excess, was not very bright and seemed to have nothing to carry him except his zeal for the Communist Party.” Because of McConnell’s extensive arrest record and a reputation for excessive drinking, Bureau leaders questioned McConnell’s memory and his believability.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ FBI Summary Report, 27 August 1951, 493-94, 503-505; FBI Atlanta Report, 29 April 1950, Remington FBI file #121-6159-437; A.H. Belmont to D.M. Ladd, 3 January 1951, Remington FBI file #74-1379-[154?].

⁵⁶ FBI Boston to FBI Director, 3 May 1950, Remington FBI file #121-6159-347; FBI Director to Peyton Ford, 8 May 1950, Remington FBI file #121-6159-368.

Based on these and other interviews, in early May the FBI expanded its search for Remington's TVA associates. Declaring that the TVA part of its investigation was the weakest, the FBI identified, located, and interviewed 24 individuals to bolster its case against Remington. Those individuals, the FBI hoped, might help establish Remington's ties to the Knoxville CP and perhaps prove his membership. As part of this inquiry, on May 17 and 19 FBI agents interviewed Remington's ex-wife Ann Moos. Ann explained that just after they first met, Remington informed her that while working for TVA, Kit Buckles had recruited him into the CP. She also identified other CP members from his TVA years, including Henry Hart, Muriel Williams, and Mabel Mansfield.⁵⁷

Beginning in May 1950 the New York grand jury heard witnesses in the Remington matter. Howard Bridgman, Kenneth McConnell, Pat Todd, Horace Bryan, Francis Martin, and Josephus Remine appeared before the grand jury, but the appearance of Ann Moos on May 16 proved to be the most damaging for Remington. Although a reluctant witness, Moos admitted that her ex-husband had knowingly paid Elizabeth Bentley dues to maintain their hidden CP memberships. She explained that they hoped to support the Russian effort during World War II, but denied that her ex-husband had participated in espionage activities. Two days later, Elizabeth Bentley appeared before the grand jury to verify that Remington had been a conscious agent for the Russians. Remington appeared a week later before the grand jury. The prosecution confronted Remington with the charge that he had been affiliated with the CP beginning with TVA and far into his Navy career. Remington denied the accusation and testified that he had

⁵⁷ A.H. Belmont to D.H. Ladd, 11 May 1950, Remington FBI file #121-6159-132; FBI Washington Report, 25 May 1950, Remington FBI file #741379-26.

never been a member of the Communist Party. Over the course of five days, Remington battled other questions about his personal life, the settled libel suit, past loyalty investigations, and espionage charges.⁵⁸

After hearing a few more witnesses, in early June the New York grand jury closed its proceedings. Based largely on the testimony of Ann Moos, Howard Bridgman, and Kenneth McConnell on June 8, 1950, the grand jury indicted Remington on the charge of perjury. Instead of revisiting Elizabeth Bentley's espionage charges against Remington, the government merely hoped to demonstrate that Remington had lied under oath about his CP membership. Earlier in the year, the government had convicted Alger Hiss of perjury and hoped to do the same with Remington. The charge of perjury, which offered limited jail time and public humiliation, became an effective government threat against those thought to have been communists. If guilty, Remington could serve a maximum of five years in prison and pay a \$5,000 fine.⁵⁹

For the rest of 1950, the Remington case expanded. Following the indictment Remington resigned from his position with the Department of Commerce, posted bail, and with the help of Joseph Rauh prepared for his trial before the New York federal court, scheduled to begin just before Christmas. During this period the FBI gathered new information on Remington's TVA tenure and unearthed a number of important untapped witnesses. Before the grand jury indictment, only Bridgman and McConnell had come

⁵⁸ Jones, "Remington Case," 268-70, 275-77; May, *Un-American Activities*, 161, 164-67, 172-73; Cook, *FBI Nobody Knows*, 335-36; "Questions Asked Remington Before Grand Jury," 24 August 1950, 1-12, Rauh Papers Accession, LC.

⁵⁹ Jones, "Remington Case," 289-90; May, *Un-American Activities*, 180; Cook, "The Remington Tragedy," 493.

forward to confirm Remington's CP membership while with TVA, but after the spring of 1950 several of his TVA associates changed their stories and began to talk.⁶⁰

Burton Zien became the first of Remington's associates to provide new information on TVA's 1930 CP cell. In late-April 1950, a Loyalty Review Board decided to re-open Zien's loyalty case, simply because after review that body found the previous testimony of Roxie Paris to be credible. There is no available evidence to suggest that the Remington case triggered Zien's new loyalty investigation, but the connection is likely. Faced with another investigation and possible public testimony on TVA communists, on May 22 Zien informed his supervisor at the National Labor Relations Board that he had once belonged to the Communist Party. Two days later, Zien voluntarily resigned from his position, thus ending his loyalty investigation, and told his former employer that he intended to make a full disclosure to the FBI. Having denied CP membership under oath during his official loyalty investigation a year prior, Zien's admission made him a target for a perjury charge. But with his knowledge of TVA's CP activities, Zien hoped to bargain for clemency with his new information.⁶¹

Zien's admission supplied government investigators with a more detailed picture of 1930s communists in Knoxville. For ten days, Knoxville FBI agents interviewed Zien about a variety of topics. As a result of these lengthy sessions, on June 9, just one day after Remington's grand jury indictment for perjury, Zien signed a 43-page official

⁶⁰ May, *Un-American Activities*, 181-84, 188-91.

⁶¹ Grover C. Davis, "Post-Audit Case for Burton J. Zien," 27 April 1950, folder 1, box 2097, Zien Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park; FBI Knoxville to FBI Director, 10 May 1950, Zien FBI file #121-9839-46; C.E. Hennrich to A.H. Belmont, 29 May 1950, Zien FBI file #121-9839-48; "Memorandum on Conversation with Burton J. Zien," 16 October 1950, attached to [Name Redacted] to J. Edgar Hoover, [14?] November 1950, Remington FBI file #74-1379-531.

statement. Zien explained that his “membership in the Communist Party at Knoxville was of relatively short duration, running from about July 1937 to about March 1939.” His decided to join the CP to help find “an answer to the social problems which caused the depression,” and promote the unionization of southern employees. But at the time of his interview, Zien regarded his past CP membership as “a very serious mistake in judgment.” Ten years later, Zien hoped to deal with his past by voicing his information.⁶²

Zien’s involvement with TVA’s white-collar union led him to associations with, among others, Pat Todd, Elizabeth Todd, Kit Buckles, Howard Bridgman, Howard Frazier, Mabel Abercrombie, Muriel Williams, Henry Hart, Buck Borah, Christine Benson, David Stone Martin, and Remington. After work, Zien and his compatriots held “study groups” at houses and apartments in Knoxville to discuss and read pamphlets on Marxism, the Spanish Civil War, and national politics. But Zien reminded agents that their group never contemplated the overthrow of the government or acted as “an arm of a foreign country.” Zien claimed that, in the summer of 1937, Pat Todd, Zien’s first Knoxville roommate, and Buck Borah recruited him into the CP. Thereafter, Zien worked closely with Todd, Remington, and Borah to organize textile workers. Zien confirmed that the Knoxville CP branch had nearly twenty members. However, although Zien provided the FBI with a refreshed list of possible informants, he never actually confirmed that Remington had belonged to the CP.⁶³

⁶² Burton Zien, “Statement to the FBI,” 2 June 1950, quotes 2, folder: Burton Zien, box 52, HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA.

⁶³ Ibid., 5, 8-13, 37-41.

Following Zien's statement, other former TVA associates cooperated. In May, FBI agents interviewed Christine Benson, who denied all charges of CP membership against herself and Remington. But in late June, she changed her story and informed the FBI that she and Remington were both CP members. It is likely that she made this statement to draw attention away from her husband, Forrest Benson, who at the time faced a TVA loyalty board and questions of his alleged radical behavior. But in fact her cooperation triggered a more detailed loyalty investigation of her husband by the FBI the next month.⁶⁴ Benson's friend Muriel Williams also came forward to change her story. After being hounded by FBI agents, in August Williams declared that she had the impression that Remington had belonged to the CP, although she offered no specific evidence or details to prove his membership. Williams named other members of the TVA group, but stated that neither Christine Benson nor Burton Zien had joined the CP.⁶⁵ Later that month Williams visited Henry Hart in Madison, Wisconsin to reminisce and discuss the Remington matter. With the HUAC testimony in hand (Joseph Rauh had sent Hart a copy), Williams convinced Hart that Bridgman's testimony was fairly accurate. After the visit, Hart became more helpful to the FBI. In September, he told agents more about the role of Kit Buckles in the TVA CP group. A few weeks later Hart also changed

⁶⁴ A.H. Belmont to D.H. Ladd, 3 January 1951, Remington FBI file #73-1379-[1537?]; FBI Summary Report, 27 August 1951, 432-36; [Name redacted] to Glenn A. Dooley, 25 July 1950, Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443-[?].

⁶⁵ FBI Summary Report, 27 August 1951, 440-41, 472-74; Selma R. Williams, *Red-Listed: Haunted by the Washington Witch Hunt* (Reading, MA.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1993), 116-17.

his story about Remington and informed FBI agents that “Remington probably was a member of the Communist Party . . . in 1937.”⁶⁶

Other former TVA associates had little to say about Remington. In May 1950, St. Louis FBI agents already were monitoring Kit Buckles for her involvement in radical political and civil rights groups, and later that month agents interviewed her about Remington. During the brief interview on May 21, Buckles did not even confirm her employment with TVA, saying that “now you’re coming to the part I don’t want to talk about.” She acknowledged that she knew Remington from reading the papers but offered the FBI no other information on her TVA experience.⁶⁷ Then, in early June, FBI agents interviewed Howard Frazier in Los Angeles. Frazier recalled attending AFGE meetings with Remington and possibly sharing a hike in the Smoky Mountains during 1937, but he had no reason to question Remington’s loyalty. The following month, FBI agents re-interviewed Mabel Mansfield about CP accusations made by Howard Bridgman and Kenneth McConnell. She explained that her work in Knoxville for labor reform should not be confused with promoting communism, and emphatically denied ever joining the CP. As for Remington, Mansfield stated that although they participated in the same causes, she did not know if he had been a card-carrying member. Working closely with their lawyer, Elizabeth and Pat Todd both continued to deny any knowledge of

⁶⁶ Joseph Rauh to Henry Hart, 17 July 1950, Henry Hart to Joseph Rauh, 20 September 1950, Rauh Papers Accession, LC; SAC Milwaukee to FBI Director, 6 October 1950, Remington FBI file #79-1379-302; FBI Summary Report, 27 August 1951, quote 531, 529-36; Stillman Williams to Henry and Virginia [Hart], 20 August 1950, folder 5, box 1 Mather Papers, UT Special Collections.

⁶⁷ FBI St. Louis to FBI Washington, 8 May 1950, Buckles FBI file #100-353259-2; FBI New York to FBI Director, 18 May 1950, Remington FBI file #121-6159-409; FBI Summary Report, 27 August 1951, quote 411.

Remington's radical TVA years, while David Stone Martin only talked to Remington's legal team. But, even the less cooperative witnesses remained current on the Remington investigation. John Frantz, who escaped significant FBI attention, kept in touch with Henry Hart. Frantz, like many of Remington's TVA associates, also spoke with Joseph Rauh that fall.⁶⁸

By the fall of 1950, the FBI had amassed an incredible amount of information on the 1930s TVA. A July report on the topic numbered over one-hundred pages, complete with interviews, copies of TVA documents, and evidence of a CP cell existing in Knoxville during 1936 and 1937. To prepare their star witnesses for Remington's trial, that fall FBI agents escorted Kenneth McConnell and Howard Bridgman back to Knoxville for clarifications. On August 10, FBI agents drove McConnell to Tyson Park, where McConnell claimed to have conducted a CP meeting with Remington in attendance. While in Knoxville, McConnell identified 1412 Forest Avenue as the house where he and his ex-wife Elizabeth had resided and held CP meetings. McConnell also took agents to a residence on Highland Avenue, where he had first meet Remington in June 1937. A month later, on September 14, FBI agents brought Howard Bridgman to Knoxville. Bridgman identified one of his residences on White Avenue and also Elizabeth Todd's apartment on Forest Avenue, but had difficulty locating sites of other

⁶⁸ In the fall of 1950 Rauh interviewed John Frantz, Howard Frazier, Muriel Williams, Burton Zien, and Henry Hart. FBI Los Angeles Report, 8 June 1950, Remington FBI file #73-1379-23; FBI Summary Report, 27 August 1951, 475, 478, 481; Henry Hart to John Frantz, 19 June 1950, Rauh Papers Accession, LC.

CP meetings. Despite Bridgman's poor memory, the FBI considered him an important witness.⁶⁹

At the same time, TVA took careful note of the growing charges of communists within its past ranks. Throughout 1950, TVA officials supplied HUAC and FBI investigators, as well as Joseph Rauh, with personnel files, union records, and photographs of suspected radicals. As these investigations grew, TVA administrators compiled a list of former employees who were most frequently named as CP members. In early November, Harry Case, TVA's personnel director, sent TVA's Washington, D.C. office a list of fifteen suspected TVA communists with employment data. The list included Mabel Abercrombie, Christine Benson, Buck Borah, Howard Bridgman, John Frantz, Henry Hart, William Remington, Elizabeth Todd, Pat Todd, Muriel Williams, Burton Zien, and four other employees. Case also included a list of nine generalizations about those in question. By comparing the employment records of the fifteen, all had some college education when employed, all held low-level positions either in clerical or custodial services, all were overqualified for their positions, none ever advanced to a position of major responsibility, none were still employed by TVA, their average age at the time of employment fell just under 22, all were in high school or college during the height of the depression, none of their records indicated possible disloyalty, and finally all were unusually good students with a variety of social and economic interests. Four other radicals not identified by TVA, David Stone Martin, Howard Frazier, Forest

⁶⁹ FBI Knoxville Report, 18 July 1950, Remington FBI file #74-1379-48; FBI Summary Report, 27 August 1951, 427-29; FBI Charlotte Report, 4 October 1950, Remington FBI file #74-1379-284; FBI Knoxville Report, 26 September 1950, Remington FBI file #74-1379-286; May, *Un-American Activities*, 190-91.

Benson, and Kit Buckles (the list included her sister Eleanor instead) also conformed to most of these criteria.⁷⁰

In December 1950, a New York Federal district court began proceedings in the Remington perjury case. Unlike the loyalty and espionage investigations, Remington's pre-World War II activities, especially his Dartmouth and TVA years, became a crucial part of determining his CP sympathies. Ann Moos, proved to be the government's key witness, corroborating Bentley's espionage charges and confirming that her former husband had admitted joining the CP during the late 1930s.

Remington's TVA period brought several former associates to the stand. The first, Christine Benson, appeared on January 2, 1951. The Knoxville homemaker and wife of Forrest Benson testified that she had joined the CP in October 1936 and left two years later. Benson described CP meetings at Elizabeth McConnell's apartment and remembered that Remington had attended some of the meetings. Benson and Remington had belonged to a small group of socially minded TVA employees interested in labor organizing and black civil rights. She testified that from that group, the most devoted individuals had joined the Communist Party and created a TVA unit. However, Benson did not confirm that Remington had joined the CP, only that he had attended meetings. Muriel Williams next appeared before the court. A later addition to the TVA CP unit, Williams testified that she joined in June 1937 and attended a number of meetings at Elizabeth McConnell's apartment. Williams explained that Remington's activities and

⁷⁰ Harry L. Case to Marguerite Owen, 2 November 1950, folder: Civil Obligations, Duties, Function, Rights, 1949-1950, box 270, General Manager's Files TVA RG 142, NARA Southeast.

associations led her to believe that he had been a CP member but, similar to Benson's testimony, she did not confirm his membership.⁷¹

The government next called Kenneth McConnell to establish Remington's TVA-CP connection. McConnell, a poultry farmer responsible for 15,000 chickens, demanded that the FBI furnish him with a qualified chicken-sitter during his testimony. Although the FBI did not supply his request, McConnell traveled to New York to describe his work as CP functionary in Knoxville.⁷² He confirmed meeting Remington on several occasions in 1937, including a CP meeting in Tyson Park and a Workers Alliance meeting in Mascot, Tennessee. Other interactions included a conversation where McConnell reprimanded Remington for his shabby appearance by saying that "it was not necessary to look like a tramp to be a Communist." McConnell also claimed that during the summer of 1937 he had advised Remington to return to Dartmouth because of the need for educated CP leadership. But under cross-examination McConnell admitted that he never saw Remington pay dues, never saw his membership card, and never remembered Remington attending CP meetings at his Forest Avenue address. With fuzzy

⁷¹ Cook, "The Remington Tragedy," 493-94; Jones, "Remington Case," 319-23; May, *Un-American Activities*, 217-19; "Christine Benson Testimony," 462-65, 468, 478, 491, 493, 496, "Muriel Speare Williams Testimony," 570-74, all in *United States vs. William Walter Remington*, Cr. 132-344, Transcripts of Record, 1950-1953, Records of the United States Courts of Appeals, Record Group 276, National Archives and Records Administration—Northeast Region (New York City) [hereinafter *Remington Trial*, RG 276, NARA Northeast].

⁷² After his testimony, McConnell demanded that the FBI reimburse him for the loss of 150 chickens that had perished while he testified in New York. Roy Cohn, *McCarthy* (New York: The New American Library, 1968), 37.

recollections and little proof behind the charges, McConnell named other TVA employees who, just like Remington, exhibited all of the signs of being CP members.⁷³

Tufts University economics professor Howard Bridgman followed McConnell on the stand to elaborate on the TVA CP unit. Bridgman testified that he had joined the CP in late 1936 and had attended several TVA branch meetings at the home of Elizabeth McConnell the following year. Other attendees at these gatherings, Bridgman recalled, included Pat Todd, Henry Hart, and William Remington. Bridgman remembered that “Remington took an active and vigorous part in these meetings.” But the brief overlap of time between Remington’s departure (in late July or early August 1937) and the McConnells’ arrival (in mid-June 1937) undermined Bridgman’s and McConnell’s testimony on the number and details of CP meetings attended by Remington. Bridgman explained that the young and socially conscious TVA employees had created so many social groups and clubs that he attended a meeting nearly every night. With so many engagements to remember, Bridgman had difficulty determining which meetings were specifically CP gatherings.⁷⁴

Other Knoxville witnesses before the court further confused Remington’s brief TVA service. Although he arrived after Remington had left Knoxville, Tennessee CP organizer Paul Crouch confirmed that he had sent radical literature to post office box #1692. But Crouch explained that the TVA members of the CP incorrectly believed that the Party supported the reforms of TVA, Roosevelt, and the New Deal. Another CP

⁷³ “Kenneth McConnell Testimony,” quote 592, 580, 584-89, 592, 676, 684, Remington Trial, RG 276, NARA Northeast.

⁷⁴ “Howard Bridgman Testimony,” quote 694, 687, 689, 692-94, 704-705, 712-13, 743-45, 948-50, Remington Trial, RG 276, NARA Northeast.

organizer, Horace Bryan from Arkansas, testified that he only knew Remington as “a nice boy” who helped with organizing textile worker unions and had sold him a motorcycle. Bryan offered the court no reason to suspect that Remington harbored CP sympathies. Following Bryan’s testimony, freelance artist David Stone Martin recalled his TVA tenure. Martin remembered Remington as a TVA messenger and fellow member of the agency’s white-collar union. He confirmed that his brother Francis Martin had belonged to the CP and held meetings, but he did not believe that Remington had attended those gatherings or belonged to the CP. But when faced with his own 1943 loyalty investigation testimony where he confirmed that Remington was a known CP member who had “approached everyone” about joining, Martin explained that he had “jumped to conclusions.” Former TVA personnel relations officer Rudolph Bertram explained to the court that in the spring of 1937 he had a heated discussion with Remington about labor, communism, and the best method to provide national relief. During the one-hour encounter Remington allegedly asked Bertram to join the CP, an offer which he adamantly declined. However, Bertram testified that he only had that one conversation with Remington about communism, and knew nothing about other communists or CP activities within TVA.⁷⁵

Besides denying the charges set forth by his ex-wife and Bentley, Remington spent much of his time before the district court explaining his TVA experience. He discussed his various roommates, TVA friends, participation in union events, square

⁷⁵ “Paul Crouch Testimony,” 850, 914, “Horace Bryan Testimony,” quote 1928, 1929, 1940-41, 1944-45, 1979-80, “David Stone Martin Testimony,” 2212-14, 2217-20, 2229-39, 2244-46, “Rudolph Bertram Testimony,” 3413, 3415-17, 3421-24, 3427, 3451-53, all in Remington Trial, RG 276, NARA Northeast; *New York Times*, 20 January 1951; Jones, “Remington Case,” 345; May, *Un-American Activities*, 245-46.

dances, and work as a messenger. Remington stated that he had never met Elizabeth McConnell while in Knoxville and that he had met Kenneth McConnell only once before leaving Knoxville. Following his work as a TVA messenger, Remington explained, he did a great deal to promote the Workers Alliance, but at the time had no idea that it might have been a pro-CP organization. Further, he had no reason to believe that his TVA associates were CP members. Only in 1939, during a trip through Knoxville, did Remington learn that some of his former TVA co-workers had belonged to the Communist Party. Remington did admit that because he and his TVA associates were largely “New Dealish” and interested in labor organizing, many Knoxvilleans called their group “damyankees, reds and communists.” But, as before, Remington denied that he ever joined the CP while in Knoxville.⁷⁶

After hearing from thirty-seven witnesses, on February 7, 1951 the New York federal district court closed the case. The jury promptly delivered a guilty verdict. The jurors unanimously agreed that that Remington had committed perjury by denying his membership in the Communist Party before a federal grand jury. Government prosecutors had successfully argued that during Remington’s brief TVA years he had not only associated with known communists but had indeed joined the CP. The next day, the court sentenced Remington to five years in prison and fined him \$5,000. Rauh immediately followed with bail and an appeal motion for the young economist. Stunned

⁷⁶ Cook, “The Remington Tragedy,” 497, “William Remington Testimony,” quote 2521, 2432-37, 2455-56, 2460-61, 2471, 2473, 2475, 2489-92, 2511-12, Remington Trial, RG 276, NARA Northeast.

by the verdict, Remington told reporters that “he had never joined the Communist Party,” and had not lied to the grand jury.⁷⁷

The United States Court of Appeals for the second district started proceedings in the Remington case in June 1951 and completed its work two months later. Remington’s legal team argued that the conviction should be reversed because the district court judge had never instructed the jury what constituted Communist Party membership. As to the Knoxville period, the defense maintained that no clear evidence had been presented to prove that Remington had joined the CP. Further, Rauh’s team asserted that the TVA witnesses consistently contradicted one another and did not establish Remington’s CP membership. The prosecution argued that Remington’s activities and associations while in Knoxville verified his CP membership. Building on this evidence, the government asserted that Remington had committed perjury by denying CP membership before a grand jury. On August 22, the court of appeals reversed the district court’s decision, saying that the original jury had “vague and indefinite” information related to finding proof of guilt.⁷⁸

Although free of the district court’s sentence, Remington remained a target of government lawyers and investigators. Instead of quashing the indictment against him, the court of appeals sent the case back to the district court. Two months later, on October 25, 1951, a New York federal grand jury indicted Remington on five counts of perjury.

⁷⁷ May, *Un-American Activities*, 261-65; quote *New York Times*, 8 February 1951.

⁷⁸ May, *Un-American Activities*, 269-71; *New York Times*, 16 June, 23 August 1951; “United States of America against William Remington, Brief for the Appellant,” 33-49, “United States of America against William Remington, Brief for the United States,” Remington Trial, RG 276, NARA Northeast; Cook, “The Remington Tragedy,” 497-98.

The new indictment accused Remington of denying that he passed secret information to Elizabeth Bentley, of denying that he attended CP meetings in Knoxville, of denying that he paid communist dues, of denying that he had ever asked anyone to join the CP, and of denying that he knew about the Young Communist League at Dartmouth. The government spent much of 1952 preparing for another trial. The FBI secured many of the same witnesses, including Bentley, Ann Moos, Bridgman, and McConnell for the prosecution. Rauh's legal team also spoke with many of the same witnesses in preparing Remington's defense.⁷⁹

Remington's second trial before the New York district court began on January 13, 1953. Ann Moos and Bentley repeated nearly the same stories they had related during the first trial. On the stand, Remington shared more about his pre-World War II philosophies on communism and his TVA experience. Although he continued to deny that he had joined the CP, Remington admitted telling his ex-wife that while in Knoxville many had called him a communist. Remington proved to be his own worst enemy, at one point in the trial calling himself a "philosophical communist." He explained that a small group of messengers frequently discussed political philosophies, and at the time he believed in the nationalization of heavy industries such as mining, steel production, and the railroads. But at these meetings he claimed that he did not espouse communist or Marxist principles as solutions to the nation's problems. Remington explained that he had kept an open mind about communism, admitting that even had he known that some

⁷⁹ May, *Un-American Activities*, 273-74, 278-83; Cook, "The Remington Tragedy," 497.

of his close friends were CP members, he still would have associated with them “right up until the time of the cold war.”⁸⁰

TVA witnesses from the previous trials further elaborated on their recollections of the then-19-year-old Dartmouth student. Howard Bridgman charged that Remington had attended a few CP meetings at Elizabeth McConnell’s Knoxville apartment during the spring of 1937, but remained unsure on the exact number and dates. Bridgman also asserted that Remington took an active role at these meetings on issues such as switching the TVA union over to CIO and building up the CP in Knoxville. Christine Benson testified that she attended CP meetings with Remington during the late spring of 1937. But during cross-examination, Benson admitted that non-CP members often attended these open meetings, making it difficult to know who actually belonged to the Communist Party. Based on his attendance at these open meetings, Benson believed that Remington probably had been a CP member. Kenneth McConnell confirmed that Remington had attended a CP meeting in Tyson Park and later had helped him recruit new members during a trip to Mascot, Tennessee. But the defense weakened McConnell’s credibility by asking about his numerous arrests and convictions for drinking “too much whiskey sometimes” and then driving. Rudolph Bertram also told

⁸⁰ May, *Un-American Activities*, 285; “William Remington Testimony,” quote 674, 538-39, 671-73, 712-13, United States vs. William Walter Remington, Cr. 138-289, Stenographers Minutes, 1953, 328-32, Records of the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, Record Group 21, NARA Northeast [hereinafter Remington Trial, RG 21, NARA Northeast]; *New York Times*, 20 January 1953.

the court that Remington had asked him to join the CP, but under cross-examination he could not confirm that Remington had identified himself as an actual CP member.⁸¹

After only ten days of proceedings, on January 23, 1953 the jury found Remington guilty of lying about passing secret documents to Elizabeth Bentley and lying about his knowledge of the Young Communist League at Dartmouth. The jury split on whether Remington had attended CP meetings in Knoxville and paid CP dues to Bentley, but acquitted him on the charge that he invited others to join the CP. A few weeks later, just as Remington learned that his second wife and former secretary Jane Shepherd was expecting a baby, the district court sentenced him to three years in prison. While Rauh prepared a second appeal, Remington decided to begin his sentence. On April 15, 1953, Remington surrendered himself to federal authorities and awaited his second appeal at the federal penitentiary in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, the same address as that of alleged communist spy and convicted perjurer Alger Hiss.⁸²

By early 1954, Remington had lost all hope of vindication. Joseph Rauh hoped to reverse the verdict from the second trial on the basis that the original indictment came from a grand jury foreman with a vested financial interest in Remington's accuser Elizabeth Bentley, but he was unsuccessful. In November 1953, the circuit court of appeals again considered the case, this time ruling 2-1 to uphold Remington's conviction. The court's prevailing opinion reported that Remington had "been entrapped not by

⁸¹ "Howard Bridgman Testimony," 59-63, 79-80, 86-87, "Christine Benson Testimony," 93-98, "Kenneth McConnell," quote 140, 131-32, 135-36, 141-44, "Rudolph Bertram Testimony," 331, 334 all in Remington Trial, RG 21, NARA Northeast.

⁸² Cook, "The Remington Tragedy," 498; Jones, "Remington Case," 393-94; Cook, *FBI Nobody Knows*, 345.

devious means and methods employed by the government, but by his own acts.” The dissenting opinion, however, believed that the Remington prosecution was invalid due to the fact that he had indeed been entrapped by the government. Rauh continued to battle for his imprisoned client and petitioned the Supreme Court to review the appeals court’s decision. But on February 9, 1954, the Supreme Court refused to hear the case, thus ending all legal options for William Remington.⁸³

Although never convicted of being a communist, Remington paid the ultimate price for the label. During the spring of 1954, Remington applied for parole, but in June the parole board, appalled by the crime of espionage (of which he had never been convicted), denied the request. Remington planned to apply for parole the following spring, but with good behavior he expected to complete his sentence in August 1955. However, on the morning of November 22, 1954, three fellow convicts assaulted Remington with a brick wrapped in a sock. With a fractured skull Remington underwent an emergency operation, but never regained consciousness. Remington, who was half-way through his sentence, died two days later at age 37. A prison warden stated that it was “not a personal attack against Bill” but just a bunch of “hoodlums worked up by . . . the publicity about Communists.” Although one of the three attackers later admitted that he hated communists enough to kill them, the FBI issued a final report connecting the attack with robbery and dismissed the anti-communist motive. A week after Remington’s murder, the Senate condemned Senator Joseph McCarthy.⁸⁴

⁸³ Jones, “Remington Case,” 398, 401; Cook, “The Remington Tragedy,” quote 498-99; May, *Un-American Activities*, 301-304.

⁸⁴ May, *Un-American Activities*, quote 308, 307-15; *New York Times*, 25 November 1953, 28 November 1954; Cook, “The Remington Tragedy,” 499.

Throughout the Remington trials, 1951-1954, members of the “Knoxville Fifteen” participated in different ways. Remington’s first Knoxville roommate Henry Hart provided the FBI with numerous statements and interviews during this period, but never took the witness stand. Instead, Hart focused on his studies and found success in academia. While revising his dissertation for publication as a book, he secured a tenure-track teaching position in the political science department at his alma mater, the University of Wisconsin, Madison.⁸⁵

Remington’s early Knoxville acquaintance Mabel Mansfield played a very minor role in his investigations. In 1950, Mansfield, then a dietitian, testified before a HUAC subcommittee in Atlanta about her TVA experiences. But true to her earlier form, when told that a number of people had implicated her as a communist, Mansfield denied any knowledge of CP activities and members in Knoxville. Mansfield did speak with FBI agents during the early 1950s, but provided little information for the Remington case. The transcripts of her interviews revealed either confusion or clever wording. As a later example, during a 2003 interview with the author, when asked about her knowledge of the CP in Knoxville, Mansfield replied: “Oh you mean the square dancing?”⁸⁶

One of Mansfield’s former Knoxville roommates, Muriel Williams, found the early 1950s a personally hectic period. In the summer of 1950, Williams and her husband moved back to the United States from Geneva, Switzerland and settled in Winchester, Massachusetts. Just after her return, FBI agents began questioning Williams

⁸⁵ Author’s interview with Henry Hart, 27 April 2002 [transcript], 1.

⁸⁶ “Mabel Mansfield Testimony,” 3-4, 6, 17-19, folder: Mabel Mansfield, box 11, HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA; author’s interview with Mansfield, 23 August 2003.

about her knowledge of Remington, which resulted in numerous interviews and an appearance before the district court. At the same time Williams, an active member of the League of Women Voters, chaired a committee planning a local United Nations Day. When Williams chose a speaker from then-neutral India to deliver the featured lecture, several veterans' groups charged that the event was a "Communist plot." Despite the negative publicity about her past CP membership, she remained active in her community and also secured a part-time secretarial position in the Department of Linguistics at Harvard University.⁸⁷

Another Bostonian and the key witness against Remington, Howard Bridgman settled back into academic life. While teaching economics at Tufts University, in 1953 he defended his dissertation at the Harvard Business School. Bridgman's study looked at employee absenteeism at seven companies in the Boston area immediately following World War II. To complete the research, Bridgman reviewed company personnel records, which included names and other personal information. But unlike his participation in Remington's trials, he did not name any names in the dissertation. Bridgman's study of the interaction between management and employees over the issue of absenteeism revealed his concern for labor reform—an area of interest that solidified during Bridgman's TVA tenure nearly twenty years before.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Williams, "Muriel W. Mather Interview," March 1981, [transcript] 4, Lois Brown to Selma Williams, 14 May 1984, folder 6, box 1, all in Mather Papers, UT Special Collections; Williams, *Red-Listed*, 121-23; *Boston Post*, 2 October 1954.

⁸⁸ Howard Allen Bridgman, "Some Patterns in Absenteeism" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1953), 1-5.

The work of labor also continued to fascinate Bridgman's former TVA colleague Howard Frazier. During this period Frazier worked on the West Coast for the United States Department of Labor. Frazier faced loyalty boards in 1950 and again in 1954, but emerged with favorable ratings. Although not a witness at the Remington trials, Frazier did talk with FBI agents and Joseph Rauh about his recollections. During the interview with Rauh, Frazier corroborated that he had been a member of the Socialist Party, not the Communist Party, but had no reason to believe that Remington had joined either group.⁸⁹

Another federal employee, John Frantz, had experiences similar to those of Frazier during this period. The Executive Assistant at the Housing and Home Finance Agency, who his fellow employees called an "extremely brilliant man," Frantz endured two additional loyalty investigations during the early 1950s. During the height of the Remington trials, a loyalty review board charged that Frantz had joined the CP while in Knoxville and asked the FBI to investigate. While the investigations were taking place, Frantz did provide some information to Joseph Rauh. Frantz told Rauh that CP members of the 1930s had the exact same views as those working on labor and civil rights, and had been misunderstood since the end of World War II. When it came to questions about which of his associates had been communists, Frantz had difficulty remembering details. Always a clever witness, when asked if Mabel Abercrombie had been a communist, Frantz offered nothing definite, only saying that "she certainly was mighty close to it . . . [because] she was sleeping with a couple of them." In 1954, Frantz continued working

⁸⁹ FBI Washington Report, 3 March 1965, Frazier FBI file #121-10515-28; Edgar Hoover to Special Assistant to the President, 5 August 1965, Frazier FBI file #161-3997-30; ["Frazier's Statement on Remington,"] ca. July 1950, in FBI Boston Report, 7 July 1950, Frazier FBI file #121-10515-19; Joseph Rauh, "Reports of Interviews with Howard Frazier," ca. 1950, 1-8, Rauh Papers Accession, LC.

for the House and Home Finance Agency in Washington, D.C while he waited for the loyalty board's decision.⁹⁰

Kit Buckles, another former Washington, D.C. resident and the alleged CP recruiter for William Remington, reinvented herself in the early 1950s. In the summer of 1950 she suddenly resigned her position as Executive Secretary of the St. Louis Chapter of the Progressive Citizens of America and married artist Ted Egri. While the two honeymooned in Los Angeles, FBI agents investigating Remington located her and served her with a subpoena. On July 19, 1950, she appeared before a Los Angeles federal grand jury, but refused to answer any questions on her membership or connection to the CP on the grounds of self-incrimination. She admitted knowing Remington while with TVA, but offered investigators little else. Eager to put her radical past behind her, Buckles and her new husband moved to Taos, New Mexico.⁹¹

Kit Egri's college friends Forrest and Christine Benson also found the early 1950s difficult. The only remaining TVA employee of the original group of fifteen, in 1950 Forrest Benson faced a loyalty examination. With over fifteen years of service, Benson's case appeared to be a matter of simple procedure. But in June, his wife Christine Benson volunteered statements on her past CP membership to the FBI. As a result, the FBI re-interviewed Christine Benson and the government called her as a witness at two of Remington's trials. Despite her cooperation, the FBI expanded its search for information

⁹⁰ FBI Washington Report, 23 December 1954, Frantz FBI file #121-7423-47; Catherine Grant to H.C. Bolton, 25 May 1962, all in folder 1, box 627, Frantz Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park; Joseph Rauh, "Memorandum of Conversation with John Frantz, 31 October 1951, quote 2, Rauh Papers Accession, LC.

⁹¹ FBI St. Louis Report, 26 October 1950, Buckles FBI file #100-353259-17; SAC St. Louis to FBI Director, 22 September 1950, Buckles FBI file #100-353259-13.

on her husband. Although the FBI's final report described his past radical associations, in November 1951 TVA's loyalty board cleared Benson for continued federal service. Three years later, the FBI launched another loyalty investigation, but again Benson emerged as a loyal citizen and continued as a TVA personnel officer. Despite the publicity, the Bensons maintained close ties to the Knoxville community.⁹²

Burton Zien, who began the decade in Knoxville, continued to struggle with his past. Following his resignation from the National Labor Relations Board in May 1950 and subsequent statements to the FBI about his 1930s CP membership, Zien left Tennessee. Ten years earlier, Zien's father had offered him the chance to take over the family plumbing business, but Zien had chosen labor relations instead. But in 1950, Zien returned to Milwaukee to work for the Zien Plumbing and Heating Company, hoping to escape the communist label. Fearful of having his own perjury trial, Zien maintained a friendly rapport with government investigators. Zien also believed that his past labor work with Atomic Energy Commission contractors at Oak Ridge would result in other charges against him. In the fall of 1950, Joseph Rauh met with Zien, who quickly explained that nothing he said would be favorable to Remington. Zien told Rauh, "I don't feel very noble about what I have done, but I am not going to be a martyr for anybody. I have got to think about myself and my family. I want to blot this whole thing out of my mind." Zien did not testify at any of the Remington trials, most likely because

⁹² FBI Knoxville Report, 9 June 1950, Christine Eversole Benson FBI file #100-369556-2; SAC WFO to FBI Director, 10 July 1951, Christine Eversole Benson FBI file #100-369556-16; FBI Knoxville to FBI Director, 2 October 1950, James M. McInerney to FBI Director, 18 September 1950, all in Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443-7; Hiram Bingham to J. Edgar Hoover, 27 November 1951, Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443-44; Civil Service Commission to FBI Director, 25 June 1954, Forrest Benson FBI file #121-24443-45.

he could not (or would not) confirm Remington's CP membership. By 1954 Zien's role as a cooperative government informant appeared to have protected him from possible incrimination.⁹³

Unlike Zien, freelance artist David Stone Martin, who testified in Remington's perjury trial, managed to distance himself from the investigations. He spent most of the early 1950s in Los Angeles designing album covers for Norman Granz's Clef record label. Using distinctive heavy black-ink lines, Martin designed album covers for jazz music legends, including Stan Getz, Count Basie, Billie Holiday, John Coltrane, Dizzy Gillespie, and Duke Ellington. Martin also created illustrated titles for television shows, including CBS's 1954 production of "Wuthering Heights." During this period, Martin received awards from the Art Directors Clubs of New York, Boston, and Detroit. Despite his past testimony and alleged CP membership, during the early 1950s Martin's professional career flourished.⁹⁴

The Remington investigations brought significant career changes for Pat and Elizabeth Todd. After refusing to assist the government during Remington's 1950 HUAC hearings, the Todds returned to their New York lives. As a result of not answering questions, Elizabeth lost her job at CBS radio and returned to being a housewife. Pat Todd also lost his job as an electrician after the HUAC hearings, but found temporary work at the Hauck Manufacturing Company and the Corbett Tingher

⁹³ Joseph Rauh, "Memorandum on Conversation with Burton J. Zien," 16 October 1950, quote 2, 1-3, Rauh Papers Accession, LC; "Memorandum for Mr. Tolson, RE: Burton Jack Zien," ca. 1953, FBI file #100-10189-[34?].

⁹⁴ *New York Times*, 9 March 1992; Daver, *David Stone Martin*, 12; "David Stone Martin" PR Release, ca. 1970s, David Stone Martin Papers, 1939-1991, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. [hereinafter Martin Papers, AAA].

Company. In 1952 he secured a position as a designer of mechanical and electrical equipment at the Russell and Stoll Company. The Todds discovered that embracing the Fifth Amendment during the height of McCarthyism and HUAC brought significant—and dire—consequences.⁹⁵

The late 1940s and early 1950s were a particularly difficult time for former New Dealers, intellectuals, and supporters of radical political ideologies. With the heyday of American communism long since past, Cold Warriors and Red hunters emerged to locate past subversives. Anti-communist leaders Senator Joseph McCarthy and FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover used government resources, legal mechanisms, and public support to target numerous groups and individuals suspected of radical tendencies. As HUAC, the FBI, and McCarthy searched for subversives in an almost competitive manner, the charges became exaggerated and the pursuit of those accused intensified. In a more consistent manner, Truman's loyalty program aimed to cleanse the federal government of subversives. Certainly radicals worked for the federal government after World War II, but the results of the loyalty program revealed only small numbers in non-sensitive positions.

One federal employee with a radical past, William Remington, battled numerous charges of subversive behavior during this difficult period. Remington's support of southern unionization, the Russians during World War II, and communist philosophies,

⁹⁵ FBI New York Report, 13 March 1951, Elizabeth Todd FBI file #100-440310-6; SAC New York to FBI Director, 4 August 1955, Elizabeth Todd FBI file #100-440310-[8?]; SAC New York to FBI Director, 18 August 1955, Elizabeth Todd FBI file #100-440310-10; FBI New York Report, 24 October 1955, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-10; FBI New York Report, 23 February 1956, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-24.

clashed with the climate of postwar America. Accused by spy queen Elizabeth Bentley of espionage, investigated by loyalty boards, questioned before HUAC, indicted by grand juries, tried before district and appeals courts, convicted of passing secrets to the Russians, and later murdered in prison, Remington suffered at the hands of both anti-communist investigators, his former friends, and his own inconsistencies.

Throughout his trials, Remington's brief TVA tenure and his former Tennessee associates played an important role. Previous studies of Remington's trials have not emphasized the importance of his TVA experience. Thirteen of Remington's former Knoxville associates contributed to the government's investigations of Remington. During this most intense period of inquiry into their past lives, Remington's former-TVA associates reacted in one of three ways. First, with the charge of perjury or the communist label before them, some members of the group, such as Burton Zien and Howard Bridgman, fully cooperated and provided the government with information, but most often fuzzy recollections of events long since past. A second group, including Henry Hart and Muriel Williams, testified when required and provided investigators with limited and often redundant lists of names and data. The remaining members of the "Knoxville Fifteen," such as Kit Buckles and Pat Todd, embraced the Fifth Amendment. Throughout the multiple investigations, William Remington demonstrated behavior to fit all three categories, which made him detrimental to his own defense.

The Remington trials briefly brought the "Knoxville Fifteen" back together. During this dark period, former TVA acquaintances revisited once-happy times with the fear that their past activities would be judged with new standards of Americanism. Using advanced legal and investigative mechanisms, by the 1950s government investigators

could better prosecute the members of the “Knoxville Fifteen.” For these individuals and for other Americans, the Remington trials and their outcomes represent a watershed event in re-defining Cold War loyalty and citizenship.

Chapter 7

Return to Knoxville

In June 1953, Laurent Frantz published the first in a series of articles for *The Nation* about the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) hearings and Fifth Amendment rights. A 1940 Dies Committee witness and older brother of John Frantz, Laurent held strong personal views on government-led investigations. Frantz believed that the government targeted certain individuals and used the fear of subsequent perjury indictments to create cooperative witnesses. In the 1953 article “Does Silence Mean Guilt?” he and co-author Norman Redlich explained:

For example, a person may at one time have considered joining the Communist Party, as many hungry or disillusioned people did in the 1930s. Perhaps he attended meetings of the party and discussed the possibility of membership with other people. In conversations with others he may have defended the position of the Soviet Union and voiced ideas which today sound communistic. This person may have abandoned these ideas many years ago. If, however, he happened to be a prominent professor or scientist or government employee who has been attacked as a Communist he knows that the Department of Justice stands ready to indict him for perjury.¹

The article appeared just two months after William Remington surrendered himself to the government and began his prison sentence. Although Frantz did not mention Remington by name, the article outlined the exact investigative methods and witness tactics used in Remington’s case.

Four year later, Laurent Frantz contributed another article to *The Nation* on the early outcomes of postwar congressional investigations of communists. In “The Bankrupt Inquisition,” he charged that after nearly twenty years of HUAC, “the supply of

¹ Laurent Frantz, “Does Silence Mean Guilt?” *The Nation* 176 (6 June 1953): quote 474-75, 473.

unused Communists is so depleted that the committees have had to dig deeply into the '30s and '40s to find enough material to keep the show on the road.” During its tenure, Frantz explained, HUAC reportedly had more than one million names of possible subversives, even though the 1930s CP only reached around 20,000 members. Despite these apparent failings, Frantz recognized the long-term affects of the HUAC investigations, saying:

During the span of a whole generation, the House committee has learned that communism is a bad thing and that, accordingly, Communists must be bad people; that Communists support liberal and labor causes and try to exploit them, that they infiltrate other organizations and that they seek to convert other people to their point of view.²

As the Cold War lumbered on for another three decades, Frantz's declarations about communism grew more and more prophetic. Multiple generations of Americans learned about the evils of communism within the politically charged context of fragile foreign relations with the Soviet Union. As a result, confirmed CP sympathizers, whether from before or after World War II or active or inactive, were thought to pose a significant threat to the American way of life. Even with the passage of time, shaking the communist label proved difficult for some. Well into the 1980s, even after HUAC had disappeared, the FBI paid attention to certain aging 1930s radicals. For members of the “Knoxville Fifteen,” the FBI maintained files on several individuals well beyond the 1950s.

Building on the legacies of HUAC, anti-communism, the Cold War, and current efforts to locate un-Americans, this chapter will trace the lives of Mabel Mansfield,

² Laurent Frantz, “The Bankrupt Inquisition,” *The Nation* 185 (20 July 1957): quotes 26-27.

Christine and Forrest Benson, Howard Bridgman, Kit Egri, John Frantz, Howard Frazier, Henry Hart, David Stone Martin, Elizabeth and Pat Todd, Muriel Williams, and Burton Zien from 1955 to present. When possible, it will focus on the long-term effects of the Remington trials and the 1930s and 1950s recollections of each individual. By the mid-1950s this scattered group had seemingly left behind little record of their 1930s experiences and 1950s ordeals. But the acquisition of Howard Bridgman's diary in 2001 helped spark the resurrection of this important group of former TVA employees. The chapter closes with the purchase of Bridgman's diary and the return of the "Knoxville Fifteen" to the "scruffy little city" some seventy years later.

The 1954 conviction and murder of William Remington symbolized the end of nearly fifteen years of government investigations into a group of 1930s TVA communists. After 1954, members of the "Knoxville Fifteen" experienced varying outcomes from their Cold War difficulties. During the following decades a few returned to Knoxville to reminisce, while others kept in touch through letters, but for the most part the individuals led separate lives. Recorded interviews and letters from several of the individuals reveal positive memories of their 1930s TVA experiences.

Christine and Forrest Benson were the only two of the "Knoxville Fifteen" to remain in Knoxville after World War II. Although questioned during the early 1950s, after the Remington trials the FBI recorded no new information on either Benson. By 1955, Forrest had cleared three loyalty boards and maintained his position as a TVA personnel officer. While raising a family, Christine became a master basketmaker, serving as a member of the Foothills Craft Guild and the East Tennessee Basketmakers

Association. She also took an active role in the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church, the East Tennessee Historical Society, the American Field Service foreign exchange program, the Fellowship House Summer Program, Planned Parenthood, and the Highlander Folk School. Besides a brief stint in Gilbertsville, Kentucky, for TVA, the Bensons spent most of their adult lives in Knoxville, keeping an address at 611 Cheowa Circle in the upscale Sequoyah Hills neighborhood. The Bensons enjoyed collecting wildflowers and made frequent hikes through the Great Smoky Mountains. Forrest spent his entire career with TVA, retiring in the late 1960s after over thirty years of service. He died on January 19, 1981 at age 76 in Knoxville, just five days after former TVA chairman David Lilienthal passed away. Christine remained active in the Knoxville community, passing away at age 87 on October 9, 1998.³

John Frantz, the brother of Laurent Frantz and a native Knoxvillean, encountered government investigations into his TVA past even after the Remington trials. Despite previous clearances, in late-1954 the FBI completed another lengthy background check on Frantz. After interviewing dozens of witnesses, including Henry Hart, Horace Bryan, Burton Zien, Howard Bridgman, Muriel Williams, Howard Frazier, and Mabel Mansfield, the FBI uncovered no evidence of Frantz's alleged CP-sympathies.⁴ In the

³ *Knoxville News Sentinel*, 16 and 20 January 1981, 11 October 1998; *TVA Telephone Books*, 1967 and 1969, TVA Technical Library, Knoxville, Tennessee.

⁴ FBI Milwaukee Report, 29 November 1954, Frantz FBI file #121-7423-76; FBI Dallas Report, 7 January 1955, Frantz FBI file #121-7423-43; FBI Boston Report, 8 December 1954, Frantz FBI file #121-7423-48; FBI San Francisco, 5 January 1955, Frantz FBI file#121-7423-113; FBI Atlanta Report, 27 November 1954, Frantz FBI file# 121-7423-116. The 1954 and 1955 FBI report can also be found in folders 3-4, box 627, John Frantz, Oversize Personnel Security Investigation Case Files, 1928-1982, Civil Service Commission and Office of Federal Investigations, Records of the Office of Personnel Management, Record Group 478, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland [hereinafter Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park].

spring of 1955, Frantz appeared before the loyalty board to again deny his past or current membership in the CP. Frantz reminded the group that he had exhibited nothing but loyalty during his twenty years of government service. A few weeks later, the loyalty board cleared Frantz of all charges related to CP membership and declared that no proof had been found to connect him with the aims of the Communist Party.⁵

Even so, far into the 1960s government investigators revisited the pre-World War II charges against Frantz. In 1962, when Frantz applied for a promotion to the Director of Budget and Management for the Housing and Home Finance Agency (it became part of the Department of Housing and Urban Development three years later), yet another loyalty board examined his record. After brief deliberations, the loyalty board yielded a favorable rating on his loyalty and Frantz assumed the new position. In 1969, after 26 years of federal service, Frantz applied for retirement. However, government personnel investigators debated whether an accused communist could receive a government pension. In November, the Bureau of Personnel Investigations declared that since previous loyalty board had not established CP membership, Frantz was fully entitled to his retirement benefits. During the following three decades Frantz remained in the Washington, D.C. area with his family. On August 29, 1997, at the age of 80, he died of cancer at his home in Silver Spring, Maryland.⁶

Another government employee, Howard Frazier, enjoyed great success after the

⁵ Affidavit of John M. Frantz, 6 April 1955, folder 3, To Loyalty Panel, "John Marshall Frantz Case," ca. 1962, folder 1, Catherine Grant to H.C. Bolton, 25 May 1962, folder 1, box 627, Frantz Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park.

⁶ To Loyalty Panel, "John Marshall Frantz Case," ca. 1962, Catherine Grant to H.C. Bolton, 25 May 1962, Andrew E. Ruddock to Kimbell Johnson, 18 November 1969, all in folder 1, box 627, Frantz Security Case Files, RG 478, NARA, College Park; *Washington Post*, 5 September 1997.

Remington trials. Frazier maintained his work with the United States Department of Labor, working in San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, D.C. He took particular interest in promoting fair-wage standards. In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson appointed Frazier to the President's Committee on Consumer Interests, a group of public and private citizens devoted to exploring consumer demands. The appointment triggered yet another full FBI loyalty investigation of Frazier. The FBI re-interviewed a number of Frazier's TVA acquaintances, all of whom declared that Frazier had been a socialist but not a communist. Instead, the FBI found Frazier's brother-in-law, Brigadier General Hugh B. Hester, much more interesting. After retiring from the military, Hester began a speaking tour on the need to cooperate with the Russians. During the 1950s and 1960s Hester had traveled to Russia, Finland, Cuba, and East Germany to advocate a soft policy on Soviet-bloc countries. The FBI kept close watch on Hester well into the 1970s. In its final report, the FBI also noted that Frazier had been a member of the Highlander Folk School's board of directors at some point. Despite these findings, the FBI cleared Frazier for White House employment.⁷

Beginning in the late-1960s, Howard Frazier grew frustrated with government service and sought other endeavors. After three years working on the President's Committee on Consumer Interests, in 1968 Frazier took a position as Assistant Director of the Office of Consumer Service within the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Frazier's knowledge of labor, wages, and consumer protection made him an

⁷ Howard T. Frazier, "Security Investigation Data for Sensitive Position," 7 July 1965, Howard Frazier FBI file #161-3997-1; *New York Times*, 14 June 1997; J. Edgar Hoover to Special Assistant to the President, 16 July 1965, Frazier FBI file #161-3997-2; J. Edgar Hoover to Special Assistant to the President, 5 August 1965, Howard Frazier FBI file #161-3997-30.

ideal choice for president of the Consumer Federation of America. At the same time, Frazier decided to retire after nearly thirty years of accumulated government service. He retired on October 31, 1969, and just five days later Frazier and the Consumer Federation of America openly criticized President Richard Nixon's consumer protection program as "inadequate and unconstructive." Frazier also opposed Nixon's nominations to the Federal Trade Commission. Frazier's outspoken behavior resulted in his resignation from the Consumer Federation of America in 1972. He remained an advocate for consumers, next serving as national director of the Consumers Education and Protective Association.⁸

Perhaps Frazier's most rewarding work came as executive director of Promoting Enduring Peace. Founded in 1958 by Jerome Davis, a former TVA employee and professor at Yale University, Promoting Enduring Peace provides inter-faith religious groups a forum to promote world peace through lectures, conferences, publications, and visits abroad. In 1974, Frazier accepted the position of executive director of Promoting Enduring Peace and held the position for twenty-three years. Under Frazier's direction, the organization held numerous conferences, distributed millions of articles, and led educational efforts on the issues of world peace. In 1978, Frazier edited a volume for Promoting Enduring Peace on the CIA's covert measures to disrupt world peace. Despite his activism, Frazier's FBI file contained very little on his post-government activities. On May 30, 1997, at age 85, Howard Frazier died in Branford, Connecticut from

⁸ SAC, WFO to FBI Director, 23 October 1969, Frazier FBI file #121-10515-34; Director, Bureau of Personnel Investigations to FBI Director, 20 March 1970; Frazier FBI file #121-10515-[25?]; *New York Times*, quote 5 November 1969, 14 June 1997; Walterene Swanston, "Washington Pressures/Consumer Federation of America Waging Spirited Battle for Survival," *National Journal* 4 (8 July 1972): 1130-32.

complications following heart surgery.⁹

Boston resident Muriel Williams kept her distance from the FBI following the Remington trials, keeping active in community and liberal causes. In the late-1950s, she volunteered at her local church, edited the monthly newsletter for the Lexington League of Women Voters, and helped organize her 25th college reunion at Mount Holyoke. Muriel divorced Stillman Williams in 1965 and moved to Cambridge, while keeping her Lexington church connections. She also continued working at Harvard in a number of departments. She worked as a part-time secretary in the Engineering and Applied Physics Department during the late-1950s, as part-time graduate secretary in the Biology Department in the early 1960s, as full-time secretary to the chairman of the Graduate Committee, as house secretary at the Dunster House in the late-1960s, and finally as an administrative assistant at the Loeb Drama Center from 1968 to 1977.¹⁰

In late-May 1977, one week after retiring from Harvard, Muriel Speare married Kirtley Mather, a Harvard emeritus professor of geology. Twenty-six years her senior, Mather at age 89 had been a scientific expert present at the 1925 John Scopes trial (he had submitted a written statement but was not allowed to testify), served as chairman of the Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts in the 1940s, was an early and outspoken foe of Joseph McCarthy, had published over a dozen books in various scientific fields, held

⁹ *New York Times*, 14 June 1997; "Promoting Enduring Peace," at <http://www.pepeace.org/>, consulted 27 November 2005; "Promoting Enduring Peace, Inc.," in "Howard Thomas Frazier," 23 October 1969, Frazier FBI file #121-10515-34; Howard Frazier, ed., *Uncloaking the CIA* (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 1-4.

¹⁰ Selma Williams, "Muriel W. Mather Interview," March 1981, [transcript] 5, folder 6, box 1, Muriel Williams Mather Papers, 1939-1990, MS 2585, Special Collections Library, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee [hereinafter Mather Papers, UT Special Collections].

six honorary degrees, and belonged to numerous professional organizations. In addition to his geologic work, Mather spoke frequently on the connections between science, religion, and freedom of speech. The couple moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico after their honeymoon. A year later, Kirtley Mather died of a stroke and Muriel returned to Lexington, Massachusetts. Muriel took great interest in collecting information on her husband's legacy and worked with Professor Kennard Bork of Denison University to prepare Kirtley Mather's biography.¹¹

Beginning in the 1980s Muriel Mather revisited the McCarthy Era. Early in the decade, journalist Selma R. Williams began work on a book about HUAC's 1950s persecution of alleged communists. Also a Lexington resident, Williams asked Mather if she would share her story. As a result, Williams's 1993 book *Red-Listed: Haunted by the Washington Witch Hunt* contained excerpts of their interviews. Williams traced Mather's evolution from a defiant idealist to a reluctant informant and called her "a successful symbol of opposition to McCarthyism as it spread its tentacles" across the nation. From the unpublished interviews, Mather revealed the details of a 1982 goodwill trip to Russia. She found a great many commonalities between the United States and Russia, instead of the greatly exaggerated differences as reported in American newspapers. The trip also pointed to TVA connections. First, the Promoting Enduring

¹¹ *The Harvard Crimson*, 1 June 1977; Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 186; Contemporary Authors Online, Gale, 2002; "Kirtley Fletcher Mather," in *American National Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 14:690-91; Kennard Baker Bork, *Cracking Rocks and Defending Democracy: Kirtley Fletcher Mather, Scientist, Teacher, Social Activist, 1888-1978* (San Francisco: Pacific Division AAAS, 1994), 224-25, 274-79; Muriel Speare, "Prepared for 50th Reunion Booklet," May 1985, folder 3, box 1, Mather Papers, UT Special Collections; *Boston Tribune*, 13 February 1978.

Peace organization, a group headed by Howard Frazier from 1974-1997, sponsored the trip. Secondly, Elizabeth Moos, the 92-year-old mother of Ann Moos Remington and a confirmed communist, also made the journey with Mather to the Soviet Union. During the interviews, Mather elaborated on her TVA experiences and explained that she kept in touch with TVA associates, including Christine Benson and Henry Hart. After the interviews, Mather gave her personal papers to Selma Williams for safe-keeping, who in turn donated them to the University of Tennessee in 2002. In 1990, Mather spoke with University of Delaware historian Gary May about her knowledge of William Remington. Her recollections appeared in May's book which focused on Remington's government trials and was published in 1993. At age 83, Muriel Mather died, on September 4, 1996 near Boston.¹²

Following the Remington trials, artist David Stone Martin found great professional success. After 1955, he split his time between New York and Los Angeles, working in the fields of music, film, theater, and television. As a jazz enthusiast, Martin's album covers created a sophisticated image of the genre. Martin worked with nearly every major jazz figure, including Count Basie, Oscar Peterson, Mary Lou Williams, Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, Stan Getz, Billie Holiday, John Coltrane, Dizzy Gillespie, and Duke Ellington. During his career he designed over 400 album covers for a variety of artists working on the Asch, Disc, Folkways, Clef, Norgran, Verve, RCA, Atlantic, Progressive, Mary, and Dial record labels. While in Hollywood, Martin did

¹² Quote from, Selma R. Williams, *Red-Listed: Haunted by the Washington Witch Hunt* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1993), 104; "Interview with Muriel Williams Mather," 22 November 1983, [transcript] 21-22, 25, folder 2, box 1 Mather Papers, UT Special Collections; Gary May, *Un-American Activities: The Trials of William Remington* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

advertising, animation, billboards, and special pictorial efforts for films such as *Daddy Long Legs* (1955), *The Cobweb* (1955), *The James Dean Story* (1957), *Gigi* (1958), *Hemingway's Adventures of a Young Man* (1962), *The Eleanor Roosevelt Story* (1965), *Elvira Madigan* (1967), and *Paint Your Wagon* (1969). In New York, Martin created posters, playbills, and advertising art for over fifty Broadway plays, most notably the artwork and advertising for the original production of the "Three Penny Opera" at the Theatre de Lys in 1951. Martin also produced graphics and posters for a variety of television shows on CBS (such as "Gunsmoke" in 1955) and documentaries on PBS.¹³

Perhaps Martin's most recognizable work came through publishing. Beginning in 1964, Martin designed covers for *Time* magazine. His most famous *Time* covers came in the late-1960s and early 1970s, which included portraits of Eugene McCarthy, Robert Kennedy, George Wallace, Mao Tse Tung, and Ho Chi Minh. Martin also designed covers and illustrations for novels (including authors such as William Faulkner and James Michener), biographies (including Jelly Roll Morton), magazines (including *Saturday Evening Post*, *Colliers*, and *Forbes*), children's books, and even *TV Guide*. Other evidence of Martin's graphic designs can be found in hundreds of brochures, advertisements, and popular press illustrations. Martin shared his designs and methods with students as a frequent lecturer, and from 1965-1968 he served as instructor at the Art

¹³ "David Stone Martin" PR Release, ca. 1970s, David Stone Martin Papers, 1939-1991, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. [hereinafter Martin Papers, AAA]; Manek Daver, *David Stone Martin: Jazz Graphics* (Tokyo: Graphic-sha Publishing, 1991), 12; *New York Times*, 9 March 1992; *The Day* [New London, Connecticut], 7 March 1992, 6 April 1986.

Students' League of New York and the Parsons Institute of Design.¹⁴

In May 1977, Martin suffered a stroke, but nearly fully recovered. He moved to Connecticut and spent the 1980s opening exhibitions of his work. As a result, he deposited collections at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Martin's work also brought an international following. In October 1990, the Tama Art University of Japan held an exhibition of Martin's album covers. Decades after his TVA work, in 1986 he gave a rare interview about his pre-World War II years. The 1930s left an important mark on Martin, who stated that, "The New Deal was possibly the most important social program in the history of the country," giving "writers, photographers, and artists . . . a chance to express themselves and also to glorify America." A groundbreaking designer, illustrator, and art director, Martin died on March 6, 1992 at the age of 78 in New London, Connecticut.¹⁵

After the Remington trials, Kit Egri also took refuge in the art world. Her husband Ted Egri used the G.I. Bill to further his training as a sculptor. The Egris found like-minded individuals in the artist community of Taos, New Mexico. Once a fiery radical, Egri devoted herself to her husband's work and career. Egri worked for the Taos Art Association, where she directed the Stables Gallery in Taos for a number of years and traveled with her husband to exhibit openings, lectures, and artist retreats. Close

¹⁴ A collection of Martin's *Time* covers are in folder 14 of the Martin Papers, AAA. Daver, *David Stone Martin*, 12; "David Stone Martin" PR Release, ca. 1970s, Martin Papers, AAA; *New York Times*, 9 March 1992; *The Day* [New London, Connecticut], 6 April 1986.

¹⁵ *New York Times*, 9 March 1992; quote from *The Day* [New London, Connecticut], 6 April 1986; *The Day* [New London, Connecticut], 7 March 1992; Daver, *David Stone Martin*, 11, 13.

community involvement and interest in social issues were also part of Egri's post-1955 life. Although a gifted wordsmith, Ted Egri recalled that Kit was "a writer who refused to write."¹⁶

After the 1950s, Egri disappeared from the government's radar. Although she had once publicly referred to the nearby Los Alamos Laboratories as a "Monument to War Mongers," in 1955 the FBI removed Egri from their security index of individuals considered a threat to national security. One year later, FBI agents contacted Egri about her knowledge of CP activities in St. Louis. The government wanted Egri to appear before closed sessions of HUAC and describe Missouri's CP infrastructure. Just as she had done during the Remington trials, Egri declined to discuss her past political activities and associates. Egri seldom revisited her TVA experiences and did not assist Gary May in his 1993 study of William Remington. At age 90, Katherine Egri died on January 10, 1998 near her Taos, New Mexico home.¹⁷

The late 1950s were particularly difficult for Elizabeth and Pat Todd. In 1955, the FBI listed Elizabeth Todd as a housewife and possibly still employed by a television broadcasting or sales company in New York. But with little new information on Elizabeth, in August 1955 the FBI removed her from its Security Index. At the same time, the FBI learned from an informant that Pat Todd's name and address had been discovered at a known CP-meeting place in New York City. With that leverage, the FBI

¹⁶ *Taos News*, 15 January 1998; quote from author's telephone interview with Ted Egri, 21 November 2005.

¹⁷ Quote FBI Albuquerque Report, 4 June 1953, Katherine Buckles Egri FBI file #100-353259-46; SAC Albuquerque to FBI Director, 22 April 1955, Buckles FBI file # 100-353259-49; SAC Albuquerque to FBI Director, 15 January 1957, Buckles FBI file # 100-353259-50; May, *Un-American Activities*; *Taos News*, 15 January 1998.

expected that in exchange for clemency Todd would furnish historic information on CP activities in the Knoxville area. Since 1952, Todd had worked as a designer of mechanical and electrical equipment at the Russell and Stoll Company. On June 21, 1956, FBI agents approached Pat Todd as he left work for the day. The agents explained that he had information that would be helpful to the Bureau, but Todd chose not to talk to them. In their report, the agents noted that Todd “appeared very nervous and scared,” but they were not aware of his deteriorating mental state. A week after the encounter, Todd resigned from his job with the intention of starting a business in Maine.¹⁸

During the next four years, Pat Todd’s mental health and marriage both deteriorated and ultimately crumbled. From 1956 to 1960, he spent time in several mental institutions, including Bellevue in New York City, Fairfield State Hospital in Connecticut, and Rockland State Hospital in New York. When not receiving treatment, he lived with his wife in New Canaan, Connecticut. But in September 1959, after over twenty years of marriage, the Todds filed for divorce. Pat Todd continued to live in Connecticut, near his sister Elizabeth Shikes, while his ex-wife Elizabeth moved to Bath, Maine. Elizabeth Todd’s FBI file ends in 1960 and there are few details on her life in Maine. At age 63, Elizabeth Winston McConnell Todd died on December 31, 1971 and

¹⁸ SAC New York to FBI Director, 18 August 1955, Elizabeth Todd FBI file #100-440310-10;; J.F. Bland to A.H. Belmont, 28 December 1955, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-20; SAC New York to FBI Director, 11 May 1956, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-26; quote SAC New York to FBI Director, 29 June 1956, FBI New York Report, 29 June 1956, all in Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-28.

was buried in the Old Chapel Hill Cemetery on the campus of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.¹⁹

With a potent combination of mental illness and alcohol abuse, beginning in 1960 Pat Todd's story and FBI file reached bizarre heights. In early 1960, Todd took a European vacation to England, France, and Germany. On March 2, the Department of State reported the details of Todd's trip. After landing in London, police arrested him for vagrancy and placed him in a hospital for observation. Since arriving, Todd stated that he had visited the Soviet embassy and gained a traveling visa to the USSR. Todd further claimed that he visited the United States consulate, and after years of silence had discussed his past CP affiliations. Following his release, Todd traveled to France and took a train to Berlin. After getting escorted out of East Berlin, Todd managed to get arrested in West Berlin on three charges: not paying for food at a U.S. snack bar, not paying his hotel bill, and "threatening to shoot someone when the lights go off." With a medical diagnosis of paranoia, the West Berlin police sent Todd to the U.S. embassy. The State Department urged Todd to return to the United States, but he insisted that his final destination would be the Soviet Union via bicycle. Todd also demanded the release of Morton Sobell, a co-defendant in the Ethel and Julius Rosenberg case, still serving a thirty-year prison sentence. After another arrest on March 8, for throwing bottles at U.S. nationals in a restaurant and then starting a brawl, the next day the Department of State

¹⁹ FBI New Haven Report, 30 March 1963, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-[33?]; SAC New York to FBI Director, 18 October 1959, Elizabeth Todd FBI file #100-440310-11; "Merwin Scott Todd," 8 July 1964, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-[48?]; *Raleigh News and Observer*, 2 January 1972.

escorted Todd back to the United States. With help from Todd's stepson and sister, Pat Todd returned to Fairfield State Hospital for treatment.²⁰

By 1963, Todd had taken great interest in the civil rights movement. In September, Birmingham, Alabama police arrested Todd on charges of drunkenness and vagrancy. After serving seven days in a Birmingham jail, where Martin Luther King, Jr. had penned his famous letter that April, Todd appeared at the city's FBI office to make a complaint. Todd criticized the FBI for doing little to improve the city's racial conditions, and claimed to have sent President John F. Kennedy a telegram urging the use of federal troops to restore order and to arrest Governor George Wallace. While with FBI agents, Todd also charged that the Bureau had allowed the murder of William Remington in 1954. When agents did not react to his charge, Todd retorted: "Don't tell me you don't know who he is. You know everything about him." It would not be Todd's only reference to Remington's death. Todd returned to New York, and in May 1964 secured work as a clerk for the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). But after only two weeks, a heated argument between Todd and other CORE employees, in which Todd spat in his supervisor's face, resulted in his termination.²¹

²⁰ Department of State, Berlin to Secretary of State, 2 March 1960, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-31; Ronald Radosh and Joyce Milton, *The Rosenberg File: A Search for the Truth* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Wintotn, 1983), 175-79, 285, 333-34; Department of State, Berlin to Secretary of State, 9 March 1960, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-[35?]; FBI New Haven Report, 30 March 1963, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-[33?].

²¹ J.L. Handley to Mr. Rosen, 29 September 1963, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-[36?]; first quote from SAC Birmingham to FBI Director, 25 September 1963, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-37; FBI Director to Attorney General, 28 May 1964, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-39; D.J. Brennan to W.C. Sullivan, 27 May 1964, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-43; second quote SAC New Haven to FBI Director, 24 August 1964, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-52.

Days after the dismissal, Todd appeared at the FBI's New York office to discuss his international travel plans. Using a new passport, Todd said he planned to spend the next year visiting London, Stockholm, and eventually Moscow. Unstable and intoxicated, Todd complained that Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev had denied his entry into the Soviet Union, so he planned to gain entry "possibly by kayak across the Bering Strait from Alaska." Once in the Soviet Union, Todd expected to distribute Bibles, but he was unsure how many Bibles would fit in his kayak. As he departed the FBI office, agents noted that he "unhesitatingly consumed" from a pint of vodka. Following the interview, the FBI sent information on Todd to the Secret Service. Thereafter, the FBI considered Todd "dangerous because of his past history of mental instability." In addition to his emotional problems, the FBI later reported that Todd should be considered dangerous because of his communist connections.²²

Todd's paranoia worsened during the next few years. In June 1964, the Secret Service arrested him for making a White House bomb threat. Todd denied the charge, saying that "he must have been under the influence of liquor at that time." Because of his fragile mental condition, federal authorities released Todd and in November 1964, the state of New York committed him to the Central Islip State Hospital. Apart from a brief escape in January 1966, Pat Todd did not see the "outside" until April of 1967, when the Central Islip State Hospital finally released him. Three months later, the FBI reported

²² J. Edgar Hoover to Director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, 1 June 1964, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-[40?]; J. Edgar Hoover to Director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, 4 June 1964, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-[41?]; SAC New York to FBI Director, 28 May 1964, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-42; D.J. Brennan to W.C. Sullivan, 27 May 1964, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-43; J. Edgar Hoover to Director, United States Secret Service, 12 September 1967, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-69.

that Todd had returned to the South, where he was arrested for prowling and public indecency in Atlanta and public intoxication in Pensacola. In August 1967, Todd visited his sister in Connecticut and with her encouragement checked himself back into the Fairfield State Hospital. During the following three years Todd made frequent escapes from various mental institutions, but by 1970 he had recovered enough to find employment as an electrical repairman in New York City.²³

In late 1975, forty years after his first arrival in Knoxville, Todd briefly returned to Tennessee. In December 1975, he took a room at the Farragut Hotel in downtown Knoxville. But after writing two fraudulent checks and intentionally setting his room on fire, he left the Farragut and headed to the Park Hotel. Just after Christmas, Knoxville police arrested Todd on charges of public drunkenness. While in the Knoxville city jail, Todd witnessed the beating of a black prisoner by police officers. After his release, Todd volunteered his information on the city's civil rights violations to the Knoxville FBI office. But at the same time, the Secret Service learned that Todd had made phone threats to President Gerald Ford.

On January 20, 1976, FBI agents located Todd at the Tavernette, a seedy working class bar on Clinch Avenue, and escorted him back to the Knoxville Secret Service office for questioning. Although intoxicated and obviously mentally unstable, Todd attempted

²³ A. Rosen to Mr. Belmont, 31 August 1964, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-54; first quote SAC New York to FBI Director, 8 September 1964, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-56; SAC New York to FBI Director, 2 October 1964, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-58; SAC New York to FBI Director, 6 November 1964, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-60; J.A. Sizoo to W.C. Sullivan, 14 January 1966, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-63; FBI Report on Merwin Todd, 11 August 1967, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-66; FBI Report on Merwin Todd, 18 August 1967, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-67; FBI Report on Merwin Todd, 19 November 1970, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-84.

to inform the FBI of civil rights violations by Knoxville's police, violations he may well have witnessed, intoxicated or sober. Todd admitted his past communications with numerous public officials, including Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, but denied threatening President Ford. And yet, two days later Knoxville police arrested Todd for making yet another phone threat, this one to Knoxville mayor Randy Tyree. A phone tap at the Park Hotel revealed that Todd had indeed threatened Tyree, had attempted to call J. Edgar Hoover, and also had made the statement that "Ford, Reagan, and Kissinger should die as they represented the godless people who are corrupting the earth." The next day a city court judge instructed Todd to desist from making threatening phone calls and letters for six months.²⁴

After leaving Knoxville, Todd ultimately settled near Tampa, Florida. During the late-1970s, however, Tampa police arrested Todd both for petty theft and burglary, but he garnered no new FBI attention. But in late-1981, Todd placed a call to Secretary of the Interior James Watt, advising "of a death in the family." The next day, December 19, 1981, FBI agents interviewed Todd. The seventy-year-old explained that he wanted to express his displeasure with the Interior Department's construction of a natural gas pipeline in Alaska and the building of the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant in California. Todd denied that he had threatened Watt, but admitted that he had been drinking at the time of the phone call. He further advised that, despite being retired, he

²⁴ SAC Knoxville to FBI Director, 26 January 1976, Clarence M. Kelley to Director, United States Secret Service, 27 January 1976, quote in FBI Knoxville, "Merwin Todd, Information Concerning Threat Against the President," 27 January 1976, FBI Director to Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division, 3 February 1976, all in Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-85.

kept current on political events and wanted to express his opinions. Three months later, on March 18, 1982 at age 70, Pat Todd died near Hillsborough, Florida.²⁵

A combination of mental illness, alcoholism, and the memories of the William Remington trials led to Todd's decline. More than any of the "Knoxville Fifteen," the McCarthy Era haunted Todd for the rest of his life. Clearly a fragile man, the experience of facing HUAC and FBI investigators while going through a difficult divorce further added Todd to the point of paranoia. Todd's example reveals how the anti-communist witch hunts of the early 1950s damaged not so much the most guilty, but rather the weakest who had no way of escaping their past.

For his part, Burton Zien escaped the McCarthy Era with few scars, but he did have another encounter with HUAC. In the summer of 1955, HUAC planned for hearings into possible communist influence in the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). In August, a retired NLRB employee informed HUAC that they should investigate Zien. The next month HUAC investigators spoke with Zien's former supervisor from the Atlanta NLRB office, who remembered Zien's confession of CP membership. During the interview, the investigator learned the names of other alleged communists working in Knoxville, including Henry Hart, Francis Martin, John Frantz, Pat Todd, David Stone Martin, Muriel Speare, Mabel Abercrombie, and Howard Bridgman. This information seems to have spurred yet another government investigation

²⁵ FBI Criminal Investigative Division, "RE: Merwin Scott Todd; Secretary of the Interior James Watt—Victim Extortion," 22 December 1981, Merwin Todd FBI file #100-36774-[86?]; FBI Tampa to FBI Director, 22 December 1981, Merwin Todd FBI file #119-66436-1.

into 1930s TVA communists.²⁶

In October 1955, HUAC investigators met with a “most cordial and cooperative” Zien. The potential witness explained that he had been a CP member in the late 1930s, but never while working for the federal government. He named several of his CP colleagues, including Henry Hart, Francis Martin, Kenneth McConnell, Merwin Todd, Muriel Speare, Mabel Abercrombie, and Howard Bridgman, and agreed to supply HUAC with a copy of his 1949 loyalty hearing transcript. Zien stated that after his admission of CP membership in 1950, he had assisted the FBI in investigating William Remington. But since Zien had not known Remington well enough to confirm his CP membership, the FBI had not called Zien as a witness in the Remington trials. Although nervous that bad publicity might affect his Milwaukee plumbing business, Zien offered to make a statement before an official HUAC committee. To assure confidentiality, HUAC investigators recommended that Zien appear before a closed HUAC session.²⁷

In December 1955, HUAC subpoenaed Zien to appear at closed sessions in Chicago. On December 12, 1955, Zien appeared at an informal HUAC session in Chicago to answer preliminary questions. Two days later, he stood before a closed Executive Session of HUAC to recall his brief CP experiences. He remembered

²⁶ Charles E. Persons to Francis E. Walter, 22 August 1955, C.E. Owens to HUAC Files, 21 September 1955, all in folder: Burton Zien, box 52, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), Executive Session Transcripts and Investigative Name Files, Records of the United States House of Representatives, Record Group 233, Legislative Archives Center, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C. [hereinafter HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA]; Congress, House, Committee on Un-American Activities, *Annual Report of the Committee of Un-American Activities*, 84th Cong., 2d Sess. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1956), 4-6.

²⁷ C.E. Owens to Thomas W. Beale Sr., 18 October 1955, W. Jackson Jones to HUAC files, 29 November 1955, all in folder: Burton Zien, box 52, HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA; J. Edgar Hoover to Kimbell Johnson, 20 January 1956, FBI file #100-10189-[41?].

associating only with those CP members in the TVA cell, which included Howard Bridgman, Mabel Abercrombie, Muriel Speare, and Christine Benson. Despite HUAC's great expectations for new names and information, Zien offered only the same details found in his forty-three page signed statement that had been given to the FBI in 1950. HUAC disappointedly dismissed Zien and indicated that he would not be called for further testimony. The FBI had kept close watch of HUAC's investigation into Zien's past, but after the Executive Session failed to produce new information on 1930s communists, the Bureau chose not to re-interview Zien. As quickly as a possible new investigation of 1930s TVA communists emerged it disappeared, and after 1956 HUAC and FBI investigators collected no new information on Zien.²⁸

Hounded for many years as a communist, after the 1950s Zien finally escaped the charges to become a successful business owner, labor leader, and civic activist. His business, the Zien Plumbing and Heating Company, worked on a number of important structures in the Milwaukee area, including state office buildings, a Greek Orthodox Church designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, and facilities at the Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory, known as "The Domes." When Zien sold the company in 1985, the business was one of the largest mechanical contracting firms in the state.²⁹

Zien's interest in labor relations and welfare continued well beyond the 1950s. He worked to improve opportunities for Milwaukee's minorities by creating an

²⁸ SAC Milwaukee to FBI Director, 21 December 1955, FBI file #100-10189-39; "Burton Zien Testimony," 14 December 1955, 15, folder: Burton Zien, box 35, HUAC Transcripts and Name Files, RG 233, NARA.

²⁹ *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, 28 January 2003.

affirmative action plan in the building trades, hiring minorities for his own business, raising more than \$250,000 to create a home for the Opportunities Industrialization Center, and co-founding the Inner City Redevelopment Corporation. Zien also remained politically active as a member of the Wisconsin Democratic Party, attending state and national conventions. Early support of Wisconsin Governor Patrick J. Lucey, 1971-1977, led to Zien's appointment on Lucey's task force on commerce and industry. During the 1970s, Zien also worked to reform the state prison system and served on the Wisconsin Board of Vocational, Technical, and Adult Education. At the national level, Zien worked on the presidential campaigns of John F. Kennedy, Jimmy Carter, Eugene McCarthy, and George McGovern. So taken with Zien's dedication, during the 1980s the latter Democrat told a Milwaukee Jewish group that "When it comes to Burt, we're all Zienists."³⁰

In the 1980s, Zien retired and refocused his energies. He took sculpting classes at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee and became fixated on the art. In the 1990s, Zien and his second wife moved to the Boston area to be closer to his family. In summer 2002, Zien agreed to an interview with the author about his TVA and McCarthy Era experiences. But a few months before the scheduled interview could be conducted Zien died on December 22, 2003 near Boston, Massachusetts at the age of ninety.³¹

The author conducted interviews with the two still living members of the "Knoxville Fifteen." The first, Henry Hart, found academic success after the Remington

³⁰ Quote in Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

trials. In 1955, Hart gained tenure in the Political Science Department at the University of Wisconsin, where he focused his research on river valley development, water resources politics, and Indian administration of natural resources. His dissertation on the Missouri River Valley appeared as a book in 1957, followed by a more general volume on the administrative aspects of river valleys which was published in 1961. His early childhood in India led to research into the emerging nation. During his academic career, Hart published three books on India and its history. He became a full professor in 1959 and spent the remainder of his career at the University of Wisconsin, retiring in 1982.³²

After the Remington trials, the FBI launched new investigations into Hart's past. In February 1958, Hart applied for a passport to complete a six-month research project abroad. Hart planned to visit England, France, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, Pakistan, India, Iraq, Iran, Malaya, Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, Japan, and the Philippines to evaluate American university programs and develop courses at the University of Wisconsin. In the application, Hart answered "yes" to the question regarding previous membership in the Communist Party, writing that he had been a member from July 1937 to January 1939. As a result, the FBI launched an inquiry on Hart. The Bureau confirmed that Hart had belonged to the Communist Party while in Knoxville, but little more came from that effort.³³

³² "Henry C. Hart," *Contemporary Authors Online*, Gale, 2002; Author's interview with Henry Hart, Madison, Wisconsin, 27 April 2002 [transcript], 1; Henry C. Hart, *The Dark Missouri* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1957); idem, *New India's Rivers* (Calcutta: Orient Longmans, 1956); idem, *Campus India: An Appraisal of American College Programs in India* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1961); idem, *Administrative Aspects of River Valley Development* (New Delhi: Asia Publishing House, 1961); idem, ed., *Indira Gandhi's India: A Political System Reappraised* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1976).

³³ FBI Washington Report, 6 October 1969, FBI file #121-11415-17; Frederick H. Schmidt to J. Edgar Hoover, 25 August 1969, FBI file #121-11415-8.

In the late 1960s, however, the FBI began a more expanded investigation of Hart. In 1967, Hart had worked as a consultant for the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare on a number of projects. Two years later, in July 1969, that Department appointed Hart as an Expert/Consultant to participate as a language and areas studies expert in the evaluation of proposals for National Defense Education Act Language and Area Programs. The position required Hart to work approximately thirty days within the next year on the project. Nonetheless, this appointment triggered an FBI investigation to determine if Hart had resumed any subversive activities. The FBI reviewed reports on Hart from the 1940s and 1950s, as well as scheduled interviews with colleagues, neighbors, university administrators, and his former TVA colleagues. On October 7, 1969, FBI agents interviewed Muriel Williams at her Cambridge home. Williams confirmed that she and Hart had belonged to the CP during the 1930s, but declined to provide details on that “regretful period.” She did admit that her association with Hart had continued since 1939, but that she had no reason to doubt his loyalty to the United States. Further, Williams described Hart “as a man of absolute integrity, strong character, who possesses reputable associates.” Ten days later, on October 17, 1969, FBI agents interviewed Burton Zien. Similar to his 1955 HUAC testimony, Zien explained that his 1950 FBI statement contained all of his relevant information on Hart and the CP. Zien further noted that he had not communicated with Hart since 1939. Unable to demonstrate that Hart was engaged in any subversive activities, in late-1969 the FBI closed its investigation of Hart.³⁴

³⁴ FBI Washington Report, 6 October 1969, FBI file #121-11415-17; SAC St. Louis to SAC Washington, 4 October 1969, FBI Director to SAC Milwaukee, 19 September 1969, all in FBI file #121-

Similar to Burton Zien, during the 1970s and 1980s Henry Hart remained silent on his CP past and focused on his career and on supporting Wisconsin's Democratic Party. But during the past fifteen years, Hart has welcomed questions on his TVA years. In 1990, Gary May interviewed Hart about his first Knoxville roommate William Remington. May's resulting book on Remington included a chapter on CP activities within the early TVA. This author first contacted Henry Hart in January 2002. The following April, the author conducted an extensive interview with Hart about his 1930s TVA experience and the subsequent government inquiries. During the interview Hart shared his recollections of 1930s Knoxville, the Smoky Mountain Hiking Club, the AFGE, labor organizing, work as a TVA messenger, square dances, trade union activity, Communist Party meetings, and numerous associates in Tennessee. As for the TVA CP members, Hart counted himself, Howard Bridgman, Pat Todd, Mabel Abercrombie, Kit Buckles, Bernard Borah, and William Remington. Hart viewed TVA as a tremendous period in his life, which exposed him to a comprehensive view of social, political, and economic development.³⁵

The second part of the author's interview with Henry Hart focused on the subsequent investigations into TVA communists. Hart found it more difficult to recollect from this period. During the Dies Committee investigations, Hart explained that he initially decided to reveal only his CP membership to the Dies Committee and not offer any names. However, because of enormous pressure, Hart found it difficult to keep from

11415-[?]; Frederick H. Schmidt to J. Edgar Hoover, 25 August 1969, FBI file #121-11415-8; first quote SAC Boston Report, 8 October 1969, FBI file #121-11415-19.

³⁵ May, *Un-American Activities*; Author's interview with Hart, 27 April 2002 [transcript], 15, 17-18.

breaking his self-imposed vow. In hindsight, Hart wishes he would have been strong enough to refuse to testify and embrace the Fifth Amendment. Hart explained,

it would have had very severe consequences for me, including my future career as I look back. So in terms of what really happened, the result was good, but that does not relieve my conscience. I wish I had had the guts to do that and to have paid the price the rest of my life.

As for his appearance before the Senate during David Lilienthal's confirmation hearings, Hart remembered being "scared to death" and lucky to have escaped further inquiry. On the issue of Remington's conviction, Hart stated that "all it would have taken to put me in exactly the same place was some determined enemy who has inside knowledge who wanted to make something of it." Remington's murder brought Hart guilt for his cooperation with the FBI, but in a later telephone interview with the author Hart explained that extreme hubris led to Remington's downfall and not the testimony of others.³⁶

Near the end of the author's 2002 interview with Hart, the question of surviving documents and letters emerged. Before the author could offer assistance, Hart climbed a rickety 12-foot ladder to his attic and retrieved a box of old papers related to his Congressional testimony. Hart gave them to the author for donation to the University of Tennessee, Special Collections, where they now reside. Another in-person interview with Hart during 2004 and a handful of phone interviews revealed similar information on Hart's complex TVA experience. On these occasions he emphasized that his contributions during the 1930s were not significant. Instead, he found that TVA offered

³⁶ Author's interview with Hart, 27 April 2002 [transcript], first and second quotes 20, third and fourth quotes 24, 19-25; Author's phone interview with Henry Hart, 18 July 2002.

him and other Americans a unique opportunity to enact change. At age 89, Hart and his wife live in Madison, Wisconsin.³⁷

Mabel Abercrombie Mansfield left little record behind of her activities after the Remington trials of the 1950s. A resident of Atlanta, Mansfield worked for a number of years as a dietician at the Georgia Military Academy. Historian Gary May interviewed her in 1990, and her TVA recollections appeared in his subsequent book on Remington. Although a resident of Georgia for many years, in the late-1990s Mansfield moved to Eureka, California to be closer to her son. The author first contacted Mansfield in early 2002 and she agreed to an interview. In August 2003, the author met with Mansfield and learned a great deal about the 1930s TVA. Mansfield's memory proved fuzzy, but she expressed great fondness for 1930s Knoxville, especially the friends she made while working for TVA. She spoke the most highly of conservationist and Appalachian Trail founder Benton MacKaye, and provided details of hikes in the Great Smoky Mountains. Mansfield became part of a small group of TVA intellectuals who took great interest in labor organizing. As part of this group, she confirmed that she joined the Communist Party along with Henry Hart, Howard Bridgman, Kit Buckles, Bernard Borah, Merwin Todd, Muriel Williams, and William Remington. But Mansfield made it clear that their work for the Communist Party in the 1930s was hardly noticeable and had later been unfairly judged. When discussing the Remington trials, Mansfield's memory seemed to fade. Even if she did have additional information, she did not want to share it. At age

³⁷ See, Henry C. Hart Papers, 1939-2002, MS 2575, UT Special Collections [hereinafter Hart Papers, UT Special Collections]. Author's interview with Hart, 27 April 2002 [transcript], 25, 31.

93, Mabel Abercrombie Mansfield lives in Eureka, California.³⁸

After the Remington trials, Howard Bridgman appeared only briefly in FBI reports. In fact, an initial Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request did not render a name file for Bridgman. A second FOIA request for all files with cross-references to Bridgman yielded further anomalies. Unlike all of the FBI files about his fourteen TVA colleagues, Bridgman's cross-reference compilation file is heavily redacted and just under 100 pages. The content of the file is equally unimpressive, with over one-third of the pages copies of newspaper articles related to the Remington case. As a cooperative government witness, Bridgman may have been able to protect himself—and his legacy—with his testimony in nearly all of the Remington inquisitions. The post-Remington reports that appeared in Bridgman's compilation file dealt with loyalty investigations for several federal employees.³⁹

Instead of participating in more HUAC and FBI investigations, Bridgman spent the majority of his post-1955 life in the classroom. He taught economics at Tufts University, until accepting a similar position in 1966. Thereafter, Bridgman served as an associate professor of economics at Southeastern Massachusetts University, which later became the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth. As a research economist, Bridgman took the most interest in labor markets, public policy, balance of payments,

³⁸ FBI Summary Report, 27 August 1951, William Remington FBI file #101-1185-62, 475; May, *Un-American Activities*; author's telephone interview with Mabel Abercrombie Mansfield, Eureka, California, 3 January 2002; author's interview with Mabel Abercrombie Mansfield, Eureka, California, 23 August 2003.

³⁹ FBI Knoxville Report, 15 November 1955, FBI file #138-3310-13, FBI Boston, 14 April 1955, FBI file #124-8524-26, FBI Milwaukee Report, 7 September 1961, FBI file #121-10713-33, FBI Detroit Report, 12 September 1961, FBI file #121-10713-34, all part of Howard Bridgman's FBI Compilation File of Cross-References.

and international finance. A member of the American Economic Association, Bridgman's research focused on writing economics textbooks for students in developing countries. One of his colleagues remembered that while that colleague was a student at the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth, he learned that Bridgman had been a CP member and later served as an FBI informant. The colleague further confirmed that Bridgman's CP past was common knowledge within the Economics Department. But within the academic community, Bridgman found little opposition to his past beliefs and activities. Bridgman served on the faculty at the North Dartmouth institution until he retired in 1981.⁴⁰

Bridgman began to reminisce about 1930s Knoxville in the 1970s. In a series of letters to Anne Broome, the widow of Knoxville outdoorsman Harvey Broome, Bridgman assessed his TVA years. In April 1973, Bridgman expressed his disdain for the agency, writing: "I was deeply 'burned' by the TVA—I think now in thinking back, by the bureaucracy of it and lack of any clear cut path upward—which was then one of my illusions . . . [.] but then subsequently to have the whole Valley handed over to big industry. . . ."⁴¹ But as an economist, Bridgman found great potential with the regional development components of TVA, especially international applications. Just after his retirement, Bridgman confessed to Broome that TVA had been his first career, which

⁴⁰ *The Standard-Times* [New Bedford, Massachusetts], 10 July 1996; American Economic Association, *1974 Directory of Members*, Rendigs Fels, ed. (Nashville: American Economic Association, 1974), 46; William Hogan to the author, 3 December 2001, e-mail in author's possession.

⁴¹ Quote in Howard Bridgman to Anne Broome, 8 April 1973, folder: Bridgman, Harvey Broome Papers, Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection, Knox County Public Library System, Knoxville, Tennessee [hereinafter Broome Papers, McClung].

“ended in profound disappointment.”⁴² Still, Bridgman listed positive TVA experiences, including his service on the AFGE’s foreign films committee. In the letters to Anne, Bridgman also recalled fond memories of hiking in the Great Smoky Mountains. In an April 1978 letter Bridgman declared: “I must get my legs on them [Smoky Mountains] again, and surprisingly many of the haunts are still fresh in my mind.”⁴³

After retirement, Bridgman did not openly discuss his TVA years and 1950s testimony. In the late-1980s, Bridgman declined Gary May’s request for an interview about his role in the Remington trials. In 1993, May completed his book on Remington, which drew from Bridgman’s publicly available printed testimony. May’s interviews with Henry Hart, Muriel Williams, and Mabel Mansfield also helped reconstruct Bridgman’s 1930s and 1950s activities. Still, their recollections that Bridgman was “stiff and humorless” and a “cold fish” gave an incomplete picture of an important member of the 1930s TVA group. Three years later, on July 5, 1996, Bridgman died at the age of 85 in New Bedford, Massachusetts.⁴⁴

In the process of cleaning out Bridgman’s office, a small non-descript red book with “Daily Reminder 1936” in gold letters on the cover, found its way into the New Bedford Free Public Library’s donation box. The library has the world’s third largest collection of American whaling materials, a large amount of nineteenth century Quaker

⁴² Howard Bridgman to Anne Broome, 24 February 1974, quote Howard Bridgman to Anne Broome, 30 August 1981, all in folder: Bridgman, Broome Papers, McClung.

⁴³ Bridgman to Broome 30 August 1981, quote Howard Bridgman to Anne Broome, 8 April 1978, all in folder: Bridgman, Broome Papers, McClung.

⁴⁴ *The Standard-Times* [New Bedford, Massachusetts], 10 July 1996; first quote May, *Un-American Activities*, 28; second quote author’s interview with Hart, 27 April 2002 [transcript], 8.

materials, and a New England literary collection.⁴⁵ Whether catalogers or those working in the library's genealogy and archives department considered adding the book to its holdings remains uncertain. Ultimately, the red book ended up in the library's book sale and fell into private hands. After a few years, the owner decided to sell the item on eBay.com. In late-October 2001, the book's owner listed the item on eBay.com as a TVA worker's diary, 1934-1936. The seller offered a handwritten diary of about 56 pages (approximately 13,000 words) kept by Howard Bridgman, a TVA employee, between early 1934 until April 7, 1936. Although having read only one-third of the diary, the seller explained that Bridgman talked about labor relations, union activities, and farmers displaced by TVA.⁴⁶

On November 7, 2001, after fewer than ten total bids, the author purchased the diary for a moderate amount. Two weeks later, the small red book arrived in Knoxville. With the expectation that the diary would be a good editing project with publication potential in a local or regional history journal, the author began reading and transcribing. However, the 1936 activities of Howard Bridgman proved to be much more significant than the author expected. During the first four months of his TVA experience, Bridgman recorded important events in TVA's history, such as the opening of Norris Dam and the decision in the George Ashwander case against the agency, while documenting the mundane details of working in the TVA mailroom. But Bridgman's discussion of the southern labor movement, the Communist Party, and the Highlander Folk School proved

⁴⁵ "New Bedford Free Public Library Home Page," at <http://www.ci.new-bedford.ma.us/SERVICES/LIBRARY/library2.htm>, consulted 9 December 2005.

⁴⁶ eBay.com description, "TVA, 1934-1936 Worker Diary," in author's possession, 5 November 2001.

to be the most interesting. Research on Bridgman confirmed his TVA employment beginning in 1936, and his later participation in 1950s HUAC hearings. A far more interesting examination of TVA's early radical history began with a closer look at Howard Bridgman's diary.

A few weeks after transcribing the diary, the author contacted the Bridgman family. Unaware that the diary existed, in December 2001 one of Bridgman's sons traveled to Knoxville to examine the item. That son requested that the diary be returned to the family, but after much contemplation the author provided the family with a transcript and a photocopy of the diary, and later placed the item in the Special Collections Library at the University of Tennessee. Bridgman's son also expressed concern and interest in the author's research, but at the time both parties believed that Bridgman would be the sole focus of the project. Within the next year, the focus of this study expanded far beyond Howard Bridgman's brief 1930s journal entries.

Bridgman's short missive served as a roadmap to a much larger story into the early history of the agency and the lives of a handful of largely forgotten individuals. The diary mentioned meetings, hikes, and discussions with Mabel Abercrombie, Benton MacKaye, Myles Horton, Kit Buckles, Harvey Broome, Bernard Borah, Elizabeth Todd, and Howard Frazier. Research into Bridgman's associates expanded the project to include other former TVA employees involved in the 1950s trials of William Remington. After numerous FOIA requests and a handful of oral history interviews, a small group of fifteen individuals emerged to characterize the early radical years of TVA. Bridgman's diary represents a small piece of a complicated legacy, but its return to Knoxville in 2001

proved to be the necessary spark to reconstruct the lives and deeds of the “Knoxville Fifteen.”

After the Remington trials of the 1950s, those surviving members of the “Knoxville Fifteen” returned to their lives. While Henry Hart and Howard Bridgman found success and safety in academia, Howard Frazier, John Frantz, and Forrest Benson maintained long careers with the federal government. Gifted artist David Stone Martin achieved great commercial success despite his past testimony and radical activities. Kit Buckles, Burton Zien, and Muriel Williams re-invented themselves after the 1950s and escaped the threat of further investigations. Pat and Elizabeth Todd suffered perhaps the most traumatic effects of refusing to testify during the McCarthy Era. Following their divorce, Pat Todd suffered a mental breakdown, while Elizabeth disappeared from the historical record. Although both participated in the Remington trials and investigations, even less is known about Mabel Mansfield and Christine Benson.

Scattered far and wide, the “Knoxville Fifteen” never reunited. Only Henry Hart, Muriel Williams, and Christine Benson kept in touch. Pat Todd and Howard Bridgman made return visits to Knoxville, but a reunion of their TVA colleagues in the “scruffy little city” never occurred. Not until the discovery of Howard Bridgman’s diary in 2001, via the internet, did this group of fifteen individuals reunite, but this time only on paper. Their deeds have been publicly available information for many years, but only now have their complex legacies been examined. As a group, the “Knoxville Fifteen” exhibited both unique and common traits of their generation. The transition from Depression to World War II to Cold War tested the 1930s ideals of this first generation of the twentieth

century. Their perceived advocacy of black enfranchisement, southern unionization, communist governance, redistribution of wealth, industrial education, and overthrow of the government, ran counter to the principles of Cold War America. During the McCarthy Era, they stood little chance to successfully defend themselves. Understanding these perceptions and misconceptions of the early Cold War provides insights into modern day investigations of those suspected of un-American activities.

Conclusion

In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower searched for a new chairman of the Tennessee Valley Authority's board of directors. During its first twenty years, the agency had completed twenty dam projects on the Tennessee River, which generated electricity, controlled flooding, and created economic opportunities for seven states. That April, Eisenhower called to offer the position to Robert Neyland, a former Brigadier General in the United States Army during World Wars I and II, then-Athletic Director at the University of Tennessee. The most successful football coach in the University of Tennessee's history, Neyland led the Volunteers for 21 seasons and in 1951 brought the team its first NCAA-recognized national championship. Tennessee's most beloved football coach responded to the President's offer reportedly saying: "You do me a great honor Ike, but I'd do you irreparable harm because I believe half those sons-of-bitches over there are communists."¹

Robert Neyland's suspicions of TVA and other New Deal initiatives were neither new nor unique to him, but were his estimates and concerns realistic? Had TVA in fact been a safe harbor for dangerous radicals since its inception or had the McCarthy Era merely amplified anti-communist rhetoric? And if communists, whether few or many, existed within the ranks of TVA, what had they accomplished? The answers to these questions put the significance of the "Knoxville Fifteen" into historical perspective and expand our understanding of the early TVA, the New Deal, and the McCarthy Era.

¹ Quote from, Bob Gilbert, *Neyland: The Gridiron General* (Savannah, GA: Golden Coast Publishing Company, 1990), 202; "Dam Was On Neyland's Playbook, Too," *Knoxville News Sentinel*, 23 September 2003, A16; *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, 5 April 1943.

The experiences of the “Knoxville Fifteen” represent how a handful of “little people” got swept up in the trends and forces of the eras through which they lived and either did or did not survive. During their brief TVA tenures, they were active in labor organizing, supporting social change, advocating economic reform, and, for some, becoming members of the Communist Party. Some were radical intellectuals, but none were bold enough to seriously propose overthrowing the government. They joined young thinkers from other New Deal agencies to support the Popular Front movement until it collapsed in 1939. Despite the fact that their CP affiliations were brief and that they exhibited no evidence of dangerous tendencies, government investigators examined their youthful indiscretions for the next fifteen years, while probing TVA.

Beginning in 1940, an investigation by the Dies Committee revealed that a small group of communists, perhaps as many as 20, had worked for TVA. At the end of their investigation, the Dies Committee reported that only three out of 18,000 TVA employees had admitted to being communists. The three identified communists had worked in low-level positions with TVA and all had later renounced their CP memberships. Despite these miniscule findings, after World War II anti-communist leaders out to damage TVA and protect America fanned the smoldering issue. Subsequent investigations expanded the list of potential TVA communists, confirmed the membership of several more, accused the agency’s top leaders of associating with radicals, and brought the charges to a national audience. Through the lens of McCarthyism, 1930s TVA radicals appeared threatening to established American values.

FBI and HUAC investigators focused their efforts on a small number of former TVA employees who might be pressured to talk and possibly connect the Reds in the

mailroom with the Reds in the boardroom. The members of the “Knoxville Fifteen,” faced numerous inquisitions and inquisitors during the 1940s and 1950s and reacted in one of three ways. First, with the charge of perjury or the communist label before them, some members of the group fully cooperated and provided the government with names, information, but most often fuzzy recollections of events long since past. A second group of individuals testified when required and provided investigators with limited and often redundant lists of names and data. The remaining members of the “Knoxville Fifteen” embraced the Fifth Amendment, which brought mixed consequences. Taken together, the combined testimony and statements of the “Knoxville Fifteen” and the massive amount of collected background information on each member revealed no real connection between TVA’s top leadership and TVA’s 1930s communists from the mailroom.

Two events in 1954 closed the door on further investigations of TVA communists. In August 1954, Eisenhower filled the chairmanship of the TVA board with Army Corps of Engineers Brigadier General Herbert D. Vogel. Unlike many previous TVA board chairmen, Vogel had not started with TVA in the 1930s and thus brought new perspectives to the agency. Eisenhower assured agency leaders that he would support TVA, an agency that Eisenhower once called an example of creeping socialism, and would work closely with Vogel to get TVA in line with other government agencies. His later work to pass the Bond Revenue Act, which allowed TVA to finance its power program through bonds, proved to be Vogel’s greatest achievement ² Later in 1954,

² Erwin C. Hargrove, *Prisoners of Myth: The Leadership of the Tennessee Valley Authority, 1933-1990*, 2nd ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 140-41, 150; *New York Times*, 18 June

William Remington, a member of the “Knoxville Fifteen” and suspected communist, died at the hands of his fellow inmates in the federal penitentiary in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. Remington’s death symbolized the end of fifteen years of government investigations into the alleged radical nature of TVA and its employees. His passing, just one week before the Senate condemned Joseph McCarthy, somehow seemed to satisfy those Cold Warriors intent on rooting communists out of TVA.

By 1955, Robert Neyland’s concerns about TVA proved unfounded. After hundreds of interviews, thousands of pages of FBI files, and dozens of official proceedings, by the mid-1950s government investigators determined that the threat of a handful of TVA communists had long since expired—if, indeed, it had ever existed at all. Their perceived radical activities were during a unique period of history and could only be judged in the context of the 1930s. Still, the Cold War climate of the 1950s made it difficult to erase completely the communist label from those accused. For the “Knoxville Fifteen,” only a few had suffered severe consequences, while most recovered to find personal and professional success. The tenures of TVA board chairmen David Lilienthal and Gordon Clapp had also helped transition the agency away from its early idealistic visions for social planning and focus TVA on electric power production and industrial development in the Tennessee Valley. If other communists, not named during the inquisitions of the “Knoxville Fifteen,” did work for the 1950s TVA, they went undetected by the FBI and registered little if any activity.

The members of the “Knoxville Fifteen” represented the kind of entry-level employees the early TVA attracted—young, idealistic, educated, overqualified, and ambitious. The “Knoxville Fifteen” and many of their associates at the lowest strata of TVA took great interest in supporting white-collar unionization, improving working conditions, rising in the organization, promoting TVA’s social programs, teaching Workers’ Education courses, and exploring the limits of the New Deal. These employees also expanded their efforts beyond TVA to participate in local and regional labor organizing activities, raising funds for national efforts such as the Spanish Civil War, and joining the Communist Party during the Popular Front era. Besides their local and regional contributions, the individual and collective activities of the “Knoxville Fifteen” during the 1930s are also significant because they mirrored the experiences of other young idealistic New Dealers trying to make sense of the Depression, the South, and themselves.

But this generation of naïve thinkers quickly paid for their youthful indiscretions during the McCarthy Era. The “Knoxville Fifteen” gained new notoriety during this difficult period, as a group which represented many of the fears of Cold War America and the radical elements of New Deal agencies such as TVA. Unable to shield themselves from government inquiry during an intense period of anti-communist sentiment, the members of the “Knoxville Fifteen” faced difficult options. Like many of their contemporaries facing the same inquisitors, their individual decisions to cooperate, withhold certain information, or embrace the Fifth Amendment brought varied consequences.

Modern day parallels make the “Knoxville Fifteen” even more relevant. Over a half century since last questioned by the FBI about William Remington, in 2002 Henry Hart assessed the significance of the “Knoxville Fifteen” and pointed to the outcomes.

Hart explained:

This little band of people of committed people . . . energized each other and gave confidence to each other to try impossible, difficult things. We accomplished more than we could have done either as individuals or as people who didn’t have this burning ideological energy. And at the same time I learned rather quickly, but by hindsight, that this process cost too much. It cost too much because it was a very presumptuous, inadequate ideological engine that we had accepted to drive us.

Hart regretted joining the Communist Party, saying “I’m not proud of my naiveté in thinking [of] the Communist Party as a way to advance, I mean certainly looking back it retarded whatever I was doing.” As for his work with HUAC, the FBI, and other government investigators, Hart stated “I’m proud of the things I did. I’m just not proud of the way I handled [it].”³

Like most of his 1930s TVA colleagues, Hart found professional success and personal happiness after the Remington trials. Unlike Pat Todd, Hart came to grips with the events of the McCarthy Era and his brief flirtation with the Communist Party. But Hart remains cautious of the government’s power to investigate individuals. After my first interview with Henry Hart, I asked his permission to request his FBI file. Several weeks later, Hart wrote back saying that he wanted to help my research, but could not grant me access to his FBI file during his lifetime. Hart explained that releasing compromised and inaccurate information to the world would give credence to the

³ Author’s interview with Henry Hart, Madison, Wisconsin, 27 April 2002 [transcript], first quote, 25, second and third quotes, 20.

government's investigations and conclusions long after both of us were gone. Instead, Hart decided that answering my numerous questions would document his Knoxville tenure, help him be cleansed of the events of the McCarthy Era, record his side of the investigations, and explain the importance of historical context.

At the time of the interview, Hart's refusal made little sense to me. But with the completion of this project, I can now better understand Hart's decision. Although I value access to government information, I now question the kind of information that the government can collect on its citizens. Government files on each member of the "Knoxville Fifteen" record decidedly more personal information than professional activities. These government records contain more than enough background information to reconstruct the lives of fifteen largely unknown individuals, from their earliest days until the end of their lives, instead of just documenting the events that related to the periods being investigated. Because of such thorough files and the passage of time, historians unable to interview participants and their associates may be forced to rely solely on these government sources and thus accept the government's side of the story as what really happened.

For this dissertation, I was able to speak with Henry Hart, Mabel Mansfield, and other contemporaries to draw my own conclusions. From those conversations I now understand that the "Knoxville Fifteen" were significant not because they were a group of accused communists, but because they were a group of young idealists trapped by larger historical forces that they could not control. It would be far more difficult to reach that conclusion by just poring over thousands of pages of government documents, which made the "Knoxville Fifteen" look much more dangerous than they ever dreamed of

becoming—or in fact ever were. Although I did not discuss present day politics and events with those I interviewed, their recollections and choices provide post-9/11 America with important lessons on individual freedoms, civil liberties, government authority, and the power of propaganda.

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Department of the Army

Name Files:

Bernard Borah

Department of the Navy

Name Files:

John Frantz

Department of State

Name Files:

John Frantz

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Name Files:

Harry Alber
Christine Benson
Forrest Benson
Bernard Borah
Howard Allen Bridgman (cross-reference composite file)
Katherine Buckles
Horace Paul Bryan
Gordon Clapp
Paul T. David
Martin Dies
James L. Fly
John Frantz
Laurent B. Frantz
Howard Frazier
Edward Glazek
Clarence Hiskey
David Lilienthal
Kenneth Malcolm
David Stone Martin
Muriel Mather
William Remington
Elliott W. Schryver
Nathan Gregory Silvermaster
Lucille Thornburgh
Elizabeth Todd
Merwin Todd
Theodore Wellman
Burton Zien

Numbered Files:

74-1379
100-35-3259
100-10189
121-6159
121-6159-1037
121-7423
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Internet Resources

- Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), "ACRL Code of Ethics for Special Collections Librarians,"
http://www.rbms.nd.edu/standards/code_of_ethics.shtml
- Contemporary Authors Online*, Gale, 2002-2003
- EBay, <http://www.ebay.com>
- Navy Medical Art of the Abbott Collection,
<http://www.history.navy.mil/ac/medica/medic1.htm>
- New Bedford Free Public Library,
<http://www.ci.new-bedford.ma.us/SERVICES/LIBRARY/library2.htm>

Promoting Enduring Peace, <http://www.pepeace.org/>

Social Security Death Index, <http://ssdi.genealogy.rootsweb.com/>

Society of American Archivists, "A Code of Ethics for Archivists With Commentary,"
http://www.archivists.org/governance/handbook/app_ethics.asp

Vita

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