Resolution on the Federal Government Security Program

The federal government's employee security program has come in for much justifiable criticism in recent months. Although the purpose behind this program is perfectly sound, namely to keep Communists and fellow-travelers out of the government, it has been used too often by unscrupulous men for cheap political advantage.

During the 1954 Congressional campaign Vice-President Richard Nixon reached a new low in dirty politics when he charged that "thousands of Communists, fellow-travelers and other security risks have been removed from the federal payrolls by the Eisenhower Administration" and that "blindness and ignorance on the threat of Communism resulted in clearing and hiring of over 6,000 security risks which this Administration has investigated and fired."

Nixon's clever smear was intended to mislead American voters into thinking there were literally "thousands of Communists" in the government due to the Democratic Party. But Mr. Nixon knew full well that such was not the case. To this very date the Administration has not named one single real live Communist it ousted from the government. Yet in order to smear the Democratic Party, which under President Truman did more to fight Communism both here at home and abroad than any Administration in history, Mr. Nixon resorted to the famous numbers game.

There are several serious flaws in the present security system which have worked great injustice on thousands of loyal Americans employed by the government.

First of all, much of the derogatory information used as a basis for security ousters is mere rumor and opinion without any basis in fact given by persons who are not under oath and who remain completely anonymous.

Although President Eisenhower publicly stated that a man is entitled to know and to face his accusers, he has done absolutely nothing to see that such is the case in the federal security program. Nameless informers are the rule not the exception. Most of these informers who supply derogatory information are not professionally trained government security officers whose identity must remain secret in order for them to function effectively.

An employee charged as being a security risk is often times not even told exactly what the accusations against him are. He faces a blind alley with no knowledge of his accusers or what he is specifically charged with. His defense, therefore, becomes extremely difficult if not impossible.
To make matters even worse, the standards as to what constitutes a security risk are so vague as to apply to almost anyone if the government sees fit. Within recent months we have witnessed several cases in which individuals were found suspect not because of any wrongful conduct on their part, but because members of their family at some time belonged to a subversive organization. This shows to what ridiculous lengths this whole business has gone. Guilt by association now apparently means you must denounce and refuse to associate even with one's own parents in order to be safe.

This year Congress, over the opposition of the Administration, passed a resolution setting up a 12 man high-level commission to go into the entire government security program and to study how it has been working and what improvements and changes should be made in it. This commission study is a most healthy sign, and it is hoped that it will result in a return to sanity by the federal government in the operation of its security program.

Therefore be it resolved: That the NAACP Civil Rights Conference here assembled urges the Eisenhower administration to correct forthwith the glaring errors in the present security system which has worked such hardship on many decent and loyal Americans.

An accused employee should have complete knowledge as to the charges against him which form the basis for his ouster from government service. He should also have the right to face and cross-examine under oath those who have made derogatory statements and charges against him, with the exception of professional security officers such as FBI agents whose identity must of necessity be kept secret. The standards of conduct which form the basis for ouster as a security risk should be more definite and reasonable. A board of appeal should also be established to be made up of competent and respected citizens appointed by the President. Its function would be to consider and make final rulings on any appeals made by government employees discharged as security risks.