ment employees. There is little doubt that engaged in criminal activities, and consequences of dismissal from the Government on charges of sex perversions, it is believed that consideration should be given to establishing a board of review or similar appeal machinery whereby all persons who are dismissed from the Government on these charges may, if they so desire, have their cases reviewed by higher authority outside of the employing agency. No such appeal machinery exists at the present time.

READING AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What factors do you think gave rise to the concern some senators had about the presence of homosexual men in government employment? How do they define the threats posed by these individuals?

2. What does this Senate investigation reveal to you about the extent to which concerns over national security impacted the personal lives of Americans? What evidence do you see that the senators balanced privacy and civil rights concerns with national security interests? How relevant are these issues today?

25-4 | Investigating the Communist Threat

CHARLOTTE ORAM, Testimony Before the Senate Committee on Investigations (1954)

Senator Joseph McCarthy (R-Wisconsin), chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Investigations, launched a campaign to identify communist infiltration in the federal government. Thousands of Americans were affected by his allegations, many of them based on false or inaccurate evidence. His excesses eventually led to his censure by the Senate. In 1954, Charlotte Oram, a suspected member of the Communist Party, faced questions from the committee’s chief counsel, Roy Cohn, about whether Annie Lee Moss, an African American woman who worked as a communications clerk in the Pentagon, was also a communist. Moss was a target because McCarthy had charged, erroneously, that she had access to the codes deciphering diplomatic messages.

MR. COHN: Could I get your full name?

MRS. ORAM: Charlotte Oram.

MR. COHN: And for the information of others present, counsel is Mr. Joseph Forer of the Washington Bar, who has been before the committee on prior occasions.

MR. FORER: That is correct.

MR. COHN: You have been before the committee on prior occasions and you know the rules?

MR. FORER: Yes, sir; I do.

MR. COHN: Now, Mrs. Oram, in 1944 were you a member of the northeast branch of the Communist party with a woman named Annie Lee Moss?

MRS. ORAM: I decline to answer that question on the basis of my privilege under the Fifth Amendment not to be a witness against myself.

MR. COHN: Did you hold membership card 53562 in the Communist party during those years?

MRS. ORAM: My answer to that question is on the same basis.

MR. COHN: Do you know Annie Lee Moss?

MRS. ORAM: I am sorry.

MR. COHN: Do you know Annie Lee Moss?

MRS. ORAM: That name doesn't mean anything to me.

MR. COHN: Can you name for us the members of the Communist cell to which you belonged?

MRS. ORAM: I decline to answer that question on the basis I stated previously.

MR. COHN: Are you a Communist as of today?

MRS. ORAM: I decline to answer that question on the same basis.

SENATOR JACKSON: I had a question. What is your occupation?

MRS. ORAM: I am a housewife.

SENATOR JACKSON: What is your occupation?

MRS. ORAM: I am a housewife.

SENATOR JACKSON: What does your husband do?

MRS. ORAM: He works in a drugstore.

SENATOR JACKSON: He works here in Washington, D.C.?

MRS. ORAM: Well, in Arlington County.

SENATOR JACKSON: Did you know a Mrs. Markward?

MRS. ORAM: I decline to answer that question on the basis that I have stated previously.

SENATOR JACKSON: That is all.

SENATOR MCCLELLAN: May I ask you a question? Are you now employed in the government in any way?

MRS. ORAM: No, I am not.

SENATOR MCCLELLAN: Have you ever been?

MRS. ORAM: No, I never have been.

SENATOR MCCLELLAN: You are declining to answer whether you are a Communist or have ever been a Communist? Is that correct?

MRS. ORAM: I am declining to answer that question.

SENATOR MCCLELLAN: You are unwilling to cooperate with your government and its agencies to the extent of giving it any information that you may have that the government or its agencies may need in order to properly function and discharge its responsibilities in preserving our country, are you?

[The witness consulted with her counsel.]

MRS. ORAM: I decline to answer the questions for the reasons I gave.

1Mary Stalcup Markward, a member of the Communist Party, had cast suspicion on Annie Lee Moss when she claimed that Moss's name appeared on the party's membership roster.
SENATOR MCCLELLAN: Are you an American citizen?
MRS. ORAM: Yes.
SENATOR MCCLELLAN: Do you owe any obligations to your country as a citizen?
MRS. ORAM: Certainly.
SENATOR MCCLELLAN: Do you regard an obligation to your country that protects you—
MRS. ORAM: I don’t believe I understand that.
SENATOR MCCLELLAN: Yes, you know what I mean. Do you regard an obligation to the country in which you have citizenship to try to serve it?
MRS. ORAM: Yes, of course.
SENATOR MCCLELLAN: You do?
MRS. ORAM: Certainly.
SENATOR MCCLELLAN: Do you think that you are serving your country as a good citizen and as a patriotic citizen when you refuse to give information that your government needs?
[The witness consulted with her counsel.]
MRS. ORAM: I believe it is my duty and every citizen’s duty to protect and uphold the Constitution and I believe that in relying upon my constitutional rights, I am certainly carrying that out.
SENATOR MCCLELLAN: Is there any part of the Constitution that you hold allegiance to except the Fifth Amendment?
MRS. ORAM: I hold allegiance to every part, including the First Amendment.
SENATOR MCCLELLAN: One of the parts of the Constitution is to preserve the United States, is it not?
MRS. ORAM: That is right.
SENATOR MCCLELLAN: Are you going to contribute anything towards preserving your country?
MRS. ORAM: I believe I am doing that.
SENATOR MCCLELLAN: If you are willing to do that, will you tell us and give us the information that has been asked as a good citizen of this country?
MRS. ORAM: I give you what information I feel I can and should give you.
SENATOR MCCLELLAN: What information you feel you can and should give?
MRS. ORAM: Under the rights of the Constitution.
SENATOR MCCLELLAN: Is there any information that you can, or that you are willing to give us, under the Constitution?
MRS. ORAM: That is rather a broad question.
SENATOR MCCLELLAN: It is a broad question, but is there any, and I make it broad for your benefit? If you can indicate any information that you are willing to give us, to help to this fight against communism and to preserve our country. Is there any, and I make it broad to cover everything? Is there any that you are willing to give us?
MRS. ORAM: Well, of course.
SENATOR MCCLELLAN: All right. Tell us. What is it? Mention one thing.
MRS. ORAM: Well, I don’t know. I would have to have a specific question, I can’t answer anything out of the blue.
SENATOR MCCLELLAN: Are you willing to help your government fight this conspiracy of communism?

MRS. ORAM: I refuse to answer that question on the basis that I have already stated.

SENATOR MCCLELLAN: You think that would incriminate you to say that you are willing to help fight a conspiracy against the United States of America?

MRS. ORAM: I think that I have to stick to my declination to answer.

SENATOR MCCLELLAN: Do you think that would incriminate you? I am not asking you; I want you to state it under oath.

MRS. ORAM: It might.

SENATOR MCCLELLAN: Do you think that it would incriminate you to help your government fight a conspiracy that is trying to destroy it?

[The witness consulted with her counsel.]

MRS. ORAM: I am afraid I don’t understand that question, sir.

SENATOR MCCLELLAN: You do understand the question and it is just as simple as it can be. Do you think that you would be incriminated if you gave information that would help your government fight a conspiracy, the conspiracy of communism that is undertaking to destroy it? You certainly understand that.

MRS. ORAM: I am afraid I don’t.

SENATOR MCCLELLAN: That is all, Mr. Chairman.

READING AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. From the transcript, what conclusions can you draw about the threat McClellan believed communism posed to America’s national security?

2. How would you describe the strategies and tactics the committee used in attempting to understand the extent and impact of the Communist Party’s influence in government?

3. Explain and evaluate how Oram’s testimony reflects the broader Cold War fears concerning communism. Based on this testimony, what argument about Cold War political culture in the 1950s might a historian make?

25-5 | Secretary of State Announces Cold War Defense Policy

JOHN FOSTER DULLES, The Evolution of Foreign Policy (1954)

President Eisenhower's foreign policy is sometimes referred to as “brinksmanship,” a term signifying his reliance on America’s nuclear threat to curb Soviet aggression. Critics argued the policy automatically escalated minor crises to the brink of nuclear war. In the published version of his Council of Foreign Relations speech, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles articulated...