

## **Scientific Freedom and Post-war Politics: Australia, 1945-55.**

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The Cold War was a tough time for some scientists. Most stayed in the no-man's-land of political neutrality. Others bunkered down with the Left. A few went further and joined, openly, the Communist Party. This provided cold war warriors with abundant and usually lethal ammunition. This article examines the position of two Australian scientists whose professional lives were blighted or thwarted due to that explosive mixture of Cold War politics and Communist Party membership.

The international literature on left-wing scientists during the Cold War is bountiful but the Australian literature is sparse and inadequate. There is no equivalent, for example, of Werskey's pioneering work on British communist scientists (Hyman Levy, J.D. Bernal and J.B.S. Haldane)<sup>1</sup>, or Whitaker and Marcuse's exhaustive study of Canadian scientists under surveillance.<sup>2</sup> What we have, instead, are brief discussions of the political impact of Cold War pressures on Australian science in biographies,<sup>3</sup> organisational studies<sup>4</sup> and other works with unrelated themes.<sup>5</sup> Indeed the most systematic analyses can be found in unpublished studies by Rasmussen and Moran.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the main objective of this article is to redress this oversight and, hopefully, illuminate some ways in which the politics of the Cold War impinged upon the lives of left-wing Australian scientists. In order to give sharper focus, the tale of only two scientists, Dr R.E.B. Makinson and Dr T.R. Kaiser, both of whom were members of the Communist Party, will be unravelled. There were, of course, a great many other Australian scientists, of whom the most notable was Marcus Oliphant,<sup>7</sup> who believed their careers were diverted or derailed as a result of the Cold War atmosphere.<sup>8</sup> Most were communist or left-leaning; some, as in Oliphant's case, merely liberal. Usually, evidence of discrimination remains circumstantial, conjectural or anecdotal. Victimisers rarely wish to leave footprints. But what is different in the case of Makinson and Kaiser is the existence of archival documents that provide explicit evidence of the political intrusion of the Cold War.

It was a standard wartime procedure, namely intelligence assessments of all personnel engaged in secret scientific work, that inaugurated the thick security files on R.E.B. ('Dick') Makinson. Because of his expertise and training in the UK in the 1930s, it was proposed that Makinson, appointed to Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Physics at the University of Sydney in February 1939, be 'fully utilised' to conduct further research into the militarily-sensitive field of radio physics. The customary security report on Makinson was initiated. But accompanying this inquiry was a special high-level request: in a 'Most Secret' memorandum dated June 1941, the Director of Military Operations and Intelligence, Col. James Chapman, sought the following:

It would be appreciated if you could arrange for very discreet enquiries to be made regarding this gentleman and for the result of such enquiries to be personally communicated to Dr. F.W.G. White ... who is in charge of the work at present.<sup>9</sup>

It is highly probable that this request was due to an awareness, by the Australian and British security services between whom information exchanges occurred, that Makinson had already joined the Communist Party at Cambridge University in either 1936 or 1937 and that in 1938 he had visited the Soviet Union.<sup>10</sup> Suspicions, if they existed in 1941, were confirmed in 1946. At a meeting of the Australian Association of Scientific Workers (AASW), attended by a security officer, Makinson publicly acknowledged that he was a member of the Communist Party.<sup>11</sup> The anxieties of security and intelligence authorities about the ideological leanings of scientists had recently been intensified by the arrest, confession and conviction of the British atomic scientist, Dr Allen Nunn May, on charges of espionage. The fact that the AASW meeting called for his release underscored those anxieties.<sup>12</sup>

On 20 September 1946, the Director of the Commonwealth Investigation Service (CIS) - the forerunner of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), established in March 1949 - sent the Commonwealth Solicitor-General, K.H. Bailey, a report of the AASW meeting. This was followed up a week later by the following secret memo. It represented the first of a series of political interventions that vexed Makinson's academic career.

I have now received advice from ... a reliable and most secret source that there is a vacancy in the Chair of Nuclear Physics at Sydney University, for which an appointment is under consideration. Applications have closed and amongst the applicants is Dr Makinson...

As chairmanship of Nuclear Physics will carry with it research into atomic energy, you may feel with me that that the matter of an appointment is of very great national significance and the fact that Dr Makinson is a professed Communist should be taken into account.

It is not possible for us [ie.CIS] to make any move in the matter and I therefore report the matter to you in case you feel that it is advisable to consult with the Vice Chancellor and in the light of the report which was sent to your office on 20<sup>th</sup> instant.<sup>13</sup>

No appointment was made despite Makinson having the strong support of the incoming Head of Department, Professor V.A. Bailey, and at least one other member of the Selection Board.

This correspondence assumes an even greater significance when it is remembered that the commencement of the Cold War, signalled by the 'two-camp' thesis promulgated at the inaugural conference of the Cominform in October 1947, was twelve months away. Moreover, a year earlier, World War 2 was still being fought - a war in which the Soviet Union, since mid-1941, was 'our gallant ally' and during which membership of the Australian Communist Party earned respectability, not admonishment.

But now, in 1946, Australian scientists were expected to play a key role in top secret atomic research. Since the McMahon Act of July 1946, which terminated Anglo-American wartime nuclear collaboration,<sup>14</sup> Britain's post-war plans to experiment with atomic energy for military purposes intimately involved Australia. The two governments entered into a joint agreement under the authority of the Long Range Weapons Project for the testing of British missiles at the Woomera rocket range in the South Australian desert. This was a crucial element in the broader integration of Australia into Empire plans for the development of deterrent weapons.<sup>15</sup> The Australian government was extremely eager to be involved with collaborative defence development where it involved atomic research and technology. Indicative of that eagerness was the vast financial expenditure on the LRWP, and this at a time of continuing postwar austerity.<sup>16</sup> This commitment was not only, or even primarily, to ensure Australian 'access to high technology weapons in future conflicts'.<sup>17</sup> The government's postwar vision of economic

reconstruction revolved around rapid industrial development, and the linchpin would be atomic power. In 1946, Marcus Oliphant's sanguine view - 'I believe Australia is now...on the verge of enormous development - and I believe that atomic power is coming in time to take part in this development'<sup>18</sup> - received strong endorsement from Prime Minister Chifley.<sup>19</sup> This, then, is the context for the CIS Director's remark that an appointment to a senior academic position in nuclear physics, such as that sought by Makinson, was a matter of 'very great national significance'.

In 1948, the year CIS files recorded Makinson lecturing on 'Science and War' in the 'Sunday Science Series' at Marx School, Makinson applied, unsuccessfully, for the Chair of Physics at the University of Adelaide.<sup>20</sup> In 1949, when he joined the 'Release Sharkey Committee' in May and formed the 'Kaiser Protest Committee' in September,<sup>21</sup> he again applied for the Chair of Physics at Sydney University and, again, it remained vacant. The following year, 1950, Makinson joined the NSW branch of the Australian Peace Council, lectured on 'The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy' at the Russian Social Club<sup>22</sup>, participated in a delegation to Canberra calling for the banning of the Atom Bomb, chaired a meeting of the Sydney University Labour Club protesting against political victimisation of scientists, and led a deputation to the American consulate in Sydney protesting against the gaoling of the 'Hollywood Ten'.<sup>23</sup> He applied, again unsuccessfully, for the position of Reader in Physics at Sydney University.<sup>24</sup> His security report, dated 14 June 1950, was damning; it concluded:

On his own admission, Doctor MAKINSON is a Communist. It is said of him that he is a "fanatical Communist" and from the foregoing summary this statement appears to be amply justified...He is undoubtedly a clever, dangerous Communist.<sup>25</sup>

For twelve months, from September 1950, Makinson took sabbatical leave to conduct research in England under Professor H.S.W. Massey at the University of London.<sup>26</sup> Accompanied by his wife, then a Research Officer with the CSIRO, and young son, this overseas sojourn was 'very fulfilling'<sup>27</sup>; it certainly would not have prepared him for the onslaught to follow. A few minutes past midnight on the final day of the parliamentary session, Friday 6 June 1952, the Liberal Party member for Mackellar, W.C. Wentworth, rose to speak in support of the *Defence (Special Undertakings) Bill 1952*.

Wentworth was a virulent and ardent anti-communist crusader. This is exemplified by the following sample of his initiatives. In 1946, he attended, and attempted to disrupt, the AASW meeting (discussed above) at which Makinson admitted his Communist Party membership.<sup>28</sup> A few months prior to his election to Parliament in December 1949, he was involved in the notorious ‘Diver’ Dobson case in which communists were accused, wrongly, of attempted murder.<sup>29</sup> In 1951, as part of his efforts to assist the work of ASIO, he became a ‘sleeping member’ of various organisations allegedly penetrated by the Communist Party.<sup>30</sup> In 1952, he drafted a private member’s anti-communist Bill whose provisions disregarding civil liberties far outstripped those of the Communist Party Dissolution Bill of 1950.<sup>31</sup> In 1954, he played a walk-on role in the high drama surrounding the defection of Evdokia Petrov.<sup>32</sup> In London in 1955, he sought an audience with Sir Winston Churchill but was thwarted at the last minute by the Commonwealth Relations Office: ‘there is no need for the PM to see Mr Wentworth...[who] seems to be getting wilder and wilder in his ideas on thermo-nuclear war’.<sup>33</sup> But in June 1952, it was Dick Makinson whom Wentworth had in his sights:

I now refer to Dr Makinson...It is always difficult to mention names, because we do not like to face up to the fact that evil and treason have their human embodiments...I have no proof that Dr Makinson is still a Communist, but I have no doubt that he is...This man, who organized what was in effect treasonable conspiracy, remains a lecturer in physics at the University of Sydney...Dr Makinson went abroad only a few months ago, whether to get instructions or to give information, or simply for other purposes, I do not know...[but] I cannot believe, when we have scientists like Dr Makinson freely talking to eminent scientists who are quite loyal, that we shall be able to keep from Russia vital information that we wish to conceal...Dr Fuchs is a living monument of the success of the Communist treason policy...and I believe that Dr Makinson is an embryo Dr Fuchs.<sup>34</sup>

Later that morning, all the Sydney daily papers gave prominence to Wentworth’s attack. In the Cold War context of 1952, when a large body of opinion held a third World War to be both imminent and inevitable, when a great many conservatives believed that in the titanic fight against the spread of Communism, only ‘five minutes to midnight’ was left, and when frustrations with the stalemate in Korea were steadily mounting, banner headlines announcing ‘Lecturer Accused of “Communist Treason” by M.H.R.’ were alarming. According to his wife, Makinson personally took a written rebuttal to the offices of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, but nothing was published.<sup>35</sup> Nor was a letter

from London, dated 29 July 1952, sent to the *Herald* in defence of Makinson by the Australian author, Dymphna Cusack, on behalf of the Australia-New Zealand Civil Liberties Society. It tackled the dilemma between political rights and scientific freedoms, a dilemma that the Kaiser case (as we shall see) had already deepened, not resolved. Her final remarks noted that the atmosphere created by W.C. Wentworth's 'fantastic charges' were 'hardly conducive to the development of scientific research in Australia or to the strengthening of our democratic traditions of freedom of speech and freedom of opinion'.<sup>36</sup> Another supporter was the historian and civil libertarian, Brian Fitzpatrick, who enquired 'whether I can be of any use in your lately publicised appearance as one of the demented WCW's victims...[for] these witch-hunters are apt to persist, and it could be that I might be of some help some time'.<sup>37</sup>

Where it was impossible for Fitzpatrick to help, of course, was with Makinson's quest for professorial recognition. To argue that Makinson's rapid rise through the academic ranks 'was stopped because of the attacks on him by W.C. Wentworth',<sup>38</sup> appears to overstate the influence of the 'Mad Mullah of Mackellar' (to use Fitzpatrick's colourful phrase). For example, the proposal in 1952 that the Menzies government vet all appointments of scientists at ANU was initiated by the Director-General of ASIO, Colonel Charles Spry.<sup>39</sup> Whatever the source, the fact remains that the criterion of political affiliation, not merit, forced Makinson to wait twenty years before he was promoted, by *another* university, to the position of Associate Professor. Even in 1953, when Sydney University established the generously-funded Institute of Nuclear Research, avenues for advancement within the Faculty were blocked. The barriers took two forms: the personal animosity, tinged with political distrust, of the new Director, Professor Harry Messel;<sup>40</sup> and the intervention, once again, by the security service via two letters, stamped 'secret' from Colonel Spry.<sup>41</sup>

Perhaps because it was now clear to Makinson that a professorial appointment would prove elusive, he did not apply to the University of New England to fill its vacant Chair of Physics. But a younger Australian physicist, Thomas R. Kaiser, did. Along with two other applicants, he was shortlisted due to his outstanding academic record: a Master of Science with 1<sup>st</sup> class honours from the University of Melbourne (1946); a Doctorate

of Philosophy in nuclear physics from Oxford University (1949), where his supervisor was Lord Cherwell, one of Britain's top atomic scientists; and thirteen publications on nuclear physics, meteor physics, radar physics and radar astronomy. His referees, who were of international standing, commented on his 'great ability' as a scientist and his 'very fine character' as a person. The university's Selection Committee believed Kaiser had 'the most brilliant future of any candidate', a prophecy confirmed forty years later by the awarding to Kaiser of the prestigious Gold Medal of the Royal Astronomical Society.<sup>42</sup>

By the end of the selection process this highly regarded candidate on the shortlist had become the political casualty of a blacklist. The final remark of the Selection Committee was cryptic but lethal: 'Doubtful whether suitable in view of past political activities'.<sup>43</sup> This was one of approximately forty scientific positions in Australia and New Zealand that Kaiser applied for, without success, throughout the 1950s.<sup>44</sup> Unlike Makinson, Kaiser was obliged to leave Australia permanently in order to find employment overseas which thereby deprived this country of a significant store of scientific expertise.

But first, who was Thomas Kaiser and what were his 'past political activities'? Born in Ivanhoe, Melbourne, to working class parents in 1924, Tom was a 'battler' but highly gifted.<sup>45</sup> He won both Victorian and Commonwealth government scholarships to attend the University of Melbourne where he gained his Bachelor of Science and Master of Science (Honours, First Class) degrees in 1943 and 1946; by then his scholarly interests centred on radar and radiophysics.<sup>46</sup> Kaiser's rebellious tendency was evident early. In 1942 he was fined £1 for 'indiscipline' towards Professor Laby, the Head of Department of Natural Philosophy; this was one of the elements that contributed to Laby's resignation in October 1942.<sup>47</sup> In early 1944 he was appointed an Assistant Research Officer with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Division of Radiophysics, in the field of Radio Counter Measures.<sup>48</sup> The secretary to the CSIR Executive was 'particularly desirous' of getting Kaiser since he was 'the best student of his year'.<sup>49</sup>

The great potential displayed by Kaiser at the University of Melbourne was also evident in Sydney, to which he moved in August 1946 to take up an appointment at the CSIR's Radiophysics Laboratory. In view of subsequent concerns that Kaiser posed a security risk, it is important to note that the relationship between radiophysics and missile research was close. In May 1946, the UK Department of Supply sent its Senior Military Advisor, Lieutenant-General J.F. Evetts, to Australia to select a testing site for long-range rocket development. The connection between missile research, radar research, in which Kaiser was engaged during the war, and radiophysics, in which he was fast earning a reputation, is revealed in a Top Secret and highly significant memo to the Australian Dept of Defence:

It is apparent that the question of use of C.S.I.R. facilities, in particular of the Radio Physics Laboratory, is a matter of great importance which requires consideration on the highest possible level. Applied radar research ... is central to the development of guided projectiles, and, if, as a result of the report of the British mission headed by Lt.Gen. Evatts [sic], the United Kingdom and Australian governments decide that Australia should be used for the testing and development of these weapons, it appears certain that the facilities of the Radio Physics Laboratory will be required in addition to ... qualified personnel.<sup>50</sup>

In this context opportunities, particularly for overseas training, seemed ready to open up for Kaiser. In the meantime, the accolades kept coming. One report commented that he 'has continued to demonstrate his exceptional ability and...is an outstanding young man. He is one of those who should be kept in mind for early experience overseas'.<sup>51</sup> The acting chief of the Radiophysics Division was even more in his assessment:

I have found Kaiser to have an excellent background of physics and of the fundamentals of radio techniques. He shows imagination and initiative together with an excellent command of both experimental and theoretical techniques.. I consider that he has a very good chance of developing into a first-rate research physicist, one well up to the standard of 1851 Exhibition scholars for example.<sup>52</sup>

It was therefore consistent that in November 1946 Kaiser should be awarded a highly-competitive and well-remunerated CSIR postgraduate research scholarship to study overseas in a chosen field. A place had to be found for him, so the Divisional Chief of the Radiophysics, E.G. Bowen, recommended Kaiser to Lord Cherwell, one of Britain's leading physicists and director of the prestigious Clarendon laboratory in



Oxford.<sup>53</sup> Once again, Kaiser received an unqualified recommendation: 'I can commend [Kaiser] to you as a brilliant young man...I have little doubt that he will develop into a research physicist of first-rate ability'.<sup>54</sup> When it became clear, in June-1947, that the redoubtable Lord Cherwell would find a place for Kaiser, that he would give Kaiser 'senior standing in view of his M.Sc at Melbourne University', and that he would act as supervisor of his D. Phil on nuclear physics,<sup>55</sup> a brilliant career in a burgeoning field seemed assured for this young working class lad. By July, Kaiser was sailing to England.

It is perhaps only the retrospective wisdom afforded the historian that enables warning signals to be identified. To Kaiser, infected with more than a touch of idealism, even naiveté,<sup>56</sup> such signs - even had he known of them - would have been ignored or dismissed. When Kaiser applied for a passport, on 12 May 1947, a copy was forwarded to the security service. The CIS Director recommended to the Department of Immigration that a passport *not* be issued.<sup>57</sup> In this and other correspondence to the Attorney-General's Department, the connections between communism, espionage and atomic research were explicitly drawn.

It has been reported that Kaiser was present at the Australian Association of Scientific Workers symposium on the [Woomera] rocket range...and there expressed himself as being against the project...Information received is to the effect that [Kaiser ] holds strong Communist views and is alleged to have stated some time ago that it was his intention to proceed to Canada to obtain employment in connection with Atomic Energy experiments... It is reported that he recently lectured to members of the [Communist] Party in connection with the Atom Bomb controversy...This further instance of Communist affiliation [sic] within the C.S.I.R. establishment (considering, also, the proceedings of the Canadian Royal Commission; and additionally the L.R.W.P.) is a matter of increasing security concern...The aforesaid information is brought to your notice in view of his Communist views and his expressed intention of seeking work in the Atomic field.<sup>58</sup>

One does not have to read between too many lines to recognise the suspicion that Kaiser, if not an 'embryo Fuchs', was a potential May, a likely 'fifth column overseas'.<sup>59</sup> Since the sensational defection of a Russian cipher clerk, Igor Gouzenko, in September 1945, the spectre of Soviet spy rings hovered over atomic establishments. Due to Gouzenko's revelations, the British nuclear physicist, Dr Alan Nunn May, who worked at the Anglo-Canadian atomic research facility near Ottawa (where Kaiser allegedly sought

employment), was arrested and convicted of espionage in 1946.<sup>60</sup> Gouzenko's testimony also triggered a chain of events, one of which was the establishment by the Canadian government of a Royal Commission whose report was widely read by security services in the West;<sup>61</sup> another was the decision by MI5 to place Klaus Fuchs under surveillance.<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, Australian security's assessment of Kaiser still fell well short of Vladimir Petrov's cryptic but conspiratorial assessment of Kaiser's movements: 'Went on a mission to England'.<sup>63</sup>

Kaiser was saved by bureaucratic slowness: by the time the acting secretary of the Department of Immigration acted, on 1 August 1947,<sup>64</sup> Kaiser had already left the country. But what remained on his security file, and this was retrieved two years later, were several pieces of 'incriminating' evidence: his membership of the CPA 'front' organisation, the AASW (with an inference that Dr R.E.B. Makinson 'recruited' him in 1945); a clipping from the communist *Tribune*, dated 22 February 1946, reporting that Kaiser admitted to the Kingsford branch of the Labor Party, that he was in fact a member of the Communist Party; his attendance at an AASW conference on 'Atomic Power and the International Co-operation of Scientists' in April 1946; his participation in a 'special meeting' of the AASW in June 1946 to protest against the sentence imposed upon Alan Nunn May; and his contribution to an AASW symposium in April 1947 on the LRWP (at which Kaiser 'revealed in conversation' to the CIS informant - who was a scientist and a 'plant' inside the AASW - that he 'recently addressed Warragamba Dam employees on the rocket range and the atom bomb'). The final item was a copy of a small advertisement in *Tribune* advertising a farewell party for Tom Kaiser on 11 July 1947.<sup>65</sup>

For the next two years at Oxford, from late August 1947 until mid-1949, Thomas Kaiser was immensely productive. In 1948, his sustained work on the 16 MeV betatron, a machine he helped build that produced high speed electrons, received public prominence,<sup>66</sup> and an article on his experiments with the 15 MeV synchrotron was published in *Nature*, a leading scientific journal. In the first six months of 1949, he prepared a further two articles for publication; he delivered a paper to the annual convention of the Institute of Physics; and he submitted his doctoral thesis, completed in less than two years, on 'Experiments on the acceleration of charged particles', for

examination.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, Kaiser was awaiting confirmation of his D.Phil when he made that fateful trip to London in late July. This trip would change, utterly and irrevocably, the direction of his life.

At the height of the bitter 1949 general coal strike in Australia, a tiny group of young Australians living in London decided to demonstrate against the Chifley government's strike-breaking actions.<sup>68</sup> For five hours on a warm summer's day, they handed out a thousand leaflets to passing Londoners. Placards reading 'Eight T[rade] U[nion] leaders Gaoled! WHY?' and 'Dr Evatt: Democracy begins at Home' were paraded, while the leaflet explained the 'savage acts' of the Australian Labor government in terms of imminent global conflict:

Why this attack? Because Australia occupies an important place in the plans of groups in America and Britain who are planning a new world war. She is to be an arms and supply base for these groups. The workers are opposed to these war preparations....[and] the Government has decided to destroy the democratic organisations of the people.<sup>69</sup>

Notwithstanding the widely-held conviction that the Cold War in 1949 could soon turn hot and escalate into World War 111, such an insignificant demonstration would normally have been ignored by the mainstream press. It was small in scale, none of the six young demonstrators was well-known, there was no violence or obstruction, the police were not involved, and it was all over by five o'clock. The next day, 28 July 1949, only the *Daily Worker*, published by the Communist Party of Great Britain, carried a brief report accompanied by a photograph.<sup>70</sup>

That this incident would soon make not only front-page news, but lead to an official enquiry by the Australian High Commissioner, heated Parliamentary exchanges, agitation in the offices of the Defence Department and Prime Minister's Department, and a flurry of top secret cables at the highest levels between London, Canberra and Washington, was due to the discovery by an MI5 informant that the identity of one of the Australians was Thomas Reeve Kaiser. In the words of the main organiser of the demonstration, 'the ever-active T. K. came down in response to a telegram and he and I

were the stalwarts'.<sup>71</sup> Although all those involved denied their communist connections and declined to identify themselves - the Cold War, after all, was getting very chilly in 1949 - unfortunately for Kaiser, he was recognised by a female employee of Australia House whom he had befriended two years earlier during the voyage from Australia to England.<sup>72</sup> She informed authorities and soon after Kaiser was interviewed by Scotland Yard.

What followed, over the next six weeks, was a voluminous correspondence of memos, letters, cables and reports whose origins reflected the breadth of interest in the 'Kaiser case': J.E. Cummins, the Chief Scientific Liaison officer in London; Dr Ian Clunies Ross, the chairman of the CSIRO; Norman Mighell, the Australian High Commissioner in London; the Australian Embassy in Washington; the United States embassies in London and Canberra; officials in the US Department of State; the Australian security services; Professor K.H. Bailey, the Commonwealth Solicitor-General; the Prime Minister, J.B. Chifley; and the Minister for Defence, J.J. Dedman.<sup>73</sup> Indicative of the high-level concern within the scientific community was the visit of the former chairman of the CSIR, Sir David Rivett to the top secret Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Harwell, where he met with Lord Cherwell. His diary entry for 6 August reads:

Lord Cherwell came out to greet me and in his room we discussed the Kaiser incident. Obviously C. has been upset by it and I offered him very full apologies...He said he knew some time ago of K's leanings...C. was very kind about it all; not desirous of interfering with a man's politics but recognised that the difficulty was due to communists acting in accordance with orders from elsewhere.<sup>74</sup>

Being the subject of such discussion and of such an avalanche of communication was immaterial to Kaiser:<sup>75</sup> what mattered, for him, was that when it all stopped, he was without a job.

The grounds for his dismissal from the CSIRO were legally shaky and morally spurious. When he refused to return immediately to Australia, as instructed, on the

grounds that he needed to ‘discharge [his] personal and scientific obligations’ and would return in October, the Executive of the CSIRO deemed his refusal a ‘breach of discipline’ and thereby a technical basis for dismissal.<sup>76</sup> There was no question of his incompetence, of his breaching the terms of the travelling scholarship or even of his right to make public statements as a private individual about political issues unrelated to his employment. In fact, one gains the strong impression from reading the minutes of the CSIRO Executive meetings that it favoured not the sack but a reprimand.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, the historian of the CSIR noted that although ‘the young scientist was guilty of an indiscretion...a strong reprimand should have been sufficient’.<sup>78</sup> Even Sir David Rivett, who commented that ‘[t]his man Kaiser is getting under my skin. I think he must be a very poor type indeed’, recognised that the CSIRO had no regulation forbidding employees from ‘displaying their political leanings’.<sup>79</sup> It was therefore not surprising that one Executive member should comment in September that he was ‘still unclear on what precise grounds Mr Kaiser has been dismissed’. Certainly Kaiser himself, at least initially, expected exoneration:

May I apologise for any embarrassment which the, to me, rather irresponsible Press reports have caused to you or to the Executive of the CSIRO...I will welcome the enquiry,<sup>80</sup> as I am sure that I have been in no way guilty of “misconduct” as alleged in certain newspapers’...I know of no legal or moral bar to my holding political opinions and taking political action in support of those opinions...[and] I am sure that there can be no question of criticism of my work, both in Australia and at Oxford and of my loyalty as an officer of C.S.I.R.O.<sup>81</sup>

As Kaiser was soon to discover, such a *mea culpa* was futile, for there were far bigger issues at stake. Most historians who have discussed the ‘Kaiser affair’ have interpreted the ruthless treatment of Kaiser as a product of either the controversial restructuring of CSIR into CSIRO, the role of domestic pressures and considerations, or a case of political victimisation of left-wing intellectuals.<sup>82</sup> I have argued elsewhere that the root cause of Kaiser’s dismissal lies outside Australia and relates to broader defence and security issues, especially complex problems concerning Anglo-American nuclear collaboration.<sup>83</sup> Interpreting the extent to which external forces impinged upon domestic

decision-making is outside the scope of this article. What needs to be emphasised here is that Thomas Kaiser was a political casualty of the Cold War.

For scientists within, and probably beyond, the CSIRO, the Kaiser case brought to a head the thorny issue of scientific secrecy and political freedom. Until 1949 - against the twin backdrop of steadily increasing attacks in the press and Parliament, and defensive counter-attacks by the CSIR especially during the latter part of 1948,<sup>84</sup> - Sir David Rivett remained an ardent advocate of scientific freedom:

As to all this business about classified information, security, secrecy and the rest of it I just loathe it. Of course we shall be prepared to give whatever guarantees may be required if that is the only way we can engage in research work of any value. I have however the utmost distrust of secrecy practices particularly when they are influenced by military people.<sup>85</sup>

Similarly, in a vitriolic letter in early 1949, he wrote:

These politicians and Civil Service bureaucrats know nothing about scientific work or the conditions under which alone it can flourish. "Science" to them means atomic bombs and rocket ranges...Hence the freedom under which CSIR developed seems to them to be something demanding suppression.<sup>86</sup>

Just two weeks before Tom Kaiser crossed his Rubicon by journeying south from Oxford to London on 26 July, Rivett expressed the same sentiments about the importance of freely-conducted scientific research 'without barbed wire' in an apparently inspiring presidential address to the British Society of Chemical Industry.<sup>87</sup> This address was reprinted in the July issues of both *Chemistry and Industry* and the *Journal of the Association of Officers of the CSIRO*. Thus, Kaiser was very familiar with this address and, much to Rivett's subsequent chagrin, cited it during the inquiry into Kaiser's actions in August.

After the Kaiser case erupted, discussion of the relationship between science, secrecy and freedom became decidedly muted. It is arguable that the turning point came when all CSIRO officers received a confidential one-page circular from the chairman of the CSIRO, Ian Clunies Ross. He expressed the 'grave concern' of his Executive about

the 'recent happenings in London'. He then elaborated, in a manner previously unthinkable under Rivett, the extent to which increasing government control circumscribed organisational autonomy, defined the limits of political expression, and imposed an obligation upon officers of 'decency and loyalty' to the government which employed them.

It is obvious that, if we are to continue to enjoy a large degree of freedom in the conduct of our scientific work in these disturbed times, we must avoid public involvement in controversial political issues: if we do not, we cannot blame anyone but ourselves if we suffer from political interference and the witch-hunting which has gone on in other countries...There may be a few amongst us who confuse scientific freedom with political licence, even to the extent of claiming the right to bring public discredit upon the Organization or the Government of which they are the servants.

The circular concluded with a veiled threat: if such officers were tempted to engage in political controversy, 'it is only right to let them know of the serious view the Executive must take...in the future'.<sup>88</sup> The Executive, however, did not rest there; its next step was regulation. The minutes of the Executive meeting for 7 September 1949 record the insertion of a remarkable new edict: 'No officer or employee shall engage publicly in political controversy, whether by speaking, broadcasting, writing letters to the Press, or by publishing or disseminating books, articles or leaflets.'<sup>89</sup> Exemplifying the prevalent atmosphere for left-wing scientists is this recollection:

One could hardly forget that period. I was in the Physics Division in the National Standards Lab at the time, and I well remember attending a meeting which Clunies Ross addressed which had been called by the Officers' Association. He attacked Kaiser at this meeting and implied that he caused his recent heart attack which I thought was unfair. Staff were very concerned at all the clamps that were going onto CSIRO, but only a few at the meeting expressed their disquiet clearly. I spoke very cautiously in favour of Kaiser along the grounds of freedom in science and I used Rivett's speech about secrecy. But I felt very cowed. Those who spoke against his action [in sacking Kaiser] did so tentatively because we were intimidated and Clunies Ross dismissed us all rather roughly.<sup>90</sup>

The consequences of these events for Kaiser himself also reveal much about the limited manoeuvrability of left-wing scientists during the early Cold War years. In turn, they illustrate the incompatibility between scientific pursuits and political commitments.

Kaiser continued to protest against his dismissal whilst in England in a series of letters to the Australian Scientific Research Liaison Office in London and the CSIRO Executive in Melbourne.<sup>91</sup> His correspondence with Clunies Ross was typical: 'I would like to receive from you a rational answer to the questions I have raised and a reasonable explanation of the actions of the CSIRO, rather than the arbitrary and unreasonable orders and conditions outlined in the two cables.'<sup>92</sup> Kaiser embarked for Australia, with his newly-married English wife,<sup>93</sup> on 24 November 1949. He returned because 'I didn't accept my sacking. I went back to fight it'.<sup>94</sup>

Despite or, perhaps, due to the fact that Kaiser had the full backing and resources of the AASW, the Australian Student Labor Federation - which devoted its entire second issue of *Student Forward* to the case<sup>95</sup> - and the 'Kaiser Protest Committees' formed in both Sydney (by Richard Makinson) and Melbourne (by Jack Legge), Kaiser's campaign for re-instatement was doomed.<sup>96</sup> From his parent's humble home in Waterdale Road Ivanhoe, he issued a stream of letters throughout January and February 1950. The final letter, seeking permission to attend a meeting of the CSIRO Executive in order to discuss in person the circumstances of his dismissal, received a peremptory reply: 'After due consideration, the Executive decided that it cannot accede to your request'.<sup>97</sup> There was no more correspondence. Kaiser was blacklisted. As the secretary of the CSIRO had earlier commented: 'I should not imagine that the new [Menzies] Government will be well disposed to Dr. Kaiser'.<sup>98</sup>

Unable to secure any employment, Kaiser threw himself into political work on behalf of the Communist Party which itself was under threat from the *Communist Party Dissolution Bill, 1950*. He joined two CPA 'front' organisations - the Democratic Rights Council and the Australian Peace Council - and addressed a plethora of meetings: the annual congress of the National Union of Australian University Students, the Eureka



Youth League at its Warburton Camp in Victoria, the Kew 'Tramways & Citizens Relief Committee', a pit-top meeting of Wonthaggi coalminers, the Melbourne Trades Hall Council, factory gate meetings in Footscray and several small 'cottage' meetings in the homes of CPA members. In the last two weeks of March 1950, Kaiser travelled to NSW where he addressed over twenty meetings in Sydney, Lithgow and Newcastle. Typical was his ten-minute talk for Lithgow radio station on 21 March 1950. Entitled 'Atomic Energy - for Peace or War?', it touched on concerns that have been issues in this article:

As a scientist, I am concerned at the witch hunting, the spy scare and the victimisation of progressive scientists...[which] are a means of intimidating scientists into agreeing to work on war projects. Security in science can only result in sterility in science. As Sir David Rivett has said: "secrecy and integrity in science cannot flourish together, and those who preach secrecy for security are false guides". Science can only flourish in an atmosphere of free inquiry and free communication between scientists.<sup>99</sup>

After Kaiser returned to Melbourne, he was elevated to the National Executive of the Australian Peace Council (whose secretary, Ian Turner, had already campaigned on his behalf). In April he helped organise a major peace conference in the Exhibition Buildings attended by Rev. Dr. Hewlett Johnson, the 'Red Dean' of Canterbury. In May, he invited Britain's most outspoken Marxist scientist, Professor J.D. Bernal, to fly to Australia, 'all expenses paid', to address a public rally on 10 June in the Melbourne Town Hall under the auspices of the Democratic Rights Council.<sup>100</sup>

By then, Kaiser had decided to return to England.<sup>101</sup> A variety of activities was initiated by the Kaiser Protest Committee in Melbourne and the Kaiser Defence Committee in Sydney, including farewell dinners, socials, dances and meetings, to raise funds for the return voyage.<sup>102</sup> With the banning of the CPA seemingly imminent, Kaiser was not a beneficiary of the Party's 'Fighting Fund' and consequently the boat on which they returned, the *s.s.Sorrento* was 'very poor indeed'.<sup>103</sup> With the assistance of R.E.B. Makinson, Kaiser arranged to take up a position as assistant to Professor P.M.S. Blackett at Manchester University's Jodrell Bank Experimental Station.<sup>104</sup> The field of research, radio astronomy, was different from that in which he developed his expertise at the

Clarendon Laboratory. Kaiser differed also from Makinson in his grudging acceptance of the need to emigrate in search of work, something Makinson would never countenance. According to his wife, Makinson 'refused to apply for any overseas position, even when it became clear that he would get no more promotion in Australia'.<sup>105</sup> But the possibility of promotion denied is one thing; the prospect of enduring unemployment quite another.

All this time, from the day Kaiser and wife disembarked at Fremantle on 20 December 1949 until the moment his boat left Brisbane for Batavia on 30 July 1950, he was under constant surveillance by the security services. The following report, an extract from one day's work in Sydney, is suggestive of the closeness of the scrutiny.

13. At 12.35pm KAISER and his wife came out of 40 Market Street. They proceeded on foot along York Street, down Town Hall railway station where they made a purchase at a bookstall, then came back into George Street, along Bathurst Street to Castlereagh Street, along Castlereagh Street to Market Street where they entered David Jones main store where they caught a lift. A search of all floors was made, but KAISER nor his wife could not be located.<sup>106</sup>

On his arrival in England, the security services continued to trail Kaiser, though now it was MI5. Due to the unavailability of nearly all Special Branch and MI5 records, and the total closure of post-1945 MI5 records,<sup>107</sup> the British security files on Kaiser will remain inaccessible for many years. The only declassified document is a memo, in the Office of the High Commissioner, notifying British security of Kaiser's presence.<sup>108</sup> Kaiser should have known that the door never closes - for example, he was refused a visa when invited in 1972 to attend the launch of a 'radio-clean' satellite in the US which he himself had developed - but he remained 'ignorantly idealistic...he just didn't think that security would be active in this way'<sup>109</sup>. This was to prove his undoing and lead to his second dismissal. In 1952, the defence counsel for Julius Rosenberg, accused of passing atomic bomb secrets from Los Alamos to Soviet agents, contacted Kaiser to act as an 'expert technical witness'. Although the British Communist Party warned against it - 'I didn't know why' - Kaiser forwarded a sworn affidavit to Washington. Unfortunately for Kaiser, a staff member at Jodrell Bank, who had been 'planted' by MI5 to keep tabs on

Kaiser, and others, learnt of this exchange (unwisely, Kaiser used Jodrell's address) and the Director, Sir Bernard Lovell, was informed. Kaiser's appointment was not renewed.<sup>110</sup>

For two years, Kaiser was again unemployed. It was during this hiatus that he applied, *inter alia*, for the Chair of Physics at the University of New England, referred to earlier.<sup>111</sup> In October 1955 he secured a one-year temporary replacement lectureship at Reading University; thereafter, his academic career took off.<sup>112</sup> Indeed, when Richard Makinson visited him in 1972 - the last time they saw each other - he was 'flourishing'.<sup>113</sup> But by then, neither would be troubled, nor their careers threatened, by letters such as the following. It was letters like this, and the sentiments underlying them, that helped so much to contaminate the working environment and emasculate the political freedom of so many Australian scientists during the early Cold War.

After reading in the newspapers about the Communists at Woomera, and I believe the C.S.I.R.O. Department [sic] are employed there, I was wondering if it is of any news to you that Communism is rife in that Department. I was told by the wife of an officer that her husband was a Communist and that a Professor at the Waite Institute, who had been to Russia, was an ardent Communist and spread his propaganda among his pupils. I also had a C.S.I.R. officer boarding with me a few years ago, and he was studying the Russian language. If you are interested in the names of these people, I will inform you. Please treat this as Confidential.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gary Werskey, *The Visible College* (London: Allen Lane, 1978); see especially chs. 8-9.

<sup>2</sup> Reg Whitaker and Gary Marcuse, *Cold War Canada: The Making of a National Insecurity State, 1945-1957* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), chs. 2-4. See also Leopold Infeld, *Why I Left Canada: Reflections on Science and Politics* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978).

<sup>3</sup> Stewart Cockburn and David Ellyard, *Oliphant. The Life and Times of Sir Mark Oliphant* (Adelaide: Axiom Books, 1981), ch.14; Marjory Collard O'Dea, *Ian Clunies Ross. A Biography* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1997), ch.16; L.R. Humphreys, *Clunies Ross: Australian Visionary* (Melbourne: MUP/Miegunyah Press, 1998), ch.6.

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<sup>4</sup> C.D. Schedvin, *Shaping Science and Industry. A History of Australia's Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, 1926-49* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987), ch.8; Sir Frederick White, 'CSIR to CSIRO - the events of 1948-1949', *Public Administration*, Vol.34, No.4, December 1975, pp.281-93.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Morton, *Fire across the Desert. Woomera and the Anglo-Australian Joint Project 1946-1980* (Canberra: APGS, 1989), pp.102-4; Frank Cain, 'An aspect of post-war relations with the United Kingdom and the United States: missiles, spies and disharmony', *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol.23, No.92, April 1989, pp.193-4.

<sup>6</sup> Carolyn Rasmussen, The post-war university and scientific research, 1945-55, unpublished ms (in writer's possession); Jean Moran, Scientists in the Political and Public Arena: a social-intellectual history of the Australian Association of Scientific Workers, 1939-49, unpublished M.Phil, Griffith University, 1983, ch.7. A highly abbreviated version of Moran's study can be found in Jean Buckley-Moran, 'Australian Scientists and the Cold War', in Brian Martin *et al.*, (eds.), *Intellectual Suppression. Australian Case Studies, Analysis and Responses* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1986); see also Tim Sherratt, "'A political inconvenience": Australian scientists at the British Atomic Weapons Tests' *Historical Records of Australian Science*, 6(2) (1985), although he focuses more on the marginalisation than the persecution of Australian atomic scientists.

<sup>7</sup> See Cockburn and Ellyard, *Oliphant*, pp.187-92. Oliphant's ASIO file records persistent allegations from 'particularly reliable sources' that Oliphant was an under-cover member of the Communist Party. In 1951, acting on information supplied by an informant, ASIO recommended that on overseas trips Oliphant be accompanied by 'an appropriate travelling companion'. The informant, whose name is clearly discernable in one of Oliphant's ASIO files, was a laboratory manager in the School of Physical Science, of which Oliphant was the director, at the Australian National University. See National Archives of Australia, ACT [hereafter NAA; unless otherwise stated, all NAA files refer to the ACT repository], A6119/62, Item 453 (especially folios 14-15); NAA A5954/69, Item 2164/1.

<sup>8</sup> Other scientists on the Left whose professional careers appear to have been affected adversely due to the Cold War and/or to their political affiliation include: John Callaghan, Beth Gott (interviewed 2 July 1997), Len Hibbard, Jack Legge (see NAA A6119/XR1, Item 79 and obituary, *The Age*, 29 November 1996, B2), Stephen Macindoe, Michael Marmach, (interviewed 10 October 1998 and 4 April 1999); Marmach is convinced that he lost at least three academic positions and one with the CSIRO in the early 1950s due to his security record) Courtney Mohr. (see NAA A6119/83, Item 1443), David Morris (see Bernice Morris, *Between the Lines* (Melb.:Sybylla, 1988, chs. 6-7), Jake Ramsay (interviewed 27 May 1997; once Ramsay was 'declared a security risk' on 29 March 1951, he was either sacked from or 'failed to gain' many appointments in the next three years: see NAA A6119/90, Item 2552, especially folios 11, 28, 30, 75); Arthur Rudkin (see NAA A 6119/2, Item 47 and *Student Forward*, No.2, 1949) and Frank Townsend, a member of the Scientists Peace Council Committee (see NAA A6122/39, Item 1404). My thanks to Huntley Higgins (a 'suspected communist', NAA A6122 XR1, Item 223, folios 111-12) and Frank

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Nicholls ('a definite fellow-traveller', NAA A 6122 XR1, Item 223, folio 26) for some corroborative information. Two other scientists, identified only by the pseudonyms 'Brown' and 'Jones', who formed a Communist Party cell within the CSIR, were also apparently victimised. See David McKnight, *Australia's Spies and their Secrets* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994), pp.50-1.

<sup>9</sup> J. A. Chapman to Director, Security Service, Canberra, 20 June 1941, NAA A6119/79, Item 1218, folio 2.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with K. Rachel Makinson, 28 March 1999. There is a separate ASIO file on her; see NAA A6119/86, Item 2010

<sup>11</sup> NAA A6119/79, Item 1218, folios 23-4. Makinson's admitted he was a communist in response to a question from a member of the large audience. Perhaps realising the ramifications, Makinson, according to the informant's report, 'immediately appeared ill at ease and it was some little time before he regained his composure'.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. See also *Bulletin of the Australian Association of Scientific Workers*, No.68, June 1946, pp.1-3.

<sup>13</sup> Roland S. Browne to Professor K.H. Bailey, 26 September 1946, Ibid, folio 30. A copy of this letter is also in the R.E.B. Makinson Papers, University of Sydney Archives [hereafter Makinson Papers], P.148, Series 7, Item 3.

<sup>14</sup> The important implications of this decision are explored in Brian Cathcart, *Test of Greatness. Britain's Struggle for the Atom Bomb* (London: John Murray, 1994), pp. 19-20; Ian Clark, *Nuclear Diplomacy and the Special Relationship. Britain's Deterrent and America, 1957-1962* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 23-4; Jonathon E. Helmreich, *Gathering Rare Ones. The Diplomacy of Uranium Acquisition, 1943-1954* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 118-23.

<sup>15</sup> See Wayne Reynolds, 'Defence science research, higher education and the Australian quest for the atomic bomb, 1945-60', *History of Education*, 26(2) (1997), 225-42; Wayne Reynolds, 'Atomic War, Empire Strategic Dispersal and the Origins of the Snowy Mountains Scheme', *War and Society*, 14(1) (1996), 121-4.

<sup>16</sup> According to the Secretary of Defence, the defence program, in which LRWP was pivotal, was costing £250 million 'which was a substantial effort for eight million people'. Notes of a meeting with President Truman, 22 April 1949, NAA A5954/1, Item 1795/3

<sup>17</sup> Frank Cain, 'An aspect of postwar Australian relations with the United Kingdom and the United States: missiles, spies and disharmony', *Australian Historical Studies* 23: 92 (1989), p. 186.

<sup>18</sup> *Advertiser*, 1 August 1946, cited in Alice Cawte, *Atomic Australia 1944-1990* (Kensington: UNSW Press, 1992), p. 8.

<sup>19</sup> Margaret Gowing, *Independence and Deterrence. Britain and Atomic Energy, 1945-1952. Volume 1 Policy Making* (London: Macmillan, 1974), p. 147.

<sup>20</sup> Eric Burhop also applied for this chair. One member of the Selection Committee stated that despite his ability and 'acceptable personality', his 'political colour might raise serious difficulties'. Note from 'K.G.'

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[Sir Kerr Grant, retiring Professor of Physics], 23 August 1948, University of Adelaide archives, Series 280, Registrar's reference files, c.1874-1950, envelope 348. My thanks to Rod Home for this reference. However, the high credentials of the successful applicant, Leonard Huxley, should also be noted.

<sup>21</sup> The general secretary of the CPA, L.L. Sharkey, had been sentenced to three years' imprisonment on the charge of sedition; T.R. Kaiser, as we shall see, had been dismissed from the CSIRO.

<sup>22</sup> The ASIO 'contact' at the Russian Club conversed with Makinson after his lecture and commented: 'in my opinion he is the first Britisher [sic] I have met that I would classify as a "Russian Communist"'. NAA A6119/79, Item 1218, folio 70. An informant also reported that Makinson 'appeared to be on very familiar terms' with Fedor Nosov, the Tass correspondent in Australia (and almost certainly a Soviet intelligence officer) whose name was subsequently to feature prominently in the Petrov Royal Commission on Espionage, 1954-55. NAA A6119/79, Item 1219, folio 26.

<sup>23</sup> In 1950 ten Hollywood writers were imprisoned for contempt of Congress when they refused to cooperate with the House of Un-American Activities; for Makinson's role, see *Tribune*, 19 April 1950, p.3.

<sup>24</sup> Makinson Papers, P.148, Series 5; NAA A6119/79, Items 1218, 1219.

<sup>25</sup> NAA A6119/79, Item 1218, folio 83. In the absence of direct evidence, one cannot state conclusively that Makinson's politics were the sole factor in an open-and-shut case for promotion; however, circumstantial evidence suggests they played a significant role.

<sup>26</sup> Makinson papers, P.148, Series 5. Makinson wrote two scientific papers, published in 1951, on the application of the Variation Method to the study of Electron Collisions.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with K. Rachel Makinson, 28 March 1999.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. Dr K.R. Makinson, also present at this meeting, recalled that he arrived with two burly associates. It seems plausible that one of them - perhaps even Wentworth himself - provided security with the detailed report referred to above. Some months later, R.E.B. Makinson wrote a confidential letter to Kim Beazley, MHR protesting against Wentworth's 'spying' activities. Makinson to Beazley, 10 March 1947, NAA A6119, Item 1218, folio 32.

<sup>29</sup> See Phillip Deery, 'Labour, Communism and the Cold War : the case of "Diver" Dobson', *Australian Historical Studies*, No.108, April 1997, pp. 66-88.

<sup>30</sup> W.C. Wentworth to R.G. Menzies, 29 October 1951, NAA A1209/23, Item 57/4882

<sup>31</sup> Don Watson *Brian Fitzpatrick: A radical life* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1979), p.233.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Manne, *The Petrov Affair. Politics and Espionage* (Sydney: Pergamon, 1987), pp.79-80; Nicholas Whitlam and John Stubbs, *Nest of Traitors: The Petrov Affair* (Brisbane: Jacaranda, 1974), p.88.

<sup>33</sup> Memo, H. Smedley to Montague Browne, 4 February 1955, Public Records Office (Kew, London), PREM 11/817. ('1955 Australia' file)

<sup>34</sup> *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol.217, 5-6 June 1952, pp.1620-22. Klaus Fuchs, a German-born British atomic physicist worked first on the Manhattan project at Los Alamos and then at Britain's Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Harwell with Lord Cherwell (Tom Kaiser's D.Phil supervisor).

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In 1950 he confessed to passing vital atomic secrets to the Russians. Of the numerous studies of Fuchs the best are Robert C. Williams, *Klaus Fuchs, Atom Spy* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1987), especially ch.8 on Harwell; and F.M. Szasz, *British Scientists and the Manhattan Project. The Los Alamos Years* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), ch.6.

<sup>35</sup> Interview, K. Rachel Makinson, *ibid.* There is no copy of this letter/article in his private papers.

<sup>36</sup> Copy of unpublished letter in Makinson Papers, P.148, Series 5, Item 5.

<sup>37</sup> Letter, Fitzpatrick to Makinson, 11 June 1952, Makinson Papers, *ibid.* Fitzpatrick *did* attempt to help: he presented a short history of the 'witch-hunt against Australian scientists' on ABC radio on 14 June 1952 (six-page transcript of talk in Makinson Papers, *ibid.*) and in the monthly publication of the Australian Council of Civil Liberties, he wrote the article 'Mischief-making Mr Wentworth's Slander on Science', *The Australian News-Review*, August 1952, p.7.

<sup>38</sup> K. Rachel Makinson to Jean Moran, 12 February 1983, Makinson Papers, P.148, Series 10.

<sup>39</sup> This proposal was implemented by the Menzies Government. See NAA A1209/23, Item 1957/4264.

<sup>40</sup> Hostility towards the 'unguided Messel' from left-wing scientists was reciprocal: see, for example, private letter from Eric Burhop to Makinson, 31 May 1953, Makinson Papers, P.148, Series 6.

<sup>41</sup> NAA A6119/79, Item 1219, folio 57.

<sup>42</sup> Confidential File, Selection Committee, University of New England, CSIRO Archives (Canberra), Series 1169, Item 16; 'Address of the President on the Presentation of the Gold Medal to Professor T.R. Kaiser on 11 July 1994', *Quarterly Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society*, 36 (1995), 81.

<sup>43</sup> Confidential File, *op. cit.*

<sup>44</sup> Interview with T.R. Kaiser, Sheffield (UK), 10 July 1997.

<sup>45</sup> As his hosts in Adelaide (when Kaiser attended a scientific conference in 1947) were later to write: 'Knowing his background which has been very down owing to his parents ill health and lack of money we think he is a credit to what courage and brains can achieve'. Letter, E.H & W.L. Lewis to Rt. Hon. J.B. Chifley, 30 August 1949, NAA A8520/21, Item PH/KAI/2. Upon request, a CSIRO officer informed Sir David Rivett that 'Kaiser's mother had been an invalid for many years, Kaiser had no admiration for his father, and the family had had a hard time during and after the [1930s] depression'. R.N. Bracewell to Rivett, 26 October 1949, NAA A8520/21, Item PH/KAI/2c.

<sup>46</sup> Kaiser gained an Exhibition and the Hamilton Radio Prize for his Master's thesis.

<sup>47</sup> Laby Papers, School of Physics, University of Melbourne. My thanks to Professor E.G. Muirhead for this reference.

<sup>48</sup> Memo, G. Lightfoot to J.J. Dedman, 13 January 1944, NAA A9788, Item M13/20 [1/8/3].

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Memo, F.R. Sinclair (Secretary, Department of Supply) to Sir Frederick Shedden (Secretary, Department of Defence), 14 May 1946, NAA (VIC) MP1748/1, Item GW/P/3 Pt.1. For Australian government initiatives in the atomic energy programme in the late 1940s see Wayne Reynolds, 'Rethinking the Joint

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Project: Australia's bid for Nuclear Weapons, 1945-1960', *The Historical Journal* 41(3) (1998), pp.853-873 (esp. pp.853-860).

<sup>51</sup> Memo, unsigned, 25 October 1946, *ibid.* Kaiser was given a double increment taking his annual salary to £468.

<sup>52</sup> Confidential Report, J.L. Pawsey, 6 September 1946.

<sup>53</sup> Lord Cherwell (aka Frederick Lindemann) had been Churchill's close friend and personal scientific adviser during WW11; in the late 1940s he collaborated with Klaus Fuchs, one of Britain's top three atomic scientists, on the separation of isotopes at Harwell. In 1947 it was suggested - naively, in retrospect - that Kaiser should work at Harwell, located only 18 miles from Oxford. The other possibility investigated on behalf of Kaiser was working with Oliphant at Birmingham University.

<sup>54</sup> Bowen to Cherwell, 28 May 1947, Correspondence Files, CSIRO Archives, Canberra, File WG/2/23, Series 639: 'He is particularly anxious to study nuclear physics ...'.

<sup>55</sup> Cherwell to E.G. Bowen, 10 June 1947, *ibid.* 'We have a number of men here working on various aspects of Nuclear Physics and would be glad if Mr Kaiser were to take part in this branch of our activities'.

<sup>56</sup> This trait was referred to by close associates of Kaiser: conversations with Professor Fred Smith, 2 February 1997; Bernard Rechter, 1 April 1997, John Arrowsmith, 26 April 1997; Jake Ramsey, 27 May 1997; Nita Murray-Smith, 7 February 1999.

<sup>57</sup> Secret memo, CIS to Secretary, Department of Immigration, 10 June 1947, NAA A6119 XR1, Item 48, folio 18.

<sup>58</sup> Memos dated 2 June, 10 June, 23 July 1947, *ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> The phrase belonged to the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, Eric Harrison. See *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, vol.205, 12 October 1949, p.1270. In tone, content and inference, Harrison's attack on Kaiser (pp.1270-72) closely foreshadowed that made by W.C. Wentworth three years later.

<sup>60</sup> For the recruitment of Canadian scientists by Soviet intelligence operatives, see Donald Avery, 'Allied Scientific Co-operation and Soviet Espionage in Canada, 1941-45', *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol.8, No.3, July 1993, pp.100-28.

<sup>61</sup> See *Report of the Royal Commission to Investigate the Facts Relating to and the Circumstances Surrounding the Communication...of Secret and Confidential Information to Agents of a Foreign Power* (Ottawa, 1946); Reg Whitaker and Gary Marcuse, *Cold War Canada*, chs. 3-4; Michael Thwaites, *Truth Will Out. ASIO and the Petrovs* (Sydney: Collins, 1980), pp.55-7.

<sup>62</sup> For a thorough account of the implications of the Gouzenko defection (which stretched even to the arrest of the Rosenbergs), see H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Atom Bomb Spies* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1980), chs.3-4 and John Sawatsky, *Gouzenko: the Untold Story* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1984).

<sup>63</sup> Interpretation - Document G.5.(Letter No.2 of 14/6/48), V. Petrov, 29 June 1954, NAA A6201/1, Item 51.



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<sup>64</sup> Secret memo, A.R. Peters to G.A. Cook, secretary, CSIR, 1 August 1947, NAA A6119 XR1, Item 48. Kaiser's obituary (*The Times*, 17 July 1998, p.25) incorrectly states that he 'left Australia after hearing on the radio that he was wanted for questioning by the authorities just as his ship left harbour'

<sup>65</sup> See NAA A6119/79, Item 1218; A6119/79, Item 1219; A6119/XR1, Item 48; A6119/84, Item 1929. Reports on the AASW functions can be found in *Bulletin of the Scientific Workers*, No.67, April-May 1946 ('Atomic Spy Scare'); no.68, June 1946 ('The Nunn May Case') and No.73, October 1947 ('AASW Policy in Regard to Scientific Work related to the Rocket Range').

<sup>66</sup> See *The Times*, 10 March 1948, p.10.

<sup>67</sup> See Kaiser's regular detailed reports on his progress to Dr E.G. Bowen, NAA (NSW) C3830/1, Item F1/4/KAI. Accompanying one report was an offprint of the *Nature* article and *The Times* article (with photograph) on the betatron.

<sup>68</sup> Details about the planning, execution and immediate aftermath of this demonstration are contained in the correspondence from one of the organisers, Ken Gott, to Australian friends in Prague. See letters, K.D. Gott to Stephen and Nita Murray-Smith, 15 July 1949; 23 July 1949, 27/28 July 1949, Stephen Murray-Smith Papers, MS 8272, Box 270/1-4, Correspondence 1948-49, Victorian State Library (VSL).

<sup>69</sup> Copies of this leaflet can be found in several of Kaiser's files (see, for example, NAA A10651/1, Item 1CR/11/2, Pt.2; NAA A8520/21, Item PH/KAI/2). The leaflet was authored by Robin Gollan (later Professor of History at ANU) at the urging of another Australian communist Ken Gott (conversation with R. Gollan, July 1997). During WW11, Gott and Kaiser were both in the Melbourne University Labor Club, along with Ian Milner, Amirah Gust and Ian Turner. Gott had just returned from Budapest, where he attended the World Youth and Student Festival, and Prague, where he stayed with Stephen and Nita Murray-Smith. (See NAA A6119/1, Item 5)

<sup>70</sup> As the recently retired chairman of the CSIRO, Sir David Rivett, later wrote privately: 'I suspect that [Kaiser's] exploit...would have drawn no more attention than is represented by a shrug of the shoulders if only the local British had observed it, but apparently Canberra has not got the same sense of indifference to youthful folly'. Cited in Marjory Collard O'Dea, *Ian Clunies Ross. A Biography* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1997), 246. Rivett's biographer notes the Kaiser incident dismissively and parenthetically: '(Just to add spice, a junior member of CSIR staff indulged in a demonstration linked with a Communist cause outside Australia House.)'. Rohan Rivett, *David Rivett: Fighter for Australian Science* (Melbourne: MUP, 1972), 213.

<sup>71</sup> Letter, K.D. Gott to S. Murray-Smith, 28 July 1949, Murray-Smith Papers, MS 8272, Box 270/1-4, Correspondence, 1948-49, VSL. In response, Murray-Smith's praise was generous: 'I have terrific admiration of your guts in going through with it and your ability in planning it so well...I [would] like to think that if we had been with you we would have been in it too; but I know how much guts that sort of thing takes. It ranks with [Noel] Counihan in the cage as something to be talked of after years'. Letter, S. Murray-Smith to Ken and Beth Gott, 1 August 1949, Gott Papers, MS 13047, Box 3764/1, VSL. The

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legendary story of 'Noel Counihan and The Cage' that occurred during a free speech protest of 1932 is told in Wendy Lowenstein, *Weevils in the Flour. An oral record of the 1930s depression in Australia* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1978), pp. 390-5 and Bernard Smith, *Noel Counihan: artist and revolutionary* (Melbourne: OUP, 1993), ch. 5.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Beth Gott, Melbourne, 29 March 1997; interview with T.R. Kaiser, Sheffield, UK, 10 July 1997.

<sup>73</sup> See the following archival files relating to Kaiser: CSIRO Archives, ACT, File WG/2/23, Series 639 Correspondence Files; NAA (NSW), C3830/1, Item F1/4/KAI; NAA (ACT), A8520/21, Item PH/KAI/2; A8520/21, Item PH/KAI/2C; A432/80, Item 55/2618; A2908/15, Item K3; A6119/84, Item 1929; A6119/2, Item 48; C3830/1, Item F1/4/KAI. Most of these files, which were recently transferred from the CSIRO Archives to the National Archives, were not given folio numbers. Thus, when these files are cited below, folio numbers will be absent. The Kaiser incident was also frequently and heatedly raised in Parliament; see *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, 9 September, 20 September 1949, vol. 204; 12 October 1949, vol.205.

<sup>74</sup> Rivett Diary, Sir David Rivett Papers, Australian Academy of Science, Basser Library, MS 83/13 (b). In a private letter to Dick Makinson in early 1949, Kaiser commented: 'Lord Cherwell has twice had the effrontery to have me interrogated and seems convinced that I am sending secrets to Moscow'. (Reprinted in *Youth Voice*, 17 September 1949, p.3.)

<sup>75</sup> The exception, perhaps, would have been one long letter from Stephen Murray-Smith in Prague to Ken and Beth Gott in London: 'What terrific stuff about the demonstration...Good for Tom; my political opinion of him, very high already, is enhanced. It's by actions such as his that the conviction and general standard as a communist can be really gauged...'. Correspondence, S. Murray-Smith to Gott, 1 August 1949, K.D. Gott Papers, MS 13047, Box 3764/1, VSL.

<sup>76</sup> Minutes, CSIRO Executive Meeting, 3 August 1949, NAA A8819, Item Book 1.

<sup>77</sup> Appendix to Minutes, CSIRO Executive Meeting, 5 September 1949, *ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> C.B. Schedvin, *Shaping Science and Industry. A History of Australia's Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, 1926-49* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 352.

<sup>79</sup> Letters, Rivett to Clunies Ross and Dr F. White, 16 and 25 August 1949, NAA A8520/21, Item PH/KAI/2. With some perspicacity Rivett added: 'The Kaiser incident will be troublesome. It was perhaps unfortunate that you [Ross] told him by cable that R[adio] P[hysics] and Nuclear Physics Section were closed to him. He was able to see that this decision must have been made before the report by Mighell and Cummins reached Melbourne: and he will be able to make the most of a "victimisation" charge'. Letter, 25 August 1949, *ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> An official inquiry chaired by the Acting High Commissioner, Norman Mighell, in London was held on 15 August 1949, with Kaiser present to defend himself. For minutes of the inquiry, see NAA A8520/21, Item PH/KAI/2C. The inquiry was a duplicitous affair. Unknown then to Kaiser (but known to Mighell)

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was the fact that his suspension from duty by the CSIRO Executive in Melbourne was already a *fait accompli*. Kaiser was not informed by Mighell of his 'guilt' because 'it might make the legal situation more difficult for C.S.I.R.O. if he should take legal action against us.' Immediately after the inquiry, Mighell told Kaiser that he was 'a silly young fool' whose actions harmed the CSIRO but, 'I am afraid, he did not see our point of view at all and stuck to his own ideas'. Cummins to Clunies Ross, 11 October 1949, NAA A8520/21, Item PH/KAI/2.

<sup>81</sup> Kaiser to J.E. Cummins (Chief Scientific Liaison Officer), 6 August 1949, NAA A8520/21, Item PH/KAI/2; Kaiser to Cummins, 22 August 1949, CSIRO Archives, File WG/2/23, Series 639.

<sup>82</sup> Jean Buckley-Moran, 'Australian Scientists and the Cold War' in Brian Martin *et al* (eds.), *Intellectual Suppression. Australian Case Histories*, pp.19-20; L.R. Humphreys, *Clunies Ross: Australian Visionary*, pp.149-52; Marjory Collard O'Dea, *Ian Clunies Ross. A Biography*, p.247, 255; Boris Schedvin, *Shaping Science and Industry*, pp.350-1. Schedvin incorrectly identifies (p.350) Kaiser as 'more a libertarian than a socialist'; in fact, as we have seen, Kaiser joined the CPA in 1946 and, according to one who knew him well during this period, was 'rather a hard-liner - although we [communists] all were then'. Interview, Nita Murray-Smith, 7 February 1999. Importantly, both J.E. Cummins (Chief Scientific Liaison Officer in London) and Clunies Ross were given confirmation of Kaiser's communist affiliation when each was visited, respectively, by MI5 and by ASIO. NAA A8520/21, Item PH/KAI/2.

<sup>83</sup> Phillip Deery, 'Science, Security and the Cold War: an Australian dimension', *War and Society*, 17(1)(1999), 81-99. This article suggests that Kaiser's fate became entwined with not only with the politics of the Cold War but also with the tripartite defence relationship between the United States, Great Britain and Australia in which a key issue was the flow of classified military information.

<sup>84</sup> See, for example, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 198, 30 September 1948; Minutes, Executive Committee meetings of the CSIR for 26-8 April 1948, 1 September 1948, 7 October 1948, 17-19 November 1948, NAA A10090/2, Book 3 and A8688/1, Book 27. See also NAA A9778, Item M13/20/1/8/1 for relevant press clippings. For some of the context see Sir Frederick White, 'CSIR to CSIRO: The Events of 1948-1949', *Public Administration* 34: 4 (1975), 281-93

<sup>85</sup> Cited in Margaret Gowing, *Independence and Deterrence. Britain and Atomic Energy, 1945-1952*, p. 149. See also his confidential memo to J.J. Dedman, 17 June 1948, and his bleak but revealing letters to J.E. Cummins (4 October 1948), Ian Wark (8 October 1948) and Sir Harry Brown (9 October 1948), in which he referred to 'certain evil men in Parliament'. Rivett Papers, MS 83/10 (f) and MS 83/8 (e), Bassett Library, AAS.

<sup>86</sup> Letter to Professor Nevil Sidgwick, Lincoln College, Oxford, 14 February 1949, Rivett Papers, MS 83/10 (f), Bassett Library, AAS. Rivett had previously developed these views in an impressive newspaper article entitled 'Science, Secrecy and Security'. See Rivett Papers, MS 83/13 (a), *ibid*; *The Herald* (Melbourne), 20 January 1949. In the context of an address in February 1949 by a Cornell University Professor, Dr Robert Cushman, entitled 'Freedom Versus Security in the Modern World', it was

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commented that ‘the only thing that Sir David did at variance with leading thought in other countries was to say what he said rather sooner than other people.’ T.C. Bell (Scientific Research Liaison Officer, Australian Embassy, Washington to G.A. Cook (secretary, CSIRO), 10 March 1949, NAA A9778, Item M13/20/1/7. The file also contains the eighteen page transcript of Cushman’s highly interesting address.

<sup>87</sup> This prestigious institution invited Rivett to visit England in the summer of 1949 to chair its international conference of scientists, held in Manchester. His address was given on 12 July 1949.

<sup>88</sup> I Clunies Ross to H.G. Higgins, 18 August 1949, ‘A Personal Message to all Officers’. My thanks to Huntly Higgins for a copy of this circular. Rachael Makinson (correspondence, 8 November 1998) found this circular hypocritical due to the fact that Clunies Ross spoke of both repression and freedom.

<sup>89</sup> NAA A8690/1, Item 49/6

<sup>90</sup> Correspondence, K. Rachel Makinson, 8 November 1998. This atmosphere was confirmed by John Spink who attended a similar meeting in Melbourne in late 1949 (interview, 20 June 1997). The only subsequent public defence of Kaiser from a CSIRO officer was in the form of an anonymous letter (but with name supplied) published in *The CSIRO Bulletin*, December 1949, p.11. The letter writer’s allegation that ‘already in one case a man’s expressed support for Dr Kaiser has been discussed in connection with his promotion’ was followed up by the Executive of the CSIRO (see Minutes, 22<sup>nd</sup> Meeting, CSIRO Executive, 10 February 1950, NAA A8819, Book 2).

<sup>91</sup> NAA A2908/15, Item K3; A8520/21, Item PH/KAI/2c.

<sup>92</sup> Kaiser to Clunies Ross, 6 September 1949, NAA A2908/15, Item K3.

<sup>93</sup> Kaiser met Pamela Pound, four years younger than he, via her involvement with the Oxford branch of the British Communist Party. Interview, Tom and Pam Kaiser, Sheffield, 10 July 1997.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> A copy of this widely-circulated four-page broadsheet can be found in the J.W. Legge Papers, at the University of Melbourne Archives. One of its headings suggests its flavour: ‘Kaiser Sacking Threatens Free Science’. It was prepared mainly by Jack Legge, Jake Ramsay and Ian Turner.

<sup>96</sup> By the beginning of 1950, the CSIRO Officers’ Association, according to an ASIO report, ‘had decided to go no further with the case’. Secret memo to Director, 12 January 1950, NAA A6119 XR1, Item 48. ASIO had also inspected CSIRO correspondence and compiled a list of the names and addresses of all individuals who had written letters of protest to the CSIRO Head Office regarding Kaiser’s dismissal. See Secret memo to Director, 17 February 1950, NAA A 6119/84, Item 1929.

<sup>97</sup> G.A. Cook, secretary CSIRO Executive, to Kaiser, 24 February 1950, NAA A8520/21, Item PH/KAI/2c

<sup>98</sup> Cook to J.E. Cummins, 12 December 1949, *ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Copy of transcript obtained by ASIO; see NAA A6119/84, Item 1929. This talk was very similar in content to his address to the Kew ‘Tramways & Citizens Relief Committee’ recorded in considerable detail by an ASIO officer present. *Ibid.*

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<sup>100</sup> Copy of telegram , sent 26 May 1950, to Bernal, c/- Birbeck College, London, obtained by ASIO. Ibid. Such was Bernal's standing that when the Lord Privy Seal, Sir John Anderson, was warned that Bernal was a security risk, he commented that 'even if he is as red as the flames of hell', he wanted him as a principal scientific consultant. Maurice Goldsmith, *Sage: A Life of J.D. Bernal* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1980), p.123. See also Andrew Sinclair, *The Red and the Blue. Intelligence, Treason and the Universities* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1986), pp.98-9. Bernal did not fly to Australia. Security surveillance of the Democratic Rights Council was extensive; see NAA (NSW) SP1714/1, Item N57490.

<sup>101</sup> See *Guardian*, 30 June 1950; *Tribune*, 26 July 1950.

<sup>102</sup> For example, a Saturday night function in the Melbourne Trades Hall raised £57/3/- towards the fare. *Argus*, 13 June 1950.

<sup>103</sup> Interview, T.R. Kaiser, 10 July 1997. What follows is based on this interview and conversations with John Spink, 20 July 1997, and Professor Robert Street, 13 June 1997.

<sup>104</sup> Patrick Blackett was a Nobel Prize winner, an advocate of atomic disarmament and the author of *The Military and Political Consequences of Atomic Energy*; according to Kaiser (interview), he was a 'true liberal'.

<sup>105</sup> K.R. Makinson to Jean Moran, 12 February 1983, Makinson Papers, P.148, Series 10.

<sup>106</sup> 'Observations of Thomas Kaiser on Friday, 21<sup>st</sup> July 1950', NAA A6119/84, Item 1929.

<sup>107</sup> See A.D. Harvey, 'The Secret Police at Kew', *Labour History Review*, 63(3) (1998), pp.298-301.

<sup>108</sup> Confidential memo, A. Harris to Major H. Stone, (Room 055, War Office), 26 September 1950, NAA A2908/15, Item K3. A search at the Public Record Office in Kew, London, yielded nothing.

<sup>109</sup> Interview, Bernard Rechter, 1 April 1997.

<sup>110</sup> See Bernard Lovell, *Astronomer by Chance* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), pp.187-90. This was despite the fact that 'his 1953 research article on radio echo studies of meteor ionisation was one of those classic scientific papers that ties up the loose knots of a subject so completely that few scientists felt the necessity to write on it again.' *The Times*, 17 July 1998, p.25. See also the obituaries in *The Guardian*, 5 August 1998 and *The Independent*, 13 August 1998 for similar comments.

<sup>111</sup> He was offered a position at Charles University in Prague; if he had accepted it, which he nearly did, he most likely would have been the subject, ironically, of a Czech security police file. A fellow Australian and communist, Ian Milner, employed at Charles University, compiled hundreds of files, mostly on visiting 'Westerners', for the Ministry of the Interior throughout the 1950s. See Phillip Deery, 'Cold War Victim or Rhodes Scholar Spy? Revisiting the Case of Ian Milner', *Overland*, No.147, Winter 1997, pp.9-12.

<sup>112</sup> In 1956, the year he left the Communist Party, he became senior lecturer at the University of Sheffield. Ten years later he was appointed to the Chair of Space Physics which he held until his retirement in 1987.

<sup>113</sup> Private aerogramme, 18 October 1972, R.E.B. Makinson to K.R. & RO. Makinson, NAA (VIC), B6332/1, Item 10. Makinson died nearly twenty years before Kaiser, in January 1979; see Eric Aarons' obituary in *Tribune*, 24 January 1979, p.11.

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<sup>114</sup> Letter to Minister of Defence, 12 March 1953, NAA A6122 XR1, Item 223.