Anti-Communism in the Heartland: The Red Scare at the Local Level in Wichita, Kansas

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Anti-communist sentiments were central to Americans during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Fear of communism during this time was pervasive and spread across the nation. Large metropolitan areas became hot beds for Red Scare politics, putting government and private sector employees in the spotlight. The existing literature of the Red Scare focuses on large cities, like Washington, D.C, New York City, Los Angeles, or places that were particularly fervent in their "redhunting". The Midwest, by contrast, the literal and industrial core of the nation, is often left out of this discussion, but it is equally important to examine in regards to the Red Scare and how it played out in the United States. Wichita, Kansas, demonstrates what the Red Scare looked like for Middle America through its community and grass roots based anti-communism, illustrating how the citizens of the United States reacted to and participated in the Red Scare on a smaller scale.

By examining details of life in Wichita and Kansas, the way in which the Red Scare played out in Wichita can be properly analyzed. The primary issue to address is loyalty oaths. Since Kansas did not have its own investigative committee into communists, they created loyalty oaths to prevent the spread of communism. Religion and its role in the Red Scare is also a part of Wichita life that must be closely looked at. A religious state such as Kansas was concerned about communists' attitudes towards religion. Examining how religious communities and religious figureheads in Wichita reacted to communism is necessary to understanding how the Red Scare unfolded in the city because religious life was so important for the social relations in Wichita. The third part to focus on is schools in Wichita and Kansas. School curriculums do not change often, but when they do, looking at how these changes in Wichita and the state were implemented during the Red Scare can give insight into how anti-communist sentiments found their way into schools. Analyzing what school officials say about the current curriculum is important, and how anti-communist sentiments influenced school officials to change what was being taught in schools is equally important. Industry and business are vital as well to the understanding of anti-communism in Wichita. Fred Koch and his companies are a major element of this topic, requiring analysis of his own beliefs and practices. As the most populous city in the state, Wichita was a hub for various business conferences, examining these is crucial to understanding the role of business in the Red Scare. Anti-communism was at the core of American values during the late 1940s and early 1950s and examining all of these areas of life in Wichita and Kansas gives a picture of how the Red Scare played out in Wichita.

As the Red Scare spread across the nation, certain states and cities became targets of the politics that came with the scare. States like Michigan and California are often cited as critical

centers of the Red Scare in America.[1] The coasts formed the key areas of the scare, with a few exceptions in the Midwest and South.[2] These are the places where the power of the nation was centered, political power on the East Coast with Washington, D.C. and the West Coast as a cultural center. These places have subsequently become the site of most Red Scare historical research. For example, M.J. Heale's book on Red Scare politics in the states and nation focuses on certain states, like Michigan and Massachusetts on the East Coast and California on the West, because of their ardent resistance of communism through communist control laws and committees that sought out communists.[3] Though scholars like Heale focus on the coasts and how the Red Scare played out there, the Midwest was not immune to the effects of the Red Scare. As James Selcraig details in his analysis of the Red Scare in the Midwest, by examining state level politics and government as well universities in states like Illinois, Ohio, and Indiana.[4] Discussing how each state responded to communism is only one layer of understanding the Red Scare as a whole though. Some scholars have examined the Red Scare throughout the nation with a bigger lens, claiming that the federal government was the major factor and force of the Red Scare; anti-communism, specifically McCarthyism, trickled down from the national level where it was tied up in party politics and matters of national security into local and state level governments and policies.[5] Thus this perspective asserts that states only acted the way they did because of anti-communism trickling down from the federal level. With analysis on a state level arguing that the Red Scare manifested itself mainly through state laws and analysis on the federal level arguing that the Red Scare began at the federal level with Sen. McCarthy and HUAC and those ideals and goals trickled down to the state level, what is left is to look at is the community, or grassroots, level and how the Red Scare played out there.

Some scholars have suggested that there is a lack of information on how citizens responded to and participated in the Red Scare. More specifically, they question how these national approaches to anti-communism trickled down to the state and local level and then how those people reacted to the Red Scare.[6] Examining Kansas--and Wichita in particular--enables a more personal way of approaching the Red Scare. Looking at Wichita gives an idea of how citizens at local level reacted to and participated in the Red Scare in community and grassroots ways. Knowing how the federal and state government reacted to and participated in the Red

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[1] M.J. Heale, *McCarthy's Americans: Red Scare Politics in State and Nation, 1935-1965* (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1998).

[2] Ibid., vii.

[3] Ibid., vii.

[4] James T. Selcraig, *The Red Scare in the Midwest, 1945-1955* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1982).

[5] Ellen Schrecker, "McCarthyism: Political Repression and the Fear of Communism," *Social Research* 71, no. 4 (2004): 1043, JSTOR.

[6] Laura McEnaney, "Cold War mobilization and domestic politics: the United States," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume 1: Origins,* ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd A. Westad (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 428.

Scare is of course vital to the understanding of the history, but looking at how citizens participated in the Red Scare gives a new depth to the understanding of this history.

A specific examination of Wichita, Kansas provides a vital observation of how the Red Scare affected the United States on a local and grass-roots level. Wichita is not, and has not historically been, a major city like New York, Los Angeles or Chicago. However, it has been a place of diverse economic innovation. Wichita experienced its first boom in 1871, as it became a major hub for the cattle drive business.[7] The city became a place associated with the "wild west" feeling, a place of cowboys and outlaws, images that are now ingrained in the American culture. Wichita continued to grow, becoming the home to the outdoor activities company Coleman and the medicinal company Mentholatum in the 1910s.[8] Throughout the first and second world wars, Wichita emerged on top in regards to war production, exceeding all other cities in per capita war production.[9] It is from this massive increase in aircraft production that Wichita earns the informal title of "air capital of the world". Wichita has always been a city in line with developments in American culture, while still not being a major city like those on the coasts. Examining how Wichitans dealt with the Red Scare can provide another level of how the nation as a whole reacted to and participated in the Red Scare, a level of analysis that shows how Middle America felt the Red Scare, but also a city that was in accordance with American cultural and industrial trends.

Understanding the background of the Red Scare is crucial to seeing just how it was so impactful in the United States. The House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) was created in 1938 as a temporary investigative committee because of growing concerns over Nazi and Communist sympathizers in the United States.[10] The committee itself had the power to investigate "the extent, character, and objects of un-American propaganda activities in the United States" and "the diffusion within the United States of subversive and un-American propaganda that… attacks the principle form of government as guaranteed by [the] constitution."[11] By 1945, it was made a standing, rather than temporary, committee under the chairmanship of Representative Edward J. Hart of New Jersey.[12] HUAC played a major role in the Red Scare, investigating government employees and their connections to the Communist Party as well as delving into the private sector, the most famous being the investigations into Hollywood's alleged communist leaning. One fervent anticommunist in the United States government that contributed greatly to the Red Scare was Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin. McCarthy was first elected to the United States Senate in 1946 and did not make much of an impact until February of 1950 when he launched a crusade against the communist party in America by

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[7] Jay Price, *Images of America: Wichita 1860-1930* (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 25.

[8] Ibid., 63.

[9] Wichita Chamber of Commerce, *Wichita People* (Wichita, KS, 1947), 9.

[10] William Klingaman, *Encyclopedia of the McCarthy Era* (New York: Facts on File, 1996), 183-84.

[11] *Facts on Communism, Volume 1: Communist Ideology* (Washington D.C.: United States Congress, House Committee on Un-American Activities, 1959), V.

[12] Ibid.,185.

claiming that he knew of 205 Communists within the United States government.[13] In the early 1950s, with help from HUAC and Sen. McCarthy's list of supposed communists, the Red Scare reached its peak, creating an environment of hysteria across the United States.

The Red Scare influenced politics not only at the national, but also state level. In his book titled *McCarthy's Americans: Red Scare Politics in State and Nation, 1935–1965*, M. J. Heale at the University of Georgia breaks down the threat of Red Scare politics into three main categories: investigation or "red hunting" committees, loyalty oaths, and communist control laws.[14] The investigation committees were often called "little HUACs" after the national committee. These state level committees worked under the doctrine of exposure; if communists could be exposed, then membership of the Communist Party (CP) would decrease.[15] Some states also adopted a Red Scare tactic known as loyalty oaths. These were oaths that public employees signed in order to show their allegiance to the country, which also included explicit language about participating in subversive activities; without signing these oaths, applicants to public positions would not be hired and potential candidates would not be allowed to run for public office.[16] The last state measures taken were communist control laws that sought to combat the spread of the CP and to keep CP members out of office. These laws were all very different in their degrees of severity. Some excluded communists from the ballot, others denied them public employment, and the state of Texas briefly considered the death penalty for communists.[17] While every state in the nation had its own legislative method of dealing with communists, most of the measures taken fell under one of these three categories.

However, state level measures did not exist to the degree in Kansas as they had in other states around the country. States like California and Michigan retained investigation committees, multiple varieties of loyalty oaths, and communist control laws that were challenged and changed often. Many states already had a loyalty oath in the form of the employee simply pledging their loyalty to the state and national constitution.[18] But when the Cold War began, specific wording about subversive groups was added to the oaths. In 1949, the state of Kansas passed a law mandating that all public employees and officials sign a loyalty oath.[19] The oath was worded as follows:

> I, ----, swear (or affirm) that I do not advocate, nor am I a member of any political party of organization that advocates the overthrow of the government of the United States or the State of violence.[20]

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[13] Klingaman, *Encyclopedia*, 256.

[14] Heale, *McCarthy's Americans*, 4.

[15] Ibid., 13.

[16] Ibid., 29.

[17] Ibid., 55.

[18] Ibid., 29.

[19] "Loyalty Oaths," *Lawrence Daily Journal*, Nov. 20, 1959.

[20] Harry Ward, *"Going Down Hill": Legacies of the American Revolutionary War* (Palo Alto, CA: Academica Press, 2008), 25.

Students at the University of Kansas also had to sign a loyalty oath when they were applying for a federal loan.[21] These loyalty oaths were the only legislation passed in order to control communism in Kansas, unlike other states that also had investigation committees and communist control laws. An article on the subject of loyalty oaths was published in the *Lawrence Journal* in 1959 in which the anonymous author states that there is no major opposition to the teachers and students signing these oaths and that the administration appears to have no objections.[22] Nearly a decade after loyalty oaths became mandatory for teachers in the state, there did not appear to be any major objections at the largest university in the state. Kansans seemed willing to go along with the loyalty oaths because to them, saying these words and pledging their allegiance to and pride in the American government was paramount. Moreover, the article is rather critical of critics of loyalty oaths, saying that if a person does not want to sign an oath they should just find employment or loans elsewhere and that the government is in the right to make sure it is not loaning money to students and faculty who will in turn use that money against the government. The author's argument is framed in such a way that it really does not leave much room for criticism. This rhetorical strategy displays how anticommunists were interested in pointing out the lack of patriotism in critics of the loyalty oath and just how easily one could do what they deemed the right thing. Teachers and students were expected to accept these loyalty oaths or be deemed un-patriotic, or worse a communist.

In Kansas, loyalty oaths had much more symbolic importance than a mission to actually completely eradicate all forms of communism and/or subversion. These oaths became part of what sociologists have called a 'symbolic crusade', a product of consensus rather than partisan politics.[23] In contrast, there were states in the country that demonstrated how these loyalty oaths could be used as weapons. One of the most publicized incidents of a loyalty oath was at a university was in California in 1949. The University of California tried to make it mandatory for all faculty members to pledge their loyalty to the state government and when multiple faculty members refused, the regents of the university tried to have them fired.[24] Though the state Supreme Court declared the oath unconstitutional shortly thereafter, people reported that the climate on campus during that time was incredibly damaging and hostile.[25] Nothing of that degree ever happened on any university campus in Kansas. In fact, the environment appeared to have been ambivalent if not supportive in regards to the loyalty oaths. Through this support or at least a passive acceptance of these oaths, one can see that they played a more symbolic role with neither side pushing too hard.

Religion played an essential role in Wichita history. In 1947, there were a total of 163 church organizations for a population of 155,968.[26] The Wichita Chamber of Commerce in 1947

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[21] "Loyalty Oaths," *Lawrence Daily Journal*, Nov. 20, 1959.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Heale, *McCarthy's Americans,* 29.

[24] Klingaman, *Encyclopedia*, 239.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Wichita Chamber of Commerce, *Wichita People*, 143,122.

published a book titled *Wichita People* and in this book, prominent Wichitan figures wrote essays about important parts of the city. One such essay is titled "Wichita is a City of Churchgoers". This book as a whole is the Chamber of Commerce's way of promoting the city and highlighting why people are proud of their city. Essays concerning Wichita's role in farming and industry are included, others write about how enjoyable it is to live in Wichita and how happy people are there. It is clear that the high volume of churchgoers is something that Wichitans were proud of and deemed an important part of the culture of the city. An essay about the education system in Wichita, which contains a section about the catholic school system, is also included.[27] The section on the Catholic school system is illustrative of the role religion played in Wichita life.

Communism is a secular religion within itself and justifies dismantling traditional social institutions and practices.[28] Religion was one of these traditional social institutions that American citizens felt that communists were attacking, and thus a focus put on religion meant an attempt to keep communists and communist ideals from spreading in the community. Another way of analyzing the relationship between communism and religion is to see the two as two conflicting "faith movements", communism as a "secular religion" and Christianity as a strict religion and the two are essentially engaged in a religious war.[29] Either way, the simultaneous existence of strict Christianity and communism in a small community is neither practical nor possible.

Fred Koch, the founder of Koch Industries, was one example of a Wichitan who was genuinely afraid of communist infiltration of the country through churches. He was convinced that communists would not only infiltrate the country through the nation's churches, but that it was a key part of their plan to take over the United States. In his book, *A Businessman Looks at Communism*, Koch devoted a whole chapter to the discussion of how the communists had infiltrated, and would continue to infiltrate, America through its churches.[30] He believed that communists came into American churches in various ways, either through becoming ministers themselves or distributing communist propaganda at churches.[31] The manner by which communists came into churches was not the focus of Koch though. In his chapter on communist subversion of American churches, Koch positions communism and religion on opposite ends of a societal spectrum, which lends itself to the idea that the two cannot exist at the same time. The solution, to Koch, is for clergy and churchgoers alike to understand Christian religious teachings deeply and completely in order to separate out what is Christian and what is communist.[32] To Koch, religion was essential in keeping communism at bay in the country and in Wichita.

Religious institutions in Wichita used their positions and influence in the community to prevent communist sympathizers. Bishop Mark Carroll, at the time Bishop of Wichita, was vehemently anti-communist and spoke out about this belief at a conference in Kansas City in 1950 saying that communists "hate [the] country and what it stands for. They are not Americans

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[27] Wichita Chamber of Commerce, *Wichita People*, 40-42.

[28] Peter Zwick, *National Communism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983), 9.

[29] Robert Daniels, *The Nature of Communism* (New York: Random House, 1962), 345.

[30] Fred Koch, *A Businessman Looks at Communism* (Wichita, KS: Fred Koch, 1961).

[31] Koch, *A Businessman Looks at Communism*, 17.

[32] Ibid., 17.

though they claim the name".[33] Though he did not end up actually attending, Bishop Carroll was also slated to attend what the *Wichita Eagle* called a "brotherhood dinner".[34] At this meeting, more than 260 Wichitans of numerous religious creeds gathered to hear religious leaders in the community speak on the state of religious harmony in Wichita. The keynote speaker at the event, Rev. Joseph L. O'Brien spoke to attendees of the meeting, asking them to stay active in their religious harmony as to not fall victim to the religious boundaries falling all over Europe.[35] While the focus of this meeting seems to be keeping religious harmony alive in Wichita between the various Christian denominations as well as Jewish, the underlying tones are anticommunist, supporting the notion that religion was the institution that kept communists out of the city. Rev. O'Brien specifically said that with this meeting they "[lifted] the iron curtain" that may have otherwise prevented interdenominational relationships in the city. The people of Wichita and the religious leaders in Wichita were fearful that they were falling victim to what they thought the rest of the world was falling victim to, a decline in religious harmony because of communism. These words are not said outright but phrases like "iron curtain" reveal where the fear really lies, with communists and their aversion to organized Christianity. Rev. O'Brien continues with this theme by saying that this brotherhood meeting "is the only valid guarantor of real democracy".[36] These remarks were met with agreement by the rest of those in attendance of the meeting, revealing that Wichita's religious leaders did see religion as the safeguard against communism. The Red Scare rhetoric that is used in this article provides an understanding that at the basic level, these religious leaders in the city were talking about safeguarding Wichita from communist influence. Unlike other places across the nation, Wichitans reluctantly call out communists as the problem, instead talk around the issue in a more subtle way while still getting their point across. This rhetorical camouflage is important because it characterizes the Middle American approach to the Red Scare, evidencing their aversion to communism indirectly rather than head on.

Religion was not the only institution to reflect Red Scare politics, as schools were not exempt from the fear and fervent anti-communism of the era. The National Education Association saw communism as enough of a threat to establish the National Commission for the Defense of Democracy Through Education in 1941.[37] As a result, teachers with alleged communist sympathies were purged across the country. Three hundred and eighty teachers were let go in New York City, in Los Angeles, 30,000 teachers were subjected to invasive and lengthy loyalty checks; books were burned in Oklahoma for containing socialist subject matter; and the list goes on.[38] What was more interesting about the Red Scare was how the curriculum changed during this time. Removing supposed communists from schools is one thing, but changing the curriculum of a school in order to combat communist influence is a different level of anti-

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[33] "Bishop Carroll Scores Reds in United States," *Wichita Eagle*, Jan. 1, 1950.

[34] "'Iron Curtain' Here Lifted, Brotherhood Diners Are Told," *Wichita Eagle*, Feb. 27, 1948.

[35] "'Iron Curtain' Here Lifted".

[36] Ibid.

[37] Stuart Foster, *Red Alert! Educators Confront the Red Scare in American Public Schools, 1947-1954* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2000), 159.

[38] Stuart Foster, *Red Alert! Educators Confront the Red,* 30.

communism, and one that is more indicative of the indirect manner that Wichita had in addressing communist influence. This is much more relevant in Wichita because there was no purging of teachers and most people were relatively willing to accept the loyalty oath that existed for public employees. Again, it is clear that the way anti-communism unfolded in Wichita was less of a weapon that was meant to fire teachers and burn books, but rather a symbolic path that was more subtle and easier for the citizens to conform to. Symbols can be vital to people and this change in curriculum was a symbol of resisting communist influence. This is an important distinction because it shows that by the time Red Scare politics trickled down from the national, it was less about hunting out the communists in an aggressive way and more about how communist influence could be slowed.

Curriculum revisions do not happen often within school systems, but when they do they are usually the result of new research that came forth about what is the best way for students to learn. In 1948, county superintendent A. F. Throckmorton, who at the time was running for state superintendent of public instruction, called for a return to fundamentals in education.[39] During the Red Scare, progressive education came under attack often because progressive, or any diversion from the fundamentalist norm, became synonymous with communist; one such example of this was the progressive educator William Heard Kilpatrick, who in 1949—when invited to attend a workshop in Pasadena, California—was widely criticized for being a communist sympathizer, even when the historical evidence did not point towards this.[40] Throckmorton felt that when schools ascribed to "progressive" ways of education, people were unable to "remember the history of the country in which they were reared". As such, he wanted to return the focus to American history in school curriculum.[41] This claim is not straightforwardly anti-communist, but when placed next to the rhetoric he uses and what the words are referring to, it becomes obvious. For anticommunists, "Progressive" meant someone who was either communist or a communist sympathizer because of their liberal views or simply their views that deviated from the fundamentalist norm, and Throckmorton's desire to place a heavier focus on American history is also an anti-communist code. The strong Cold War movement to define exactly what "American" meant resulted in "Un-American" becoming synonymous with Communism.[42] By wanting to put a focus on national history, Throckmorton wanted to make sure that the students were becoming "American" enough.

At its core, the Red Scare was about change. People were afraid of this new way of thinking and what it would do to the United States. This resistance to communism is sometimes not said outright, but instead talked about in terms of "progressive movements" or "change" in the country. Another notion that seemed to be connected with communism was that of breaking with the past, and that does not mean someone is liberal or left leaning. On the surface, it

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[39] "School Candidate for Fundamentals and Less Freudism," *Wichita Eagle*, Jan. 1, 1948.

[40] Stuart Foster, *Red Alert! Educators Confront the Red Scare,* 168.

[41] "School Candidate for Fundamentals and Less Freudism," *Wichita Eagle*, Jan. 1, 1948.

[42] Philip Wander, "Political Rhetoric and the Un-American Tradition," in *Cold War Rhetoric: Strategy, Metaphor, and Ideology*, ed. Bernard K. Johnpoll (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1990), 192.

appears that Throckmorton just wanted a renewed focus on U.S. history. But if one looks closer at what the undertones of this suggestion are, he was afraid of what these new ideas would do to children and thus wanted to renew a sense of patriotism and Americanism in children who were still in school. What Throckmorton feared was that if students did not understand American history, then they would be more susceptible to communist conversion. In 1958, the University of Kansas published a review of high school preparation of their 1,124 incoming freshmen. In this review George B. Smith, the Dean of the University of Kansas, stated that "education programs in any society at any stage in history reflect…the philosophy of the society in which they exist."[43] He provides the example of the priority physical education was given during World War I.[44] While people like Throckmorton and Smith may not have been completely aware that the curriculum they were advocating for was in accordance with the themes of the Red Scare, they were nonetheless compliant in forming the education of the country according to those themes.

Though it was noted earlier, Kansas' teachers' acceptance of the loyalty oaths is worth mentioning again. There were undoubtedly some individual teachers who felt opposed to the oaths, but as a whole they accepted the oaths as necessary to safeguarding public education from communism. Unlike previously mentioned states like California where there was massive uproar from teachers who had to sign loyalty oaths, nothing of the like is ever documented in Wichita or Kansas. This is not to say that some teachers or professors did not like the oaths, but rather that there were not enough opposed to lead to any sort of organized protest.

While Wichitans feared communist ideals would seep into the schools in the city, the business and industry sectors shared similar fears, and when speaking about business and industry in Wichita, Fred Koch and Koch Industries are unavoidable subjects. Fred Koch came to Wichita in 1925 to form a new engineering firm with two other men and in less than ten years, Koch had turned a small $300 investment into a colossal fortune.[45] His engineering firm specialized in the design and manufacture of petroleum refineries and between 1929 and 1931, Koch's company built fifteen oil-cracking refineries in the Soviet Union.[46] While in the Soviet Union, Koch was led around the country by a man named Jerome Livshitz, an old Bolshevik who supposedly knew the specifics of the communist plot to infiltrate the United States through its schools, universities, churches, labor unions, government, and armed forces.[47] It was during this visit and his business dealings in the USSR that Koch became fervently anti-communist. A phrase of Livshitz's especially stuck with Koch, which was that the foundation of the communist plot was to "make you rotten to the core."[48] With this newfound passion for halting the communist infiltration of America, Koch wrote a book on the subject titled *A Businessman Looks at*

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[43] George B. Smith, *Let's Look at the Record: The High School Preparation of 1,124 University of Kansas Freshmen* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Publications, 1958), 2.

[44] Ibid., 4.

[45] Daniel Schulman, *Sons of Wichita: How the Koch Brothers Became America's Most Powerful and Private Dynasty* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2014), 10-11.

[46] Koch, *A Businessman Looks at Communism,* 3.

[47] Ibid., 7.

[48] Ibid., 7.

Communism. His sons report that his time there and his subsequent fear of communism coming to America was a frequent topic in the family; they say that growing up, the point of view that big government was to be feared was fundamental.[49] Though the end goal is a world void of government, communism begins with the State controlling all aspects of life, and this tenant is what scared Koch, especially as someone who relied heavily on a free market in order to make his fortune. One consultant said, these views influenced his son Charles' political views.[50] This is significant, as Charles became the head of Koch Industries and led the company into unprecedented growth, expanding company revenue from $70 million in 1960 to $90 billion in 2006.[51]

Fred Koch's anti-communism was a key influence on the future of industry in Wichita. He was a highly influential man, not just his influence on his son's later successful business dealings, but also his role in the local community during the Red Scare. Koch and his wife belonged to a number of social and community clubs in the late 1940s and early 1950s, such as the Wichita Country Club, Junior League, and Towntalks.[52] As a highly involved member of Wichita society as well as owning a massive company in the city, Fred Koch had plenty of avenues to display his anti-communist beliefs. His avid anti-communism brought him to the attention of a man named Robert Welch, a former candy company executive who quit his job to fight the spread of communism full time during the 1950s.[53] Together with Welch and ten others, Koch helped to found the John Birch Society in 1958.[54] On the society's current website, they pride themselves on being an organization that has never strayed from their "opposition to communism and any other form of totalitarianism".[55] If Koch was among the select few to be invited to help start a highly conservative organization, his anti-communism was extreme enough to get the attention of people across the country. The John Birch Society cites him as a significant figure along with its founding father Robert Welch, indicating that Koch was a figurehead in the anticommunist movement within America. Koch represented the anti-communism that was coursing through the upper levels of society and business in Wichita during the Red Scare. While Wichita did not participate in active searches for communists, important local figures dispelled their beliefs. Koch's influence on his son's future business and political strategy, and his own anticommunist influence, are key to understanding how the Red Scare manifested itself in Wichita.

Nor was Koch alone in Wichita as far as anti-communism in big business. In 1949, Wichita held a conference with 125 bankers to hear from finance chiefs from around the state about

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[49] Schulman, *Sons of Wichita*, 41.

[50] Ibid., 41.

[51] Ibid., 243.

[52] *Wichita Social Register* (Wichita: Wichita Social Club Directory Co., 1949-1950).

[53] Schulman, *Sons of Wichita,* 40.

[54] Ibid., 45.

[55] John Birch Society, "History," *The John Birch Society*, http://www.jbs.org/about-jbs/history, November, 2014.

anti-inflation credit control methods.[56] At this conference, E.W. Stillwell, president of the Kansas Bankers Association, asserted the "responsibility of individual bankers in preserving our democratic form of government."[57] Stillwell called upon the bankers at the conference to take a firm stance in combatting inflation in the nation, appealing to them by claiming that one of the main motives of American bankers is patriotism.[58] The people of Wichita, specifically those in the financial sector of the town, came out en masse to support and listen to Stillwell and his idea that bankers safeguarded the American democratic way of government. Wichita bankers saw the financial sector as a place where communists could gain major footholds if left with an opening. Koch himself agrees with the strategy of combatting inflation in order to keep communists from infiltrating America as he lists inflation specifically as one of the ways that communists plan to take America.[59] Whether or not Stillwell truly cared about the preservation of democracy or if he was just interested in keeping himself and his money safe does not much matter. The point is that he and Wichitan bankers at least worked under the guise of "Americanism", which was code for anti-communism. People were afraid that communists would take over every aspect of life, and this included the financial sector. Wichita here reacted to the Red Scare again in a rather subtle way, simply by continuing to combat inflation under the guise of keeping democracy safe.

The Red Scare fear swept the nation in an unprecedented manner. While the red-hunting committees, Hollywood blacklisting, and major communist control laws, were the reality for parts of the country, the Red Scare was quite different depending upon where you lived. In places like Wichita, the Red Scare manifested itself on a much smaller, subtler scale, unlike the grand committees and hearings of the coasts. Research exists as to how the Red Scare affected federal and state level politics, but what is lacking are closer investigations of how local communities dealt with the massive fear of communism trickling down from the federal level. Loyalty oaths, religious leaders and organizations, school curriculum and teachers, and industry, were some of the major issues in which Wichita reacted to the Red Scare. These topics provided a snapshot of what Wichita was like during the Red Scare.

Wichita's Red Scare is not a microcosm for the Red Scare as a whole, but rather an example of how a specific place digested and "did" anti-communism. Observation of how smaller communities throughout the nation followed the lead of institutions like HUAC can provide a more complex understanding of how the nation as a whole reacted to the Red Scare. Wichita is an example of how anti-communism was exhibited on a local, grassroots level, away from the severe anti-communism of other states around the nation. Wichita did not hunt out the communists with fervor and severity, nor did Wichita provide an oasis for them in a massively unfriendly nation. Rather, Wichita fell somewhere in between those two ends of the spectrum, by attempting to stop communist infiltration where they thought it was and slowly pushing the supposed communists back out. Citizens and community leaders were free to go along with the mores of the Red Scare where they found it to be pertinent. In comparison to places like Los

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[56] "Patriotic Trust Told to Bankers," *Wichita Eagle*, Fe. 27, 1948.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Koch, *A Businessman Looks at Communism*, 12.

Angeles, New York City, or Detroit, the Red Scare manifested itself differently in the smaller city of Wichita. Although most definitely a part of the nation's larger anti-communist movement, Wichita's citizens' reaction to and participation in the Red Scare created a unique grassroots approach to combatting the supposed communist infiltration of the United States.