

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
REGENTS COMMUNICATION

SUBJECT: Building and Space Naming

ACTION REQUEST: Authorization to rescind and to remove the name of the
Clarence Cook Little Science Building

Background:

In January 2017 a review process was established for considering questions raised by the community about historical names in and on University buildings (the “review process”) based on the recommendation of the President’s Advisory Committee on University History (“PACOUH”). The PACOUH is a standing committee of expert faculty that advises the President on matters relating to the history and traditions of the University that require historical interpretation, sensitivity and expertise. The committee is currently chaired by Thurnau Professor of History Terrence J. McDonald, who is also director of the Bentley Historical Library, the University’s primary institutional archive. The review process articulates a set of principles that should be used in considering requests to review names as well as the steps that will be taken when requests are submitted.

On September 1, 2017, a U-M undergraduate student and four LSA faculty members submitted a request that the name of the Clarence Cook Little (“C.C. Little”) Science Building be reviewed pursuant to the review process. The PACOUH carefully evaluated the request and in January 2018 unanimously recommended to me that the name be rescinded and removed. In doing so, the committee independently considered “...the content of Little’s work, the trajectory of his life and career, his role as University President from 1925-1929 and the most recent finding of historians on the history of his period, the movements with which he was affiliated, and his science.” Their review also took into consideration the contents of two public forums that were held on the campus in 2017 exploring the life and career of C.C. Little. In addition, the PACOUH received and reviewed resolutions in support of renaming that were submitted by Central Student Government and LSA Student Government.

The PACOUH recommendation to remove the name is based on several conclusions. The central tenet is that in the areas of eugenics and tobacco smoking “...[Little] lent his scientific (and University) prestige to public policy campaigns supposedly based in science...whose scientific foundations were minimal, exaggerated, or actually contradicted by mainstream scientists or the contemporary scientific consensus.” The committee emphasized that Little’s support and participation in these campaigns had serious negative consequences noting that “his 1920s campaign for eugenic measures while University President -- immigration restriction, sterilization of the “unfit”, anti-miscegenation laws -- and the 1950’s campaign sowing doubt about the links between smoking and cancer negatively affected the lives of millions.” Given these conclusions, they found it “particularly problematic that [Little’s name] is on a building dedicated to science.” Additional factors underlying their conclusion are detailed in the appended recommendation.

After the recommendation was transmitted to me, I considered it carefully and discussed it extensively with the executive leadership of the University.

Action Requested:

The Board of Regents authorized the naming of the Clarence Cook Little Science Building in 1968. As we articulated in the review process, the University community makes a significant commitment to an individual or family when it names a space after a person and those who wish to change it carry a heavy burden. In this case, I believe that heavy burden has been met for the reasons articulated in the PACOUH recommendation.

Therefore, I request that the Board of Regents authorize the rescindment and removal of the name of the Clarence Cook Little Science Building as soon as is practicable. Until such time as it is renamed under our 2008 "Policy for Naming of Facilities, Spaces and Streets" ("the 2008 Naming Policy"), the building will be referred to by its street address, 1100 North University Avenue, or by a functional designation that will be determined by the Associate Vice President for Facilities and Operations, as specified in the 2008 Naming Policy.

Respectfully submitted,



Mark S. Schlissel
President

March 2018

January 9, 2018

Dear President Schlissel:

As you know, on September 1, 2017 your Advisory Committee on University History received a revised and expanded request to review the name of University President Clarence C. Little which is currently on the C. C. Little Science Building. This request had been made in briefer form on January 23, 2017 and we asked for its revision. At the same time that this request was presented to us in September it was placed on a website along with a petition in this matter that has so far received about 1400 signatures.

With your permission we moved forward with the review of this revised request and our report is attached. The request is available here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/0By_BduXhL06LeUhKN2UtS1k2Rkk/view

We wish to say, first, that this is a remarkable request: for its depth, for its length, and, most important for its balance. The authors of the request, four UM faculty members and one undergraduate student have reviewed and documented just about every argument for and against a name change in this instance, concluding, however on the side of a change. They write:

“We submit that a combination of the historical record regarding Little and our collective desire to create and maintain a university topography of names and places representative of current institutional values compels a renaming of the Little building. There is some debate about how to weigh Little’s accomplishments over the course of his career, and clearly he produced some keen scientific insights, particularly with regard to mouse genetics. Just as clearly, however, he also promoted a scientific theory anchored in invidious judgments about the relative worth of different kinds of people and was a central figure in a campaign orchestrated by a PR firm to discredit public health evidence in order to protect a profitable industry. Moreover, Little’s time at UM was brief and not noteworthy, whether looked at in terms of his scientific research or his contributions to the university. Thus in our view the Little building exemplifies the kind of university structure that should be renamed based on a critical and substantive reevaluation in one historical moment of a previous historical moment.”

We have taken this request seriously, and investigated the content of Little’s work, the trajectory of his life and career, his role as University President from 1925-1929, and the most recent findings of historians on the history of his period, the movements with which he was affiliated, and his science. We received research help from archival staff at the Bentley Historical Library and conducted lengthy discussions of these issues in the committee. Committee members attended two public fora on this issue – featuring the authors of the request for review – on April 11 and September 26, 2017. Each of these provided opportunity for public input. We also received and reviewed communications on this issue from Central Student Government and LSA Student Government, each of whom passed resolutions calling for the building to be renamed.

We have followed our own procedures outlined in the memo we sent you in January <https://president.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2017/01/PACOUH-memo-on-naming-1-13-17.pdf> and attempted to answer the questions we posed there.

As we have put it in that memo, we believe first, that change in a duly authorized honorific name of a building or portion of a building on the campus should be unusual, but, second that such change is certainly possible in light of information unavailable or underutilized at the time the name was chosen. These considerations are especially important in the case of the building named after a former president. But they cut both ways: on the one hand, removing the name of a former president from a building is a serious thing; on the other, honoring anyone with a named building should be preceded by careful consideration, including questions about the success of the person's presidency and the way that a president's other commitments might have been important.

We believe that we are wedded to our past with all that is uplifting and troubling within it. There can be no "memory hole" in a university. But we also believe that memory and commemoration are not the same thing. None of the buildings we discuss in our report were "born" with the names they hold today; all were changed in 1968. People like us changed them based on what they then wished to commemorate. We believe we have the right to do the same thing.

Change in what is commemorated and how something is commemorated is not the same thing as changing the past or our understanding of it. Indeed we hold that a better understanding of our past can be a very good reason for changing the way we commemorate a person in our history.

En route to our conclusion we have pondered the same principles we have asked others to consider in our policy document, such as: **The Principle of Pedagogy:** What lesson does this name teach today? **The Principle of Historical and Institutional Context:** How can we be fair to the work of someone working in the 1920s and the 1950s? **The Principle of Contemporary Effect:** Does this name carry a different valence today than it did when it was selected in 1968?

At the end of our analysis we are unanimous in the following points:

Clarence C. Little was a failed University President who because of that failure served the briefest term in the history of the University.

The naming of the East Medical Building after him in 1968 was an afterthought and was preceded by minimal due diligence.

At least twice in his life he was engaged in activities in which he lent his scientific prestige to organizations leading public policy campaigns supposedly based in science (for eugenics in the 1920s and around smoking in the 1950s and 1960s). But in each case the scientific evidence was minimal or directly contradictory of the public policy purpose sought. His campaigns for eugenic measures – immigration restriction, sterilization of the "unfit," and anti-miscegenation laws – and for sowing doubt about the links between smoking and cancer affected the lives of millions.

For all of these reasons, we find it inappropriate that his name is on a building and particularly problematic that it is on a building dedicated to science.

We understand that our report is a recommendation only and that it will be up to you to determine its next steps.

We are confident that our University's history provides an exceptional number of names of others whose work justifiably should be celebrated on a building dedicated to science. And we look forward to a process of reflection on these issues in discussion about a possible re-naming of this building. We are especially concerned about this issue because of the attacks on science and scientific findings today. Forthright identification of instances in which University leaders misread or misused scientific findings is an important part of the continuing credibility of the University's scientific mission.

Sincerely,



Terrence J. McDonald
Arthur F. Thurnau Professor
Professor of History and Director
Bentley Historical Library
Committee Chair

Report and Recommendation on the Clarence C. Little Name on the C. C. Little Science Building

President's Advisory Committee on University History

Summary:

At their meeting on December 20, 1968 the Regents of the University of Michigan approved the naming of three buildings after former presidents. The record of this decision in the minutes of the meeting was terse: "Approval was given for naming the East Medical Building the Clarence Cook Little Science Building; the Museums Building the Alexander G. Ruthven Museums Building; and the Graduate Library the Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library."¹

On September 1, 2017 your committee received a remarkably thorough and well-balanced request for review of the name on the C.C. Little building conferred at that meeting in 1968. Four university faculty members and one undergraduate student contributed to the request document which was also made public at the same time and has informed a petition drive regarding the issue that as of November had collected around 1400 signatures, the overwhelming majority of which supported the removal of the name. (The petition is open to the world on the internet and so the signatures come from many sources.) We would say that this request is a model except that might seem intimidating to others who might come forward. In fact petitions to our committee do not require the level of detail provided by this group; our previous petition, from an undergraduate student, was about one page long.

But we do recommend reading the request in this case because we found it enormously helpful to our work and we do not intend to repeat it here except as necessary. The text of the petition is available at this link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/OBy_BduXhL06LeUhKN2UtS1k2Rkk/view.

At the core of their request is the following, which has both informed and paralleled our own view and so we quote at some length:

“We submit that a combination of the historical record regarding Little and our collective desire to create and maintain a university topography of names and places representative of current institutional values compels a renaming of the Little building. There is some debate about how to weigh Little’s accomplishments over the course of his career, and clearly he produced some keen scientific insights, particularly with regard to mouse genetics. Just as clearly, however, he also promoted a scientific theory anchored in invidious judgments about the relative worth of different kinds of people and was a central figure in a campaign orchestrated by a PR firm to discredit public health evidence in order to protect a profitable industry. Moreover, Little’s time at UM was brief and not noteworthy, whether looked at in terms of his scientific research or his contributions to the university. Thus in our view the Little building exemplifies the kind of university structure that should be renamed based on a critical and substantive reevaluation in one historical moment of a previous historical moment.”

¹ University of Michigan. “Proceedings of the Board of Regents,” (1968): 1585.

At the end of our analysis we agree with many of the details in the request and we are unanimous in the following points:

That Clarence C. Little was a failed University President who because of that served the briefest presidential term in the history of the University.

That the naming of the East Medical building after him in 1968 was an afterthought and was preceded by minimal due diligence.

That at least twice in his life he lent his scientific (and University) prestige to public policy campaigns supposedly based in science (for eugenics in the 1920s and smoking in the 1950s) whose scientific foundations were minimal, exaggerated, or actually contradicted by mainstream scientists or the contemporary scientific consensus. Moreover, his 1920s campaign for eugenic measures while University President – immigration restriction, sterilization of the “unfit,” and anti-miscegenation laws – and 1950s campaign sowing doubt about the links between smoking and cancer negatively affected the lives of millions.

For all of these reasons, we find it inappropriate that his name is on a building and particularly problematic that it is on a building dedicated to science.

A Failed Presidency and Lack of Due Diligence in the Naming Decision:

According to then University planner, Fred W. Mayer, the decision to name a building after Little in 1968 was an afterthought. President Robben Fleming's administration had begun the process to name a building after recently retired President Harlan Hatcher. In his academic life Hatcher had been a professor of American Literature and had been concerned with the status of the library while serving as University President from 1951 through 1967 so the thought in the administration was to name the Graduate Library after him. But by then buildings had been named for most of the previous presidents of the University and so Mayer was asked to "find a building" for both Ruthven and Little. Because he had received his doctorate at UM based on work done in the Museum of Zoology and then had formerly directed the units in the Museum Building at UM the choice for Ruthven was easy. Because he had served as president for a very brief time and had not been associated with a particular building on campus it was harder to find a building for Little. Mayer recalls that he was aware that the East Medical Building, originally built in 1925, was then in process of renovation in order to host biologists from LSA. Remembering that Little had been trained in genetics and realizing the connection between that field and biology Mayer proposed the change in name of that building.²

There appear to have been no serious objections to this decision at the time. But someone familiar with the history of the University might have wondered if this decision was arbitrarily recognizing presidents with markedly different records. Whatever their other successes or failures – and both are inevitable in the history of any presidency – Ruthven and Hatcher had served the University for long periods in

² Telephone interview with Terrence McDonald October 20, 2017.

extraordinary times. Ruthven's term stretched from 1929 through 1951 putting him at the helm through the Great Depression, World War II, and the dawning of the extraordinary expansion of enrollment and research capability in the post-World War II years. Hatcher served from 1951 through 1967, presiding over the actual emergence of what came to be known as the modern multiversity – large, research oriented, and supported by both state and federal funding—and the beginnings of the student movement.³

Little had held the shortest presidency in the history of the University. He was elected to the office by the Regents in 1925, inaugurated on November 2 of that year and resigned three years and three months later, leaving in the summer of 1929. But his departure date was a courtesy. The Regents had been discussing his possible termination in the fall of 1928 and held a secret meeting on the topic in December of that year. They offered him the face-saving possibility of his own resignation effective at the end of that academic year.⁴

At the time of his hiring there had been great enthusiasm about it among the Regents, faculty, and the public. The *Michigan Alumnus* declared that seldom “had a choice been more generally and wholeheartedly approved.” The Harvard-trained scientist was already distinguished for his scientific work, young – the youngest president in the University's history – and enthusiastic. One of the faculty advisors to the search spoke for many faculty members in noting that Little had “experience in a state university” and understood “the more direct service rendered to...the state by reason of its research laboratories.” His ideas about higher education – developed in part while he had been President of the University of Maine beginning in 1922 – had been widely published in articles and interviews. In an article headlined “Michigan takes Live Wire from Maine in Clarence Cook Little,” the Boston *Sunday Globe* described the 37-year-old president as “an exceptionally vital person, full of ideas, which... he strives vigorously to put into practical application.” In his letter accepting the position Little asked to be allowed to continue his research and his work on behalf of birth control. The Regents agreed to both requests, providing substantial funding for the former.⁵

In the event many of these seeming virtues turned out to be problems. Almost immediately he began to speak out on controversial issues with little regard for the connection between these comments and the reputation of the University. In his inaugural address as President he stated firmly that “the uncontrolled and unintelligent addition of more people to the world by the production of undesired and neglected children is in my opinion quite as right as murder of the children by slow means.” And later that same month the New York Times headlined his lecture to the Michigan Public Health Association as “Urges Sterilization of Mental Defectives: University of Michigan President Also Advocates Birth Control for the

³ Howard H. Peckham, *The Making of the University of Michigan, 1817-1967*. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1967), covers the Ruthven and Hatcher presidencies 169-258.

⁴ Daniel K. VanEyck, “President Clarence Cook Little and the University of Michigan.” (PhD. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1965), 8, 201-228.

⁵ Roberta Gallant Clark, “The Social Uses of Scientific Knowledge: Eugenics in the Career of Clarence Cook Little, 1919-1954,” (M.A. Thesis, University of Maine at Orono, 1986), 98; search advisory member quoted in Karen R. Rader, *Making Mice: Standardizing Animals for American Biomedical Research, 1900-1955*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 68; VanEyck, “President Little,” 8.

Poor." In that speech he praised the new immigration restriction law as the beginnings of the recognition that population needs to be limited, dismissed concern about sterilization of the "unfit" – "a public opinion intelligent enough to understand the need will be intelligent enough to prevent its abuse"-- and asked "are we playing fair to extremely poor and extremely pathetic creatures to allow them to be born?" Many of his "ideas" about higher education and other topics were fixed and he was rarely open to advice or discussion. It was difficult for him to imagine those who disagreed with him were potential allies who needed to be persuaded. Interestingly, many of the same issues had arisen during his presidency at Maine but these were overlooked during the selection process apparently because it was thought that the institutional situation at Michigan would temper his behavior. In fact, the higher profile of the University of Michigan, its much more active and distinguished faculty, and its elected Board of Regents made all these issues more complicated.⁶

In a review of Little's scientific career his close colleague George Snell wrote that "he preferred the broad view to attention to detail," and this approach prevailed as well in his university presidency and may have been part of his downfall. Of broad, perhaps even correct and important ideas he had many, but when it came to persuading others to support his ideas he seemed to have little patience with the process or with those who questioned his views. At the time that he arrived at Michigan it is worth noting, too, that he had minimal experience relevant to the job. He had never been a faculty member elsewhere, had never been in the classroom with a woman (Harvard was all male, of course), and had rarely traveled west of the Hudson River. The University of Maine had been a small land-grant college specializing in mostly technical fields.⁷

Little's on campus tendency was to announce a new or changed policy and then attempt to weather the storm of criticism that followed. He believed that students would be better off without automobiles or alcohol, that women needed to be housed in student dormitories, that all students would be better off spending their first two years in a "university college" before being advanced by their choice or University selection into the upper division. He felt that the University deserved more resources from the state and that analysis of the state budget by University faculty would find the resources. Merits of these proposals aside, each of these moves set off a storm of criticism beginning in the complaint that he conducted little or no consultation before making his decision. Controversial issues ended up at the table of the Regents who were forced to make the choice to back the president or his growing group of critics: students in favor of cars and drink, Ann Arbor landlords who would be damaged by the construction of dormitories, faculty outraged by his failure to understand that the construction of a university college would inevitably take resources from existing undergraduate units such as LSA and Engineering. In each of these cases as well alumni had an interest. And neither the governor nor state legislators appreciated being patronized by Little about state resources or his suggestion that the state budget should be investigated by the University.⁸

⁶ Clark, "Eugenics," 99-100.

⁷ George D. Snell, "Clarence Cook Little," *National Academy of Sciences Biographical Memoirs*, 46 (Washington, D. C.: National Academy of Science, 1975), 249.

⁸ VanEyck, "President Little," reviews all these controversies – and more.

When the faculties of both the College of Engineering and Architecture and LSA voted against affiliation with Little's proposed "university college" structure in February and March of 1928 it was seen as a major defeat for him and he wrote to a scientific colleague elsewhere in March of 1928 that "the majority of the faculties would, I believe, prefer that the initiation of educational reform here should be left entirely in their hands. With this I cannot agree because of their past inactivity and present illogical approach to the situation. As a result of this, it is possible that my stay here...will be decidedly more limited than I thought it would be a year ago." Little was right that his self-righteous and patronizing attitude toward the faculty – and everyone else – would bring an early end to his term. He suffered as well by comparisons with his presidential predecessor, Marion L. Burton, who had joined the University after 10 years of presidencies elsewhere and was well known, as the University's *Encyclopedic Survey* put it, for possessing "the power to attract others and to win their liking. He could cooperate with other people and make allowances and concessions which permitted the work to proceed without friction." Burton had tragically died of heart failure in 1925.⁹

The constant drumbeat of conflict in Ann Arbor and with Lansing combined with press coverage of Little's controversial statements elsewhere began to wear on the Regents. The relationship with the state, fatally, continued to deteriorate. The deans of the university came to individual regents in the fall, complaining that "the President rushed matters through without taking them into his confidence. Once projects were started, he left them, dropping his interest." State officials were complaining to the Regents about Little's arrogance and snubbing both Little and them at football games in the fall of 1928. For this reason the Regents began to feel that it would be "disastrous" if Little presented the University's budget proposal to the state in the spring of 1929. Through a back channel the governor let it be known that unless Little was gone by then, he would support anti-Little candidates for the two opening seats on the board. Little's great supporter on the board, Junius Beal came to conclude that "The President lacked administrative qualities, and he realized it and desired to be relieved." No one was surprised when his resignation was announced.¹⁰

By the time of the naming of the C. C. Little Science Building in 1968 there was historical consensus that Little had been a failed president. The always evenhanded *Encyclopedic Survey* of the University published in 1942 concluded that "President Little's resignation was not a complete surprise when it was presented at the Regents meeting of January 21, 1929.... In his letter President Little said that for some time it had been becoming increasingly apparent that his methods of dealing with certain situations were not consistent with policies which the regents believe wise, and that he hoped to be more successful in scientific research and teaching than in administration." In the authorized history of the University by Howard H. Peckham, *The Making of the University of Michigan*, published in 1967, the chapter on Little was entitled "President Little Embattled," and outlined his many conflicts with University stakeholders which Peckham ascribed to "a mischievous indifference to the views of persons

⁹ VanEyck, "President Little," 155-56; Little's letter quoted in Rader, *Making Mice*, 82-83; Walter Arthur Donnelly and Wilfred Byron Shaw, *The University of Michigan, an Encyclopedic Survey*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1942), 81-88.

¹⁰ VanEyck, "President Little," 225-226. There were also problems of various kinds with major donors and some issues of conflict of interest in the way that he prioritized support for his own research over that of some faculty members. See Rader, 75.

or organizations outside the University," combined with "decisiveness and impatience" that were discomfiting to those inside the University. In his University of Michigan doctoral dissertation in 1965, "President Clarence Cook Little and the University of Michigan," Daniel Kenneth VanEyck declared that his study could not "be called the chronicle of a successful presidency, for the failure is apparent." In the end, according to Van Eyck, Little had had difficulties with the faculty, private donors, and with some alumni groups; he had been heavily criticized by many residents of Ann Arbor; and was not popular with the governor or the legislature. "His outspoken opinions regarding religion, birth control, and prohibition, all issues having little relevance to his position as university president, had made him a center of controversy."¹¹

We wish to make it clear that it is neither our task nor our intention to criticize previous decisions of the Regents. The statement of principles that governs our task, however, includes one involving "due diligence" and so a full inquiry requires us to say that the historical record on this issue is abundantly clear: Little was a failed president; at the time of the naming this information was available to those who chose to look for it; they did not, in part because the naming project was an afterthought. No one did anything "wrong," but the decision was mechanical, really about filling an empty slot. The primary motivation underlying the decision was just to name a building for each of the university presidents.

We would not argue that this inadequate due diligence, in itself, would be grounds for removal of his name from a building. It may measure the strength of University's original commitment to the naming. More important to us is our principle of pedagogy, which requires us to ask what lesson is taught by the memorialization of a person on a university building. Investigating this requires us to consider carefully the issues underlying President Little's controversial public statements and actions before, during, and after his presidency. These issues cluster around what we might call the social responsibility of science.

At the time of the naming in 1968 it had been four years since the release of *Smoking and Health: Report of the Advisory Committee of the Surgeon General* on January 11, 1964 which declared that there was a causative link between smoking and lung cancer. And yet, in all that time, and, indeed, since 1955 former President Little had been serving as the chief "scientific" officer of the Tobacco Industry Research Council, an organization managed and funded by the tobacco companies themselves to create doubt about the relationship between smoking and cancer. Many of those aware of this today, including members of our faculty in the Schools of Public Health and Medicine have been embarrassed that a building on this campus has been named after someone whose role was to undermine the more than 7000 studies of the connection between smoking and cancer that went into the Surgeon General's report.¹²

We will take this issue up in due course. One might wonder about the relevance of actions taken many years after Little left the University in any controversy over his name on a building today. But when we investigate the issues that roiled the campus during his time here we find a thread that links these two important periods in his life and that is his willingness to offer his scientific credibility to movements and

¹¹ Donnelly and Shaw, *Encyclopedic Survey*. 97-98; Peckham, *Making*, 177-78; VanEyck, "President Little," 1, 8.

¹² U.S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare, *Smoking and Health: A Report of the Advisory Committee of the Surgeon General*. (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1964).

organizations whose thrust and goal were deeply at odds with the practice, findings, and ethical conduct of modern science. His willingness to provide scientific credibility for those who denied the link between smoking and cancer from 1955 until his death in 1971 was paralleled by his similar role in the American Eugenics Society while he was UM President. In both cases a controversial social movement with significant public policy implications was legitimized by his name and presence in the movement and given scientific credence as a result. During the 1920s Little was at the very center of a movement whose public policy proposals and victories quickly outran their basis in scientific findings. Public confusion about his role in the American eugenics movement and his presidency of the University of Michigan and his controversial statements about eugenics and birth control were important factors in the brevity of his presidential term.

Little and His Times:

Clarence Cook Little was born in Brookline Massachusetts in 1888 and died in 1971. His family was well off and traced its lineage to Paul Revere and passengers on the Mayflower. He entered Harvard University in 1906 and stayed there through the completion of his doctorate of science degree in 1914. His all-male undergraduate class at Harvard was a famous one – including political commentator Walter Lippmann, activist and journalist John Reed, and poet T. S. Elliott – and he was popular and successful in it. His graduate advisor there was Dr. William E. Castle, a pioneer in the application of Mendelian genetic principles to mice and rabbits. Little's major scientific research interests – transplantation, cancer, and mammalian and murine genetics – were established in these years at Harvard. He was a research associate in genetics and cancer research at Harvard between 1910 and 1916; a kind of assistant dean and Secretary to the Corporation there 1916 through 1917; and an associate in comparative pathology at Harvard Medical School 1917 – 1918. In 1921 he became assistant director of the Station for Experimental Evolution at Cold Spring Harbor on Long Island in New York State. At the age of 34 he left that laboratory to become President of the University of Maine and in 1925 he became President of the University of Michigan. Already by the time he arrived at Michigan he had published 47 scientific papers in his major areas of interest and established the first inbred strains of mice whose genetic uniformity made them a research tool of great importance. His 1914 paper in *Science* proposing a genetic theory of tumor transplantation was widely regarded as a major scientific development. He was on the path to a very distinguished scientific career and might have been excused for thinking himself among the best and brightest of his generation.¹³

The years when Little reached scientific maturity were also the years in which Americans dealt with the effects of three extraordinary social forces: the spread and acceptance of the Darwinian theory of evolution and the development of a large number of derivations from it, the rise of a wide variety of white supremacist ideologies and rationalizations in the wake of the Civil War and the failure of

¹³ There is no overall biography of Little, but the details of his life can be traced through several previously cited sources: Snell, "Clarence Cook Little," VanEyck, "President Little," Clark, "Eugenics," Rader, *Making Mice*. Rader, 62, makes the insightful point that Little's reformist impulses fit the profile of "managerial progressivism" in these years: "nationally directed, but not democratic...notably elitist in their heavy reliance on expert knowledge."

Reconstruction, and an increasing concern with the racial and ethnic composition of what would come to be called the “new” immigration to America.

In those days one did not need to be a scientist to see the influence of “Darwin” everywhere. From the time Charles Darwin published his famous book, *The Origin of the Species*, in 1859, his work rapidly achieved almost unanimous acceptance by American scientists. Perhaps more complicatedly though, it was applied to an extraordinary range of problems about which Darwin had never intended to comment. For example social reformers believing that evolution was always linear could invoke the mere idea of “evolution” to claim that vast progress was inevitable. On the other hand those who called themselves “social” Darwinists could invoke the idea from Darwin of the “struggle of the fittest” to rationalize the development of the burgeoning capitalist economy in America and claim that government intervention in this development would be contrary to evolutionary theory.

Neither took account of a central feature of Darwin’s method, namely that evolution was not in any way a predetermined process of change subject to knowable mechanisms. Its course could not be predicted in advance because it occurred by way of random variations. Only subsequently would certain changes gain advantage as they proved best adapted to an organism’s survival in its environment. Whether a variation made an organism in which it occurred better or the ‘fittest’ was established retrospectively by the fact of its survival and persistence. Darwin was not claiming to explain how the “fittest” became the “fittest” nor to be offering a mechanism for predicting, let alone changing, the course of evolution.¹⁴

As it had been earlier in the 19th century "Darwinism" was recruited into the debate over American race relations in the same years. For most Americans in these years there was little doubt that the “fittest” race was the white race and significant numbers of commentators in those years thought that “evolution” predicted the disappearance of the black race after a period of “competition” with the white race. The end of Reconstruction and the withdrawal of federal troops from the South by 1877 had intensified the search for "scientific" and other rationales for the social and political "containment" of the black population. In the South where most of the black population then lived this led to the great fear that race mixing would disrupt the evolutionary process and provided a powerful support for legislative actions and legal victories constructing the completely segregated society known as "Jim Crow." Three famous Supreme Court cases in these years dismantled the nascent racial settlement of the Reconstruction era. In the "civil rights" cases in 1885 the court invalidated the Civil Rights Act of 1875, thus legalizing racial discrimination in public accommodations. In 1896 the court rendered the famous decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* declaring that laws passed by states calling for racially segregated

¹⁴ On this very broad topic see, among many others, James Moore, “Deconstructing Darwinism: The Politics of Evolution in the 1860s.” *Journal of the History of Biology* 24, no. 3 (1991): 353–408; Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies a Study of the Protestant Struggle to Come to Terms with Darwin in Great Britain and America, 1870-1900*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought*. (New York: G. Braziller, 1959); Richard Allen Bolar, “There’s Power in the Blood: Religion, White Supremacy, and the Politics of Darwinism in America.” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, San Diego, 2014). Haller and Ludmerer, below, discuss this topic in relation to American eugenics and genetics.

public facilities under the doctrine of "separate but equal," were legal. And in 1898 the court approved a variety of means for disfranchising voters through such techniques as literacy tests and poll taxes.¹⁵

Meanwhile, similar fears of "race mixing" and "scientific" rationales for its prevention began to be deployed in the cause of immigration restriction as elites in northern cities began to notice the shift in sources of immigration away from Northern and Western Europe and toward Southern and Eastern Europe that historians would later come to call the "new" immigration. While there had always been concern about immigration, the bulk of it before the Civil War came from English speaking countries – including Ireland -- and Germany. Beginning about 1880 a notable shift occurred toward Italy and the territories in the contested areas in what today is Poland and Russia. Between 1880 and 1930 more than 20 million of these "new" immigrants arrived, most speaking little or no English, tending to live in the large Eastern cities, and including a substantial number of Catholics and Jews, ethnoreligious groups that had always been under suspicion in America. This change in points of origins led to claims that a kind of "ethnoracial" mixing with the new immigrants would degrade the "authentic" racial stock of America.¹⁶

Little's Leadership in Eugenics:

When the Eugenics Committee of the United States sent letters to prominent Americans in 1922 urging them to join its new eugenics endeavor – later to be called the American Eugenics Society – the letters combined all of these social and intellectual developments into a powerful political polemic. Declaring that "the time is right for a strong public movement to stem the tide of threatened racial degeneracy....America needs to protect [itself] against indiscriminate immigration, criminal degenerates, and... race suicide. The letter called for resistance to the "complete destruction" of the "white race," claiming that eugenics was the only movement which stood "against the forces... Of racial deterioration and for progressive improvement in the figure, intelligence, and moral fiber of the human race." Eugenics it said represents "the highest form of patriotism and humanitarianism" and "...offers immediate advantages to ourselves and to our children."¹⁷

The committee that sent this letter, which would be the founding committee of the American Eugenics Society included scientist Charles Davenport, author Madison Grant, scientist C. C. Little, and Harry Olson, Chief Justice of the Chicago Municipal Court. At the first meeting of this committee it was decided that there would be a close relationship between the heretofore separate organizations of the Eugenics Research Association, the Eugenics Record Office, and this committee; they would share office space and jointly publish the magazine called *Eugenical News*. But their roles would be importantly different. The American Eugenics Society would be the political and public arm of the movement. In its letter attempting to recruit members to its "advisory council," the executive committee – including Little –

¹⁵ George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind; the Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914*. 2nd ed. (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 228-255.

¹⁶ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land; Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*. 2nd ed. (New York, N.Y.: Atheneum, 1971), 131-157.

¹⁷ Barry Alan Mehler, "A History of the American Eugenics Society, 1921-1940," (PhD. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1988), 61.

invited potential members to join the struggle against "racial degeneracy," indiscriminate immigration" and "race suicide."¹⁸

From these days until 1935 Little would serve on the Advisory Council and Board of Directors of the organization. He was president of the society between 1928 and 1929. At various times in the 1920s he served as Director of the American Birth Control League, a leader in the Population Association of America; as vice president of the Social Hygiene Association and on the executive committee of the first World Population Conference in Geneva in 1927. He was President of the Race Betterment Congress in 1928 which held its meeting in Battle Creek, MI., and also president of the International Neo-Malthusian League and member of the Euthanasia Society of America and the Eugenics Research Association.¹⁹

At the basis of the eugenics movement were certain scientific advances. The rediscovery of the experiments of Gregor Mendel in 1900 introduced a mathematical model for the inheritance of characteristics (e.g. dominant and recessive traits) that seemed to offer one explanation for the mechanism for evolutionary change. Also, experiments by German scientist August Weismann in these years seemed to prove that changes in organisms caused by environmental factors were not heritable. Something within the organism maintained the record of heredity. Scientists began to call these "genes" and many (wrongly) attributed a one to one correlation between them and observable traits.

This work suggested that the role of heredity was more important than heretofore realized and that various forms of population control might insure that evolution moved in the right direction by strengthening the positive characteristic within its hereditary materials. This, in turn, gave rise to two faces of the movement: positive eugenics (encouraging the reproduction of those who were "fit") and negative eugenics (discouraging the reproduction of those who were not "fit"). With the movement's attachment to this new science and its dual nature, and the diverse measures it proposed for "improvement," it attracted a wide variety of reformers. Everyone from advocates for the diet and education of the poor to those fearful of racial intermarriage or the arrival of the "new" immigrants could claim a eugenic license.

However, in this context of genuine scientific questions pondered in the midst of the search for new racial hierarchies it is no surprise that the latter outweighed the former and that painstaking scientific research took a backseat to the exaggerated political claims made by the movement in its various manifestations. While eugenics intrigued and attracted a wide variety of reformers in the first thirty years of the twentieth century a much smaller number were at the center of the movement where Little worked. Leaders at the level of – and who worked with -- Little focused on three great political causes: immigration restriction, anti-miscegenation laws, and sterilization of the unfit. And their rationale for their actions was steeped in scientific racism. In his standard history of the movement, *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought*, Mark Haller notes that during its period of greatest influence from about 1905 through 1930 the movement took on a "racist" tone, fearing that the "influx of inferior races" imperiled the innate capacity of the American people." And in his history of genetics,

¹⁸ Mehler, "Eugenics," 61-63.

¹⁹ See Mehler, "Eugenics," 411 for Little's career in the various organizations related to the eugenics movement.

Genetics and American Society, the medical historian Kenneth Ludmerer declares flatly that many of the leaders in the eugenics movement were “scientific racists.” Such individuals believed in the existence of racial stereotypes, accepted the belief that certain races possess a monopoly of desirable characteristics, and thought that racial differences are caused invariably by heredity, thereby being resistant to any modification or change. For the sake of the American gene pool, they would argue, immigration would need to be curbed, inter-racial marriage would need to be stopped, and “defectives” would need to be sterilized.²⁰

Ludmerer writes:

“...following a common misinterpretation of Darwinism, they postulated a unilinear vertical progression from the lowest to the highest. They considered the Negro race biologically inferior to the Mongoloid race, which then turned deemed inferior to the exalted Caucasian race. Within the white race they felt there existed a threefold classification consisting of the “Mediterraneans,” the “Alpines,” and the “Nordics.” ... In general eugenicists believed that the “Nordic” race possessed a monopoly of desirable characteristics, physical and mental, thereby standing as a superior race. They regarded these racial traits to be firmly and immutably established by heredity and insensitive to change or modification through environmental influences.²¹

The Eugenics Society produced a flood of information and activity during the decade of the 1920s: consulting, lobbying, publicizing, endorsing. “They set up exhibits at county fairs, municipal buildings, schools, and libraries. They surveyed college campuses for courses in genetics and eugenics and encouraged eugenic course work. They ran sermon contests, organized lectures, participated in local and national legislative initiatives.” And their activities achieved significant success. The Johnson Act, passed by Congress in 1924, radically reduced the number of immigrants to the United States and set quotas for each country based on the representation of those from that country resident here in 1890, an attempt to re-set immigration in the direction of the “old” immigrants. By 1931 thirty states had passed sterilization laws and more than 12,000 such operations had been conducted. Various forms of “eugenic” marriage statutes were passed including laws banning racial inter-marriage in 28 states. One of the most radical of the Society’s board members, Madison Grant, author of the best-selling 1916 book, *The Passing of the Great Race*, summarized the thought that underlay all these actions: fear that intermarriage would “degrade” the pool of heredity:

“...the result of the mixture of two races, in the long run gives us a race reverting to the more ancient, generalized and lower type. The cross between a white man and an Indian is an Indian; the cross between a white man and Negro is a Negro; the cross between a white man and a Hindu is a Hindu; and the cross between any of the three European races and a Jew is a Jew.”²²

²⁰Mark H. Haller, *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought*. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1963). 6-7; Kenneth M. Ludmerer, *Genetics and American Society: A Historical Appraisal*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), 5. Both Ludmerer and Haller believe that the rise of eugenics actually retarded the development of legitimate genetic science in America.

²¹ Ludmerer, *Genetics*, 22.

²² Mehler, “Eugenics,” 65, 83; Haller, *Eugenics*, 144-159.

All of these causes were opposed by major groups in society: big city Democratic mayors defended immigrants, the Catholic Church did the same and denounced sterilization laws, the NAACP fought the sentiments in and details of the anti-miscegenation laws. Many of the critics felt justified when Hitler in 1933 promulgated the sweeping German eugenics and euthanasia laws -- the most radical in the world. The response of the American Eugenics Society was tepid: the Germans were "proceeding toward a policy that will accord with the best thought of eugenicists in all civilized countries."²³

As the striking political successes of the eugenics movement suggest, from about 1915 through about 1925, the eugenics movement held the social and intellectual high ground in American society. The roll of supporters of the Eugenics Society, for example, contained college presidents, distinguished scientists, and noted social and political reformers. Little was by no means unusual in his participation in the movement and among a considerable number of distinguished scientists who supported it at least in its early years. For some years, in fact, the scientific "headliners" of the movement included several connected Harvard scientists who were among the leaders of American science. Charles Davenport had taught William E. Castle there and Castle had taught Little there. Davenport led the genetics research lab on Long Island where Little began his scientific career. Little and Davenport both served at the very top of the leadership of the American Eugenic Society and stayed in those positions for many years. In his estimate of Davenport, who was also a member of the National Academy of Sciences, Oscar Riddle has written that Davenport "was unquestionably one of the leaders of biology in his generation" but that "in his promotional efforts, even where apparently temporarily successful, it is probable that science was sometimes ultimately the loser."²⁴

The problem for scientists in the movement was that, at the moment of its most impressive political victories the policies it had supported had completely outrun the science that supposedly justified them. There was no scientific evidence that racial mixing led to inferior national "stock," or that there was any careful way to define the "unfit" in such a way as to justify their sterilization. Criticism began before World War I reflecting on the fact that none of the research in the field had been done on humans, because for a variety of reasons they were harder to study than insects and small animals. One of the most significant defections came in 1924 from Castle -- Little's graduate director -- who wrote in the 1924 edition of his textbook, *Genetics and Eugenics*, that eugenics measures should be "limited to such that the individual will voluntarily take in the light of the present knowledge of heredity....It will do no good, but only harm, to magnify such knowledge unduly or to conceal his present limitations."²⁵

Castle's voice would be only one of the many that would abandon and criticize the scientific basis for the movement by the mid-twenties. But it was a significant one, so much so that the author of his biographical memoir for the National Academy of Sciences would draw special attention to it, praising Castle's "steady maintenance of an attitude of critical, scientific objectivity toward such questions as

²³ Mehler, "Eugenics," 117; Higham, *Strangers*, discusses the struggle over immigrants; Haller, *Eugenics*, 124-159 the political battles over all these issues.

²⁴ Oscar Riddle, "Charles Benedict Davenport," *National Academy of Sciences Biographical Memoirs*, 25 (Washington, D. C.: National Academy of Science, 1947), 74-110.

²⁵ L. C. Dunn, "William Ernest Castle," *National Academy of Sciences Biographical Memoirs*, 43 (Washington, D. C.: National Academy of Science, 1965), 33-80.

eugenics, race crossing, and the other social applications of genetics at a time when other voices attended to become strident and extreme positions were often expressed by his fellow scientists.” Castle had begun questioning the claims of eugenics in 1916 and his views carried through all four editions of *Genetics and Eugenics*. In a famous 1924 article on the biology of “race crossing” he declared that “so far as a biologist can see, human race problems are not biological problems any more than rabbit crosses are social problems.—The sociologist who is satisfied with human society as now constituted may reasonably decry race crossing. But let him do so on social grounds only. He will wait in vain if he waits to see mixed races vanish from any biological unfitness.” Castle left the scientific advisory board of the Eugenics Society in 1928 and continued to level pointed critiques of its claims, determined, as L.C. Dunn wrote of him in 1965 “to meet the obligations which were increasingly being placed upon scientists to speak out on public questions, but ... to speak only as a scientist, and within the limits of the scientific competence.”²⁶

Through all of these years Little did the opposite, serving at the highest level of the society that coordinated the activities of the movement, guiding the effort to over-extend its scientific claims, promulgate its racist arguments and support its legislative efforts which did ideological and physical damage to millions. He was not the most radical member of its board, that position was held by Grant. He was not the best-known scientist at that level of the organization, that was Davenport, among whose scientific claims was that there was a specific gene for “outbursts of temper.” But year in and year out and including every year he was president of the University of Michigan Little sat with these board members and planned the strategy and approaches of the political arm of the eugenics movement. He spent untold hours in his final year at the University working on two projects: a survey of eugenics education in the nation commissioned by the Eugenics Society and the organization of the 1928 “Race Betterment” conference which he chaired. When he made the controversial statements that would ultimately alienate stakeholders in the University he knew exactly what he was doing: he had created the context in which his denouncing of “reckless inter-racial marriage” or advocating that “when the sink is stopped up you shut off the faucet” made sense. And the idea of “race betterment” was crystal clear to Americans by 1928 when he hosted Race Betterment conference in Battle Creek from his position as President of the University, thereby lending it a powerful legitimacy. But at every step of the way his training as a geneticist should have reminded him of the weak scientific basis of all this work as it had already done for so many other scientists.

Those who have requested the review of his name have been generous in their acknowledgement of his positive characteristics and accomplishments in these years. As their request notes, he made significant scientific contributions, opposed the attempt of Harvard to impose a “Jewish quota” in 1922, tempered his views on racial superiority by 1932 when he seemed to say that eugenic fitness could be environmentally contingent, and, in 1936 signed a letter asking that the upcoming 7th International Congress for Genetics should “question” whether Nazi theories of racial superiority had any scientific basis. A critical biographer concedes that Little personally emphasized individual differences more than strictly speaking “racial” ones and it was for this reason that it was in character for him to oppose a Jewish quota at Harvard; until it was proven empirically that members of a certain group were unable to

²⁶ Ludmerer also praises Castle’s stands in, *Genetics*, 79, 139-140.

succeed in higher education individual members of that group should not be excluded from it. But these subtle views and even some scientific doubts about the eugenics program were lost in the flood of class and racial bias that both characterized and was produced by the Eugenics Society and Little's own comments.²⁷

Whatever his own views, Little, unlike Castle his teacher, did not advocate for change in the movement; far from it. His core views changed little, a characteristic that Ludmerer points out was typical of the movement's leadership as a whole. Contrary to its scientific claims, eugenics leaders rarely acknowledged new scientific information. In her attempt to explain these developments Roberta Clark points out that "what many characterized as the scientific approach to problems caused him [Little] to hold an open mind when others had already arrived at moral certainties. Once he believed he had found an answer, however, he leaped with vigor to institute it, with scant regard for others doubts or objections. Moreover, on social issues the scientific findings were almost always supported, as he saw them, by moral principles – in fact they were inseparable from them. This typically progressive attitude and the resultant tendency to identify his own opinions with scientific truth and opposition with selfish interest did not accord well with an educational task he had to share."²⁸

Sowing Doubt About Smoking and Cancer:

Between 1952 and 1964 physicians and health organizations around the world issued 16 so-called "consensus" statements explaining the positive relationship between cancer and cigarette smoking. By the latter year almost 7,000 studies of all kinds – involving animal experiments, epidemiology, clinical pathology and chemical analysis – confirmed this relationship and it was these studies that were the foundation for the report of the U. S. Surgeon General that concluded that smoking was "causally related to cancer in men." As Robert Proctor has pointed out, because of this previous work the famous surgeon general's report was almost a scientific anticlimax. In preparation for the report 155 consultants and supporting staff spent 13 months examining the scientific literature on the question. The advisory panel to issue the report on this work was selected only from among scientists who had never taken a position on the question of smoking and cancer, an approach to a scientific report unprecedented in its valuation of a lack of engagement in the topic. The effort was, according to Alan Brandt, an example of "procedural science:" a scientific report organized to prevent impeachment of its results which were by now quite well known to scientists.²⁹

And yet, at the end of all this procedure one important scientist criticized the results of the study, claiming that "...the fact remains that knowledge is insufficient either to provide adequate proof of any hypothesis or to define the basic mechanisms of health and disease with which we are concerned." In fact since 1955 this scientist had been leading the public effort to deny the relationship between smoking and cancer from his position as scientific director of the Tobacco Industry Research Committee

²⁷ Clark, "Eugenics," 23.

²⁸ Clark, "Eugenics," 162.

²⁹ Allan M. Brandt, *The Cigarette Century: The Rise, Fall, and Deadly Persistence of the Product That Defined America*. (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 211-239, and Robert Proctor, *Golden Holocaust: Origins of the Cigarette Catastrophe and the Case for Abolition*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 232-236.

(later Council, but always TIRC), a position that he would hold until his death in 1971. This scientist was former University of Michigan President Clarence C. Little, and this final act of his scientific career bewildered his colleagues but demonstrated parallels with his work on eugenics in his refusal to recognize a changing scientific consensus.³⁰

Little had taken a roundabout path to this position heading an organization that was created by the Hill and Knowlton advertising agency, housed in the same building as that agency, and funded entirely by the major tobacco companies. After leaving Michigan in 1929 little had built the Roscoe B. Jackson Memorial Laboratory for cancer research in Bar Harbor, Maine, from the ground up. In part because of his pioneering scientific work and development of the inbred strains of mice which made them an ideal instrument for genetic research, the Jackson laboratory would become one of the most famous in the country for work on mouse genetics relevant to the science of cancer. One of its long serving staff members, George Davis Snell, who worked there from 1935 until the end of his career, received the 1980 Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine for his discovery at the lab of "genetically determined structures on the cell surface that regulate immunological reactions." Snell would argue that the Jackson laboratory was the world's mecca for mouse genetics. It also became the main supplier of inbred strains of mice to labs around the world and important parts of the research at the lab were supported by the sale of these mice. In 1929 Little also became part-time managing director of the American Society for the Control of Cancer, where by all accounts his work for the organization – which again required developing a public approach and movement – was entirely to his credit and the benefit of those who did and would suffer from cancer. He held his position with the Cancer Society until 1945. In that same year – and no doubt related to his work with the society and his leadership in passing federal legislation opening a National Cancer Institute -- he was elected to membership in the National Academy of Sciences. He was then at the peak of his scientific recognition.³¹

Little was not the first choice to head the TIRC organization; several other distinguished scientists turned it down; and still others were not approached because the advertising firm and tobacco companies did not feel they would be "reliable." Little turned out to be the perfect choice. Because he was a geneticist Little was convinced that the basic science of heredity was crucial to understanding the causes of all diseases. Those whose heredity held cancer in store for them would get it; others would not. Next to this, environmental causes like smoking were less important. He was not a medical doctor, of course, and had little respect for clinical and field observations, including epidemiological observations. As a result he steadfastly refused to acknowledge the rapidly growing body of statistical evidence confirming that smoking was a cause of lung cancer. Denying that there were any known carcinogens in tobacco tars (this in spite of research conducted by the tobacco companies themselves) he also attacked the substantial evidence indicating the harms of smoking while at the same time offering unsubstantiated

³⁰ Brandt, *Century*, 230

³¹ Snell, "Little," 249. On Snell himself, see N. Avriion Mitchison, George Davis Snell," *National Academy of Sciences Biographical Memoirs*, 83 (Washington, D. C.: National Academy of Science, 2003), 3-18.

claims about the health benefits of cigarettes including tobacco's ability to "relax a great many people."³²

The history of the organization and the entire effort to sow doubt about the connection between smoking and cancer became known and better understood because of documents revealed in the many liability cases filed against the tobacco companies by those who actually contracted cancer from smoking. These documents have made possible new histories of the campaign to deny the connection by Alan Brandt and Robert Proctor in which Little is charged with willful blindness to his own function at the TIRC, and more disturbingly, for helping invent the now familiar practice of using the openness of science against itself. By claiming always that the connection between smoking and cancer was "not proved," but refusing to specify what evidence would settle the outstanding issue, Little demonstrated the ability of scientific "doubters" to claim that an issue settled in normal science remained open in the public mind. In this way he and the tobacco companies managed to convey the impression that there was an actual scientific "controversy" about the health effects of smoking. As late as 1967 Little bemoaned the fact that "the extensive propaganda [against cigarettes] has brought back fear into the minds of thousands of Americans."³³

When the formation of the TIRC was announced in 1954 its public purposes included conducting "research into all phases of tobacco use and health." The internal founding documents of the committee declared, on the other hand, that "it is an obligation of the Tobacco Industry Research Committee at this time to remind the public of these essential points: 1. There is no conclusive scientific proof of a link between smoking and cancer. 2. Medical research points to many possible causes of cancer.... 5. The millions of people who derive pleasure and satisfaction from smoking can be assured that every scientific means will be used to get all the facts as soon as possible." And in an early meeting Little himself declared that "he and the members of the board were aware of the attacks which had been made on tobacco for over 200 years, and wished to build a foundation of research sufficiently strong to arrest continuing or future attacks."³⁴

Under his leadership the TIRC distributed significant funds to basic scientific researchers, but none to projects that actually sought to study the link between smoking and cancer, in spite of the 1955 pledge to do so. The overall strategy of the organization was explained by an official of the advertising agency in 1971: "...the headline should strongly call out the point—Controversy! Other factors! Unknown!" Little demonstrated this tactic frequently, for example, when in 1957 the then Surgeon General reported that "there is increasing evidence that excessive cigarette smoking is one of the factors which can cause lung cancer," Little replied that "...the Scientific Advisory Board (of the TIRC) questions the existence of sufficient definitive evidence to establish a simple cause-and-effect explanation of the complex problem of lung cancer."³⁵

³² Brandt, *Century*, 175-180

³³ Proctor, *Golden*, 268

³⁴ Brandt, *Century*, 173-175

³⁵ Brandt, *Century*, 237, 213, 217

By 1958 the American Cancer Society – successor to Little’s pioneer anti-cancer organization – declared that tobacco manufacturers were conducting “a sideshow with smoke and mirrors,” the point of which was to “deny repeatedly,” to mislead, and “to convince the trusting, tobacco-consuming public of the industry’s eleemosynary lasting interest in people’s health.” The TIRC continued its work until 1995 when it was ordered closed by a judge who declared that its work was part of a tobacco sponsored effort that was “vast in scope, devious in purpose and devastating in its results....” It lingered until a court ordered settlement in 1998.³⁶

Little’s colleague George Snell felt compelled to note after Little’s death that he was “widely criticized for accepting this position [with the TIRC] because of the link between cigarette smoking and cancer, already suspected at the time. “ This was the least of it. For Brandt and Proctor the issue is much more serious than that: Proctor has argued flatly that “for the last 16 years of his life Little was little more than a puppet for Big Tobacco. His public pronouncements were carefully staged, his veneer of objectivity carefully protected.” Brandt’s view is more measured: “What we do know is that Little, by self-proclamation deeply committed to science and rationality, lost all capacity to evaluate his own biases as he assessed the question.... He failed to comprehend the corrosive social and psychological mechanisms of conflicts of interest. Colleagues and friends came to question his judgment and rectitude: he had sold his science to industry.”³⁷

Conclusion and Recommendation:

In a recent book on the future of the research university in the world, *Higher Education in 2040: A Global Approach*, Bert van der Swaan has argued that “...in an age ruled by the wisdom of the crowd there is an urgent need for one wholly reliable institution,” “a beacon of reliability” that facilitates society’s demand for knowledge. Such reliability, he argues, requires transparency and that, we would argue, requires the University to be willing to acknowledge when its leaders have been wrong, or worse, have wrongly informed society.³⁸

Here we make an important distinction between the first amendment right to be wrong and the protection of teaching and research provided by academic freedom. They are not at all the same thing. In their 2009 history of academic freedom, *For the Common Good*, Matthew W. Finkin and Robert C. Post have pointed out that “academic freedom establishes the liberty necessary to advance knowledge, which is the liberty to practice the scholarly profession,” as judged in part by that profession. The founding ideals of academic freedom as outlined by the American Association of University Professors in 1915 were clear that academic freedom was granted to scholarly communities and not just individuals. In its *Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure* the Association declared that “the responsibility of the University teacher is primarily to the public itself, and to the judgment of his own profession....” and that protection extended to “conclusions gained by a scholar’s method and

³⁶ Proctor, *Golden*, 286

³⁷ Snell, “Little,” 249; Proctor, *Golden*, 286; Brandt, *Century*, 180. Proctor also points out that few of Little’s biographies or obituaries even mentioned this work for the tobacco companies.

³⁸ Bert van der Zwaan, *Higher Education In 2040 A Global Approach*. (Amsterdam : Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 188, 194.

held in a scholar's spirit; that is to say, they must be the fruits of competent and patient and sincere inquiry." Therefore, according to Finkin and Post, the theory of academic freedom invokes "not the absolute freedom of utterance of the individual scholar, but the absolute freedom of thought, of inquiry, of discussion and of teaching, of the academic profession."³⁹

This distinction is crucial to our understanding and conclusion that Little's public opinions on eugenics and the connection between smoking and cancer were protected by the first amendment, of course. His loan of academic credibility in both instances was not. The claim that "science" justified immigration restriction, eugenic sterilization, or anti-miscegenation laws had little or no scientific foundation and, indeed, by the time Little had become president of the University of Michigan many in the scientific community – those with the right to judge his work – had reached the opposite conclusion. Similarly, by the time of the Surgeon General's report in 1964 the weight of scientific opinion was wholeheartedly against his claim that there was "no scientific proof" of the connection between smoking and cancer.

Those who claimed that the evidence on smoking, for example, seemed contradictory, were misreading an appropriate scientific humility in the face of an extraordinarily complicated causal chain originating in the nature of cancer itself. Because so much is at stake when scientific claims underlie public policy, it is appropriate that serious scientists can work for years before declaring that science "proves," something. That is why such a conclusion is so powerful and important, as was the Surgeon General's report.

It was Little's deeply problematic conduct in his own time and not our contemporary political concerns that have placed the University in the difficult position of contemplating the removal of a former president's name from a building devoted to the practice of science. We do not minimize the complexity of the judgment that our current President and Regents must make based upon this information. But neither do we gainsay the information we and those who have requested the review of his name have gathered: there is little disagreement among scholars and ourselves that Little was a failed president, that the University's commitment to his naming was minimal, and that he acted without regard to professional academic standards in both the case of eugenics and cancer for a period of years – 17 in the first, and 16 in the second – that constituted the bulk of his career. Moreover, these episodes were not merely "academic" disputes. The lives of millions were negatively affected by his positions.

³⁹Matthew W Finkin and Robert Post, *For the Common Good: Principles of American Academic Freedom*. (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2009), 39.