In the annals of politicized science, Trofim Lysenko provides a supreme example of ignorance and ignominy wedded to power. Lysenko was a two-bit horticulturist who rose to great prominence in the Soviet Union under dictator/mass murderer Joseph Stalin, becoming director of the Soviet Academy of Sciences's Institute of Genetics. Subjugating science to communist ideology and personal whim, Lysenko succeeded in outlawing biological research that was not in accord with his crackpot notions of genetics.

Lysenko's corollary was the extension of Stalin's infamous purges to the ranks of Russian scientists, many of whom were denounced, demoted, exiled, jailed, tortured — or even executed. After all, these dangerous folks were guilty of the serious thought crime of "deviationism": dissenting from the glorious truths of "the people's science," as defined by the Party and Lysenko.

Lysenkoism, obviously, resulted in deep personal tragedy for the scientists directly affected, but it spelled even larger tragedy for Russian science in general and greatly exacerbated the famines caused by Stalin's agricultural collectivization policies. Lysenko's pseudoscience spread to other communist countries and especially enjoyed Mao Zedong's favor in Red China, greatly contributing to that country's Great Famine, which killed at least 45 million Chinese between 1958 and 1962. (See: Mao's Great Famine by Frank Dikotter, 2010; Hungry Ghosts by Jasper Becker, 1996; and China's Bloody Century by R. J. Rummel, 1991.) Even after Stalin's death and after Lysenko had been denounced and toppled from his throne at the Soviet Academy of Sciences, Lysenkoism continued to reign supreme in Chairman Mao's totalitarian "People's Republic."

The charge of "Lysenkoism" is the ultimate opprobrium that can be leveled at a scientific institution or organization, suggesting that a mailed fist is being used to destroy scientists who

"deviate" from the ideological path prescribed by the political powers that be. Has Lysenkoism infected Oregon State University? That would certainly seem to be the case, if charges by Dr. Arthur Robinson (photo, above) turn out to be substantiated.

Dr. Robinson is a distinguished scientist: Ph.D in chemistry, former professor at the University of California San Diego; former president and research professor at the Linus Pauling Institute; currently president and research professor at the Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine (OISM); publisher of Access to Energy newsletter; author of many scientific research papers. He also was a recent candidate for Oregon's 4th Congressional District, which has been the domain of uber liberal-left Democrat Rep. Peter DeFazio since 1987. Last November Robinson nearly pulled off what many thought impossible, turning in a stunningly close race (54.5 to 43.6 percent) in what has heretofore been considered a "safe" district for DeFazio. In fact, despite being outspent, many believe Robinson might have won, save for a desperate smear campaign by DeFazio and his media allies in the closing days of the campaign.

Dr. Robinson recently announced that he is going to run against De Fazio again in 2012. Around the same time he dropped another bomb: In a column he authored for World Net Daily, Robinson charged that three of his adult children who are in the Ph.D. program at Oregon State University's Department of Nuclear Engineering and Radiation Health Physics are being targeted for expulsion from the program as "payback" for their father's political activities. On the website he launched to expose and oppose this alleged attack on his family, Robinson says that DeFazio supporters at Oregon State University have "initiated an attack on my three children — Joshua, Bethany and Matthew — for the purpose of throwing them all out of the OSU graduate school, despite their outstanding academic and research accomplishments. OSU is a liberal socialist Democrat stronghold in Oregon that received a reported $27 million in earmark funding from my opponent, Peter DeFazio, and his Democrat colleagues during the last legislative session."

The facts appear to justify Robinson's claims. Joshua is a four-year Ph.D . student and the "prompt neutron activation analysis facility Joshua built for his thesis work ... which he built and added to the OSU nuclear reactor with the guidance and ideas of his mentor, Michael Hartman, earned Joshua the award for best Masters of Nuclear Engineering thesis at OSU and has been widely complimented by scientists at prominent U.S. nuclear facilities." His daughter Bethany, another four-year Ph.D. student, has a 3.89 GPA and, he says, "Some of Bethany's graduate work has already been used, without credit to Bethany, in the thesis of another favored student now recently hired on the department faculty." Matthew has an OSU grade point average of 3.91 and received outstanding reviews for his master's thesis. The graduate program at MIT offered him $57,000 per year, but he turned that down so he could join his brother and sister at OSU.

The three Robinson siblings at OSU come from a family of outstanding home-schooled scholar-scientists. Their three older siblings have blazed a path of distinction before them: Zachary is a chemist with a doctorate in veterinary medicine; Noah has a Ph.D. in chemistry from Cal Tech and works as a research scientist with his father at the OISM; Arynne, like her brother Zachary, is a chemist and a veterinarian. All of these kids grew up on the family farm in Oregon, immersed in books, science, nature, and family life. Tragically, their mother Lauralee, who was herself an accomplished chemist, died suddenly from a rare disease when the children were still young. Dr. Robinson continued the plans he and Lauralee had made to raise and school the kids on the farm, which also houses the impressive laboratory facilities of the OISM. It's obvious that those plans worked. As Mary Pride noted in a 2008 article on the Robinson family in Practical Homeschooling magazine:

Zachary, Noah, and Matthew all skipped two years of college, entering as juniors and requiring only two years to complete their Bachelors degrees. Noah completed his PhD at Caltech in three years (it normally takes five years or more).

These are the kind of outstanding students that any university should be thrilled to have. Why would OSU want to terminate them? Dr. Robinson goes into considerable detail on his website, naming names and providing specific charges concerning certain individuals, most particularly the chairman of the nuclear engineering department, Kathryn Higley. This reporter called Dr. Higley, as well as OSU President Edward J. Ray; neither was available for comment.

Todd Simmons, OSU's Interim Vice President for University Relations and Marketing did get back to me. Mr. Simmons would not go much beyond the official statement OSU had placed on its website, to wit: the university will not comment on Dr. Robinson's accusations except to say that they are "baseless and without merit."

Mr. Simmons also repeated the OSU claim that "Federal law prohibits institutions of higher education from discussing matters concerning our students ... without the express consent of the student involved." When your correspondent pointed out that Joshua Robinson had already granted privacy waivers to the media, Simmons replied that the federal legal restrictions still hold. The same for Bethany and Matthew; he could not legally discuss their status at OSU, Simmons claimed.

"Alright," I said, "let's talk purely theoretical. If three siblings, all with outstanding records and all attending the same XYZ graduate school were all terminated or expelled from the program at the same time, would that not be highly unusual and highly suspect?"

"I'd go beyond that and say it would probably be unprecedented at any university, but that isn't happening here," said Simmons.

I asked: "So are you telling me that 5, 6, 7 months — or a year — from now we won't be seeing a situation where the three Robinson siblings have been booted from OSU — because, as you yourself just noted, that would be unprecedented, and highly suspect?"

"As I've already explained," Simmons replied, "we may not legally discuss particular students."

Dr. Robinson says OSU is stonewalling. "They're getting a lot of public heat, and they're worried," he told me. As well they should be worried, if even a fraction of the charges of unethical (and some possibly illegal) actions are proven true.

According to Robinson, he was initially warned about the coming attack on his kids from Dr. Jack Higginbotham, a tenured professor and president of the OSU Faculty Senate, who opposes the actions against the Robinsons. If expelling the three Robinsons would be "unprecedented" — as Simmons says — imagine how much more outrageous it would appear to fair-minded observers to see the president of the faculty senate tossed out too. Professor Higginbotham, reportedly, has been ordered not to speak to the press and has been threatened with loss of his job. Not surprisingly, Dr. Higginbotham has not returned my calls to his OSU office.

According to OSU spokesman Simmons, Robinson is simply exploiting his children for a campaign stunt. "It is increasingly difficult to determine," says Simmons, "where Art Robinson the candidate ends and Art Robinson the father begins."

That's completely untrue, says Robinson. "Over the past several months we've tried to work this out quietly [with OSU]." However, when Higginbotham made it clear that Higley and others in

the department were moving to expel Joshua, Bethany, and Matthew, he had to act, Robinson says.

According to Simmons, the kind of unethical, politically motivated machinations Robinson charges against OSU "just don't happen" in academe, and definitely not at OSU. Tell that to Dr. George Taylor, former head of Oregon Climate Services at OSU. In 2008 Taylor was bounced from OSU (after a stellar 19-year career) for refusing to cave in to the Global Warming Lysenkoists.

As the Climategate scandals at Penn State, Britain's University of East Anglia, and other universities have shown, Lysenkoism may have been officially repudiated in the Soviet Union, but it still thrives in the hallowed groves of academe.