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PROGRESS MADE IN DECLASSIFICATION  
OF ATOMIC ENERGY INFORMATION

The pipelines of scientific information, once drained of all reference to atomic energy to preserve the secrecy of the atomic bomb, are beginning to fill with data in the field of nuclear science -- "without impairing the essential security surrounding the bomb."

Passed through the filtering process of declassification, the knowledge gained in nearly five years of atomic research and development is beginning to flow -- both in scientific and technical channels and in the public press.

Nearly 500 papers, totalling some 2,000,000 words of atomic information, have been cleared through the Manhattan Project's declassification procedure, according to an article in the December 5 issue of the Chicago Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists by Lieutenant Colonel W. S. Hutchinson, Jr., Declassification Officer for the Army's atomic development agency.

"Specific evidence of the effectiveness of the declassification policy," said Colonel Hutchinson, "was given at the June meeting of the American Physical Society and the September meeting of the American Chemical Society in Chicago. Of the 101 papers presented at the Physical Society meeting, 46 dealt with material developed on the project and had been cleared by the Manhattan Project Declassification organization.

"Included in the American Chemical Society program was a two-and-a-half day symposium on fluorine and fluorocarbon chemistry, heralding the birth of a completely new branch of the domestic chemical industry. This represents a significant contribution to science and was accomplished without danger to national security."

In connection with the article appearing in the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, it was reported by the Manhattan Project that nearly half of the papers declassified are being published.

Many of the unpublished as well as the published articles will appear in the Manhattan Project's own technical history started in 1945. This will be a library of more than 100 volumes bringing together in one set of books all of the significant scientific and engineering information developed in the atomic energy program.

**MORE**

Arrangements have been made with the Department of Commerce for the publication and distribution of a number of these papers. They are listed in the Department's Bibliography of Scientific and Industrial Reports. Although government funds are not available for printing, the papers are for sale as photostats or on microfilm at the Office of Technical Services of the Department of Commerce.

"American Science is best served by the widest possible dissemination of Scientific information without restriction," said Colonel Hutchinsin but "national security is best served by controlling certain scientific developments in the nuclear field as they relate to the atomic bomb."

"The Manhattan Project has established a very effective program which protects the vital secrets of nuclear science affecting National security and which still releases the basic mathematics, chemistry and physics developed on the Project during the war. One purpose of this policy is to give the impetus to American Science to continue its advance, not only in government sponsored and government-controlled laboratories, but also in the many independent academic and industrial organizations that are the foundation of our national scientific, engineering, and industrial strength."

The first application of this policy was the release of the Smyth Report (Atomic Energy for Military Purposes, H. D. Smyth) shortly after the announcement of the bombing of Hiroshima, according to the article. In the Smyth report a general survey of the major fundamental developments was presented to American scientists while the detailed information which concerns national security was retained.

General L. R. Groves, chief of the Manhattan Project established the present declassification policies in the spring this year. These policies were based on the recommendations of a committee headed by Dr. Richard C. Tolman, Dean of the graduate school, California Institute of Technology and now chief scientific advisor to Mr. Bernard Baruch, was the chairman. Colonel John R. Ruhoff of the Manhattan District was the non-voting secretary. Dr. R. F. Bacher, Dr. A. H. Compton, Dr. E. O. Lawrence, Dr. J. R. Oppenheimer, Dr. F. G. Spedding, and Dr. H. C. Urey comprised the committee. The purpose was to recommend the adoption of a detailed procedure to accomplish the general mission of releasing scientific information to further the national welfare where this can be done without danger to the National Security.

This report recommended the establishment of a declassification organization project - wide in scope and manned by the very civilian scientist who have been personally concerned with developing the information that was to be presented for release. Declassification was to be accomplished by document rather than by broad fields of science.

Each release had to be written up and reviewed in detail, first by the head of the organization in which the information was developed, then by a competent scientist in the particular subject concerned, and finally by the Manhattan District Declassification and Publications Office at Oak Ridge to check for any possible oversight and to provide general administration for the organization as a whole.

“The present Manhattan Project declassification organization began to operate along these lines in April 1946. With a few modifications it is now doing a flourishing business and had declassified nearly five hundred scientific and technical documents by the end of September without releasing any information that endangered the National security.

“The Declassification Guide provides in general for the release of basic scientific information which bears no direct relation to the problems that a foreign nation would have in making an atomic bomb of its own.

“Despite the carefully repeated checks that are made on each document the system operates quite rapidly on papers that are clearly in the releasable category and which are submitted in accordance with the directions in the Manual for the Declassification of Scientific and Technical Matters. A prominent scientist at the June Physical Society meeting said that it was remarkable that not a single paper that was submitted for declassification and presentation at this meeting had to be withheld from presentation because of administrative failure of the Declassification Office at Oak Ridge. Normally a document can be processed within two weeks from the day that it leaves the Coordinating Organization Director's office.

- 3 -

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