

PERSONAL

7 June 1949

Dr. A. H. Compton
Washington University
St. Louis, Missouri

Dear Art:

This is a brief preview of the items up for consideration at the KRAC meeting scheduled for June 13. The important topics are:

- a. What should be the ONR policy in regard to AEC participation in research contracts?
- b. What should ONR do when the National Science Foundation Bill is passed by Congress?
- c. The ONR offer to conduct basic research for the National Military Establishment.

With regard to (a), the AEC-ONR agreement regarding joint interest in basic research covers the subjects related to nuclear physics such as physics, chemistry, mathematics and radiobiology. According to this agreement, established in 1947, ONR would undertake to place contracts for the AEC when mutually approved and accept transfer of funds from AEC under the same conditions. However, circumstances were such that the AEC support has been almost entirely in the fields of nuclear physics and radiobiology. In the nuclear physics program currently operating at an annual expenditure rate of about \$7,000,000, AEC contributed \$4,300,000 as compared to ONR's \$2,700,000, and the prospect for 1950 and 1951 remains the same insofar as ONR's contribution is concerned due to ceiling limitations. In the radiobiological field, ONR has accepted funds from AEC to place new contracts as well as to support jointly existing ONR contracts. The Office of Naval Research handles ~~as~~ as many contracts here for AEC as are jointly supported. The AEC has started this year to make its own basic research contracts and expects by fiscal 1951 to have its own program on a more or less permanent basis. The question is to what extent should ONR retain support of basic research in radiobiology and nuclear physics, and this question should be answered in the light of the probable available budget of ONR.

I believe you know ONR's position with respect to the proposed National Science Foundation. If the Bill is passed it is hardly likely the Foundation can start operations until between one and two years. Whenever the Foundation is ready, ONR would be prepared to discuss

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transfer of suitable basic research to the Foundation, but the Navy wishes to fight for its present operating level in research on the basis that more emphasis could be placed on items important to the Navy program while maintaining an appropriate limited amount for a comprehensive research program. Will this position be supported by NRC?

The Navy has asked the RDB, through the Committee on Basic Physical Sciences of RDB, for allocation of primary responsibility for basic research in the physical sciences to the Navy. This is in line with RDB policy, since RDB wishes, as far as possible, to allocate such responsibility. Enclosed is copy of letter to the Chairman, Committee on Basic Physical Sciences, which will explain the reasons for this step. In this connection, the point on which we should appreciate informal discussion and consideration is to what extent ONR should be receptive to acting for the National Military Establishment on basic research. This latter point of course goes further than the request for primary responsibility since primary responsibility is not intended to interfere with programs of the other Services. At present the Office of Defense within which the RDB works is not permitted authority to operate in any such way. Should an effort be made to secure such authority for the Office of Defense and thereby center basic research contracting and general supervision of basic research in one office instead of leaving it to the three military departments independently.

Perhaps this will serve to outline the questions I would particularly like to discuss with you, and I am most appreciative of the opportunity to do so. You have been closer to the ONR program than most of the present members of the Committee and, in addition, your experience and point of view seem to me to be especially helpful. Following our discussion of these matters, I should hope to bring your point of view back with me for the Committee meeting in any form you may wish.

I am looking forward to seeing you on Friday, but do not let me take too much of your time.

Sincerely yours,

Alan T. Waterman
Deputy Chief and Chief Scientist

Enclosure

EXOS:ONR:N-102

PERSONAL

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- b. What should ONR do when the National Science Foundation Bill is passed by Congress?
- c. The ONR offer to conduct basic research for the National Military Establishment.

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