



UNITED STATES  
ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

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Chairman has seen  
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February 6, 1959

Mr. John A. McCone, Chairman  
United States Atomic Energy Commission  
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Mr. McCone:

The Advisory Committee for Biology and Medicine held its 72nd meeting at Germantown January 9 and 10. We were pleased to learn that Dr. Robert Loeb had accepted your invitation to become a member of the Advisory Committee. Our next meeting will be held at Brookhaven National Laboratories March 13 and 14.

Dr. John Bugher was elected Vice-Chairman of the Advisory Committee, this office not having been filled since the expiration of Dr. Shields Warren's term.

The Committee received from Dr. Dunham and Dr. Victor Beard as full a report concerning the fatality resulting from the December 30 Los Alamos accident as details then permitted. Our main concern, shared by all responsible for the health and safety of AEC operations, is in the prevention of criticality accidents. The directive of the General Manager of October 10, 1958 requesting a review of procedures for prevention of criticality accidents has received full cooperation from DBM. That the specific operation which resulted in the Los Alamos accident had been reviewed by the Los Alamos Laboratory only two weeks before the accident should not discourage but rather stimulate an early compliance with the General Manager's directive. Further analysis of the causes underlying the accident may prove to be helpful to the entire problem of prevention as this relates both to technical procedures and personnel training and operations. We anticipate further discussion of this problem in our March meeting.

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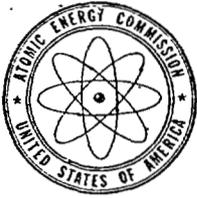
My letter to you of December 1, 1958, following the ACBM meeting at Argonne National Laboratory purposely omitted any mention of the feelings of frustration experienced by the Committee during and following this visit. The reasons for this omission were prompted by the hope that the underlying causes for our dissatisfaction with much of the presentation of the biology program might be later understood and thus provide guidance to recommendations concerning the program.

While the Committee, at the time of its meeting at the Argonne National Laboratory, was acutely conscious that there were difficulties in connection with the biology program, neither it nor the Division of Biology and Medicine was made aware, until some weeks later, that the resignation of Dr. Austin Brues had been submitted to Dr. Norman Hilberry at the latter's request near the end of September last. Dr. Dunham, by letter to the Chicago Operations Office has expressed his own dissatisfaction and that of the Committee with this lack of candor concerning a large biology program totally sponsored by DBM.

In order that the scientific resources of this Laboratory should be safeguarded and at the same time improvement in administration be secured, we suggest an early review of the entire program and mode of operation, and the taking of appropriate action to ensure the maximum scientific productivity within a plan and budget acceptable to the Division.

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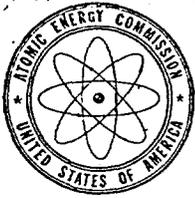
A general AEC administrative restraint which seriously affects the participation of DBM in exchange of information with the international community of similar interests is one which prevents the Division from giving financial support to international scientific meetings of specialized or topical interest (i.e., international congresses of hematology, genetics, physiology, etc.). The inability to do so also adversely affects the Division in building sound relations with those in this country and abroad who have a similar interest in international exchange of ideas and technology. The Committee therefore urgently recommends to the Commission that ways and means be found to permit the Division to give financial support to these meetings by a policy similar to that which permits other government scientific agencies to do so.

The Advisory Committee was again requested to review the policy of DBM in support of research in cancer and in particular the advisability of seeking elsewhere for support of the Argonne Cancer Research Hospital. The Committee reviewed the original policy of DBM relative to cancer research and therapy insofar as these might be furthered by radioactive materials and technics developed through AEC support. The Committee noted with satisfaction that the original reasons underlying AEC support of cancer research are still sound and in no way less valid. With time there has evolved some change in direction and emphasis in support of cancer research. In particular the rapidly expanding uses of radiant energy, the increasing number of workers potentially exposed to irradiation, the world-wide increase in radiation background secondary to atomic weapons testing and the future problems yet to be solved in waste disposal from power and industrial uses all lead the AEC to maintain an active supporting interest in cancer research and in the relationship between radiation exposure and cancer induction.

The total budget for cancer research within DBM is currently some 8% of the total budget. We consider this amount to be minimal. The Argonne Cancer Research Hospital, with its close affiliation with the University of Chicago, requires the greatest support in this program. The Committee believes this to be presently justified and would not recommend the divorcement

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of the Argonne Cancer Research Hospital from Commission responsibilities.

In reviewing the program of DBM concerned with special studies relating to human exposure to chronic low-level irradiation, the Committee has recommended to DBM the initiation of a project which will have the following general objectives:

- (1) Assembling the occupational radiation exposure data from AEC and Manhattan Project contractors,
- (2) Collecting data relating to causes and age of death of those whose occupational exposure has been recorded,
- (3) A continuing analysis of (1) and (2).

It is appreciated that this is a large undertaking yet its importance lies in the information which it may contribute to a relatively large population study whose occupational radiation exposure has been and is being recorded. Such a study has many ramifications and difficulties in collection and analysis of data but these do not seem insurmountable.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Simeon T. Cantril", is written above the typed name.

Simeon T. Cantril, M.D.  
Chairman, Advisory Committee  
for Biology and Medicine

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