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DRAFT LETTER TO CHAIRMAN FOR YOUR COMMENTS	

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January 13, 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 ~~the~~ ^{your} invitation ~~to become a member of~~ ^{to become a member of} the Advisory Committee, (and will be present with us at our next meeting ^{at Oak Ridge in March.})

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 several 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 these relate both

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to technical procedures and personnel training and operations. We anticipate further discussion of this problem in our March meeting.

My letter to you of December 1 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 ^{the} by/hope that the underlying causes for our dissatisfaction with much of the content and presentation of the Biology Program might be later understood and thus provide guidance to recommendations concerning the program.

We have now as a Committee been ^{appraised?} appraised of events by Dr. Dunham which antedated our visit to the Argonne National Laboratory and of which no-one in DBM was then aware. These relate to the resignation of the Director of the Biology Division tendered to the Director of the Argonne National Laboratory prior to our visit and which was not mentioned or discussed with the Committee or Dr. Dunham by either party during the course of the visit. Dr. Dunham, by ^{memorandum} letter to the ^{Chicago Operations Office} responsible contractor, has expressed his own dissatisfaction with this lack of candor concerning a large biology program totally sponsored by DBM. As a Committee, we have the greatest respect for the Director of the Biology Program, Dr. Austin Brues, both as a person and as a valued scientist in radiobiology and medicine. We agree ~~and~~ with Dr. Dunham however that ^{it may well be that} Dr. Brues' administrative capacities ^{do not} ~~do not~~ measure up to the requirements of so large a biology program ^{we should look ~~to~~ very carefully into way of affecting} and that a change in scientific administration ~~will be needed~~. But we also agree that in deference to Dr. Brues and to a considerable

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segment of a very competent and productive staff of the Laboratory, it would adversely affect the Laboratory's future if such a change were made in haste or without the senior scientists of the staff being aware of the problem and participating in its solution. We shall therefore await with interest further information which Dr. Dunham will secure by personal visits to the Laboratory later this month. In the meantime there is no intent on the part of DBM to now increase the program or accede to further construction requested by the Laboratory. We have confidence that a satisfactory solution will result both in a strengthened biology division at Argonne National Laboratory and in Dr. Brues' being able to continue his outstanding contribution to radiobiology and medicine in an atmosphere better adapted to his talents.

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 in general and in particular

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the advisability of seeking elsewhere for support of the Argonne Cancer Research Hospital. The Committee reviewed the original policy of DBM in its early support of cancer research and therapy insofar as these might be furthered by radioactive materials and technics developed through AEC support. The Committee noted with interest that the soundness of the reasons underlying AEC support of cancer research had in no way been lessened but that with time there had 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 the relationship between radiation exposure and cancer induction.

The total budget for cancer research within DBM is currently some 8% of the total budget. This is not considered disproportionate. 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 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:

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- (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,

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

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cc: All members of ACBM
Dr. Charles L. Dunham