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Dear Dr. Seaborg:

The Advisory Committee for Biology and Medicine held its 84th meeting at the Puerto Rico Nuclear Center on January 13, 14 and 15, 1961. We regret that this letter to you has been delayed. Meetings were held both at Rio Piedras and Mayaguez in order to see as fully as possible the facilities of the AEC Project in these two places and to examine the training and research programs and to meet the personnel at both branches.

We were pleased to find that under the present director, Dr. John Bugher, very considerable strides have been taken. A new facility, including a reactor which went critical in November 1960, had been completed at the Mayaguez Campus of the College of Agriculture and Industrial Arts; and at the Medical Center on the Rio Piedras Campus of the University a new research building is moving toward completion. The presentation of aspects of the programs at both places indicated a stimulating atmosphere and excellent cooperation with the University of Puerto Rico. At the same time, certain problems become very apparent. One may doubt that even the full activation of the Puerto Rico Nuclear Center will lead to a rapid and eager utilization by the Latin American countries of the opportunities for basic training in the use of radioisotopes and reactor facilities in medical and biological research. This is in part because if the funds are available to send a man abroad for training, the excellent opportunities in the United States and elsewhere have great appeal. On the other hand, there seems to be a steady, if at present small, demand for facilities for a more prolonged training and for cooperative activity in research. This demand is to a considerable degree thwarted by the unavailability of dollars for a stay of some duration in Puerto Rico. Moreover, it seems natural that the basic technical training and instruction will be more and more taken over by regular university departments, as these acquire greater competence in such areas. If so, the role of the Puerto Rico Nuclear Center will necessarily shift from provision of basic training to training in more advanced research. It seems advisable to plan now for this transition to be effectuated gradually and in full cooperation with the University of Puerto Rico.

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The medical program in radiation therapy and the use of isotopes in clinical medicine should be greatly aided by the abundance of available clinical material and a cancer picture that is characteristic of the local population and quite different from that in the United States. Radiological physics offers great promise. In the Health Physics and Agricultural Bio-Sciences Program, centered at Mayaguez, we see some difficulties, in part relating to the difficulty in attracting and holding senior scientists of high reputation, and in part to the lack of enterprise in undertaking an ecological survey of the region, including its marine resources and relations.

The University of Puerto Rico does not seem able at present to staff the program above the existing level and to remedy these deficiencies, much less to stimulate work in agriculture, nutrition, ecology, and marine biology, which seem particularly suited to the region and its needs. The Director suggests that the problem can be solved by a policy of bringing in able scientists for 2-year terms to organize the research programs, initiate training, and develop the strength of the University to a point where it can supply all further needs of the PRNS. To do this would require a sizeable increase in the budget, especially if fellowships for Latin American students and established research workers for longer periods of stay are also provided. Inasmuch as the Division of International Affairs, under which the budget of the PRNC was placed, was originally directed to promote training in nuclear methods, the modification of the program to embrace a more extensive research function poses problems which the Commission must face. Not only is the allocation of the funds a problem, but the general supervision of the research program also becomes an issue.

Considering these needs and problems, the Committee has concluded that the Commission should consider the wisdom of enlarging the research program of the Puerto Rico Nuclear Center, in place of further emphasis upon basic training in nuclear and isotope methodology, which seems to be less needed in the relations of Puerto Rico to the rest of Latin America. We recognize that provision of funds for the research program will indeed require adjustments of the budget. As for the longer-term fellowships which seems necessary to attract Latin American students and more advanced research workers, we hope that the Commission will explore with other federal and international agencies the ways and means of providing such fellowships for visitors to the PRNC for periods of a year or longer. To provide for a continuing consideration of the research program in biology and medicine, the Committee suggests that the Division of Biology and Medicine be asked to serve in an official advisory capacity to the Division of International Affairs for this developing research program.

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All members of the Committee were deeply impressed by the economic and social strides being made by the people of Puerto Rico, and evident on every side. We firmly believe that a great opportunity exists for us to utilize our relations with Puerto Rico to cement our friendship with other Latin American peoples. But psychological aspects of this relationship are critical, and we believe that the Puerto Rico Nuclear Center can only achieve a full and rich place in these international relationships if it achieves a place of recognized scientific eminence and worth. The Latin Americans are both too proud and too discerning to be attracted to an institution that is elementary and lacks distinction. On the other hand, an institution of distinction may provide elementary training that is highly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

H. Bentley Glass, Acting Chairman
Advisory Committee for Biology
and Medicine

Dr. Glenn T. Seaborg, Chairman
U. S. Atomic Energy Commission
Washington 25, D. C.

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