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ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR BIOLOGY AND MEDICINE
TO THE
UNITED STATES ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

Box 1823- U.P.R. Station
Río Piedras, Puerto Rico

June 6, 1961

Dear Dr. Seaborg:

The Advisory Committee for Biology and Medicine held its 86th meeting on May 12 and 13, 1961, at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory where it enjoyed a review of the biology and health physics programs of that laboratory.

We were much impressed with the uniformly high quality of the work being supported in the ORNL Biology Division under the able leadership of Dr. Alexander Hollaender. The contributions of this laboratory in the fields of mammalian genetics, cytogenetics, nucleic acid chemistry, radiation immunology, and physical chemistry associated with radiobiological problems have been outstanding. The scientific productivity of this program over the years testifies to the wisdom of those who conceived and established it and to the strength of the leadership it has enjoyed.

The Health Physics Division of ORNL not only has discharged well its responsibility for radiological safety in the Oak Ridge Operations Area; it has also conducted a substantial research program with many ramifications of importance to the Commission. We were pleased to learn more of the basic contributions of the Health Physics Division to radiological physics and to the difficult problems of neutron and gamma dosimetry in relation to nuclear weapons effects and criticality accidents. The Division is esteemed both nationally and internationally for its work on the principles and standards applicable to the establishment of maximum permissible limits of radiation exposure.

In connection with the valuable ecological studies being conducted by ORNL, the committee became more than ever impressed with the remarkable opportunities for study offered by the bed of the old White Oak Lake. This area, heavily contaminated years ago with waste fission products, is probably the most suitable site in existence for the study of the agricultural implications of radioactive contamination of the soil. We have urged the Division of Biology and Medicine to support more extensive and more effective use of this resource for both observational and experimental work.

For a number of years the Health Physics Division of ORNL has been engaged in the systematic analysis of human tissues for trace elements, chiefly

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by emission spectrography. We feel that the area of study is of such fundamental importance in the determination of permissible body burdens that a review of both the applicable methodologies and the plan of attack should be undertaken by an ad hoc group of experts in order that new program plans may be developed along the most effective lines. We would suggest that this ad hoc committee be arranged by the Division of Biology and Medicine in consultation with ORNL.

In an extensive discussion of the possibility of making use of the grant mechanism for smaller research projects, we were greatly aided in our understanding of the problems by staff members from the General Counsel's Office and the Office of Contract Administration as well as by the staff of DBM itself. It appears probable that the grant authority under Public Law 85-934 could be used advantageously to support off-site research (non-developmental) by non-profit organizations up to $50,000 annual cost and that this arrangement could include commitments for three to five years when in the best interests of the program. We recommend that the use of grants under these conditions be explored for the AEC Biology and Medical program and that this problem be called to the attention of the Federal Council on Science and Technology for consideration by other Government agencies in order to achieve a uniform policy. We further recommend that for all projects exceeding $50,000 cost per year the present contract procedure be maintained.

We understand that where the grant procedure is used, a financial audit would not be necessary but that review of the scientific content and performance could be made by a program director.

We note that the indirect costs of off-site research continue to be a problem that vexes all governmental agencies concerned with scientific investigation. Here again, a uniform policy is highly desirable, especially in the off-site situation where the institution may be expected to make an appreciable contribution from its own funds and thereby to exercise some degree of control in the interest of a healthy academic structure.

Sincerely yours,

John C. Bugher, Chairman
H. Bentley Glass, Vice-Chairman
Fred J. Hodges
James G. Horsfall
Robert F. Loeb
Leonidas D. Marinelli
Carl V. Moore
James H. Sterner
Harland G. Wood

Dr. Glenn A. Seaborg, Chairman
U.S. Atomic Energy Commission
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