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

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October 1, 1969

Dr. Glenn T. Seaborg
Chairman
U. S. Atomic Energy Commission
Washington, D. C. 20545

Dear Dr. Seaborg:

The Advisory Committee for Biology and Medicine held its 130th meeting at AEC Headquarters, Germantown, Maryland, on September 12, 1969, and at the "H" Street Office, Washington, D. C., September 13, 1969. Committee members present were Drs. Bale, Cohen, Haagen-Smit, Moseley and Stout. A Chairman (Cohen) and a Vice-Chairman (Moseley) were elected to serve for 1969-1970.

The ACEM concerned itself for a full day on September 12 listening to and discussing scientific reports presented by invited investigators, by staff of the Division of Biology and Medicine and by representatives of other agencies bearing on the validity of claims made in the scientific and popular press that past fallout radiation has been responsible for induction of cancer and for a retardation in the trend of improvement of the incidence of fetal and infant death rates. In reviewing the pertinent scientific evidence, the ACEM has drafted a statement which follows, and which we hope you will find helpful and useful.

"The Advisory Committee for Biology and Medicine has reviewed the past and present programs of investigative work sponsored by the AEC designed to evaluate the hazards related to ionizing radiation and released radioactivity. These studies provide a useful basis for setting acceptable exposure limits for the peacetime uses of atomic energy and for an evaluation of the hazards associated with atomic bomb testing in the atmosphere.

Present criteria for evaluating these hazards are based largely upon the considerable amount of reliable data from investigative work sponsored by the Division of Biology and Medicine. This work covers both the direct effects of radiation on the body of the irradiated subject (somatic effects) and effects on descendants of the irradiated subject (genetic effects). These data come from a variety of experimental animal studies, from the

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studies of the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and from studies of human beings exposed to radiation accidentally or for medical purposes.

Recently published reports in both the scientific and popular press claim that past fallout radiations have been responsible for inducing cancer, and for increasing stillbirths and infant mortality. There is further the implication that present standards for peacetime atomic energy uses are unsafe. It is clear to the ACBM from a review of the pertinent scientific information that these claims are erroneous and reflect a biased selection and incorrect statistical treatment of the available data.

The ACBM is convinced that the data presently available give an adequate foundation of knowledge for setting public safety standards for radiation. Moreover, there is good reason to believe that future research will reveal that the present standards are conservative."

During the Executive Session on September 13, the ACBM was briefed on a number of currently important matters. Dr. Totter's review of the status of the 1970 budget for DBM led to an expression of serious concern by the ACBM with particular reference to the manpower and research support needs of DBM in the face of increasing responsibilities.

The next meeting of the ACBM is scheduled for November 14 and 15, 1969, at the Savannah River Laboratory.

Sincerely yours,



Philip P. Cohen, M.D.
Chairman, Advisory Committee
for Biology and Medicine