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May 8, 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 129th meeting at the Atomic Energy Project, Case Western Reserve University, in Cleveland, Ohio, on May 2-3, 1969. All members except Drs. McGee and Stead were present.

The ACBM desires to call your attention to the following items of special interest:

CWRU Review. The historical and present goals of this program were revealed by Dr. Hymer Friedell, Director of the Project, to include four major divisions: 1) Physics and Biophysics; 2) Biochemistry; 3) Cytology and Biology; 4) Radiology and Medicine.

Within the above divisions, experimental and developmental efforts in the areas of cell division and cell kinetics, DNA metabolism and protein synthesis, modification of radiation effects and recovery, and direct applications, including instrumentation and development of radioisotopes for use in medicine, were revealed as program components.

In addition to the formal presentations and discussions, the ACBM members visited the laboratory facilities. The ACBM met the following day with Dr. Friedell, and commented on the different aspects of the research, training, instrument development, academic staff and application efforts in this program, including reference to areas of apparent weakness and strength. The dimensions of financial support, present and anticipated, were reviewed.

The ACBM found the program to be well integrated into the academic structure of the basic sciences and clinical departments of the University and to have a magnitude of support appropriate for the goals and efforts of the program. The need for more critical assessment of the project dealing with the modification of radiation effects by metabolic control was called to the attention of Dr. Friedell.

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Other aspects of the program impressed the ACBM. The work of the group developing special instruments is both applied and basic. The excellent development of clinically useful instrumentation is supported by good basic image quality investigations (modulation transfer function studies, noise power spectrum investigations, optical spatial frequency filtering, etc.)

Radium Dial Workers. The ACBM notes with pleasure DBM's rapid implementation of recommendations in relation to the radium dial painters' program. It is understood that there are some significant unresolved staffing problems but the ACBM is hopeful about Argonne National Laboratory and DBM efforts to solve these difficulties. The ACBM stands ready as a body and individually to be of any possible assistance in resolving the remaining problems.

Uranium Miners. The Committee was informed of recent recommendations of the Federal Radiation Council with respect to permissible levels of radon and radon daughters' exposure in uranium mines and of the disagreements on such levels that preceded the formulation of these recommendations. We understand that these disagreements may have arisen over the weight to be assigned various calculations of lung doses from radon and radon daughters as compared with maximum permissible doses allowed under current NCRP standards. Nevertheless, we doubt the wisdom of the establishment of new committees whose functions would overlap those of the present FRC or would superseded them. We believe that the AEC should express its strong support of the FRC as the responsible interagency organization for setting radiation exposure levels.

GAO Report. We note with satisfaction that the General Accounting Office Report on the Administration and Management of the Biology and Medicine Research Program did not indicate any significant deficiencies in management. We are not sure that the GAO fully understood all the details of DBM's program management. For example, the ACBM has historically had a greater involvement in this area than is indicated by the report. With respect to the specific recommendations of the report, we understand that DBM will consider these carefully with a view to implementing some of them. We again wish to record that we strongly favor DBM's extensive informal surveillance of its program, which has succeeded very well. A rigid and completely formal structuring of DBM's management procedures is likely to impair the effectiveness of its research program.

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Dr. G. T. Seaborg

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The ACBM further understands that, twice a year, each Program Director receives formal written guidance from the DBM Director about the direction, scope, and level of effort of each component of his research program. We believe that any further written directive might be unnecessary and, possibly, ill-advised.

The next meeting of the ACBM is now planned for September 12-13, 1969, at AEC Headquarters and "H" Street office.

Sincerely yours,

Earl L. Green  
Chairman, Advisory Committee  
for Biology and Medicine

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