

326 US ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION

RG

Collection

Biology of Medicine

Box

2

Folder

7

711191

November 21, 1968

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 127th meeting at the Nevada Operations Office and the Nevada Test Site on November 7-9, 1968, with all but one member present. The meeting was devoted to acquainting the ACBM with the weapons development and the space exploration programs, especially with respect to safety measures, to studies of biological and civil effects, and to means of exploiting nuclear technology for peaceful commercial uses. The meeting was largely devoted to imparting information to the ACBM, rather than discussing issues, and ranged over a wide variety of topics. The following three items appeared to deserve special comment.

Plowshare. The ACBM was impressed by reports on developments under the "Plowshare" program. It is clear that research at first primarily associated with weapons development is also paying dividends in providing insight leading to important reductions in radioactivity associated with atomic explosions for peaceful uses. It is, of course, most important that great care be taken to assure that release of radioactivity shall not be of a magnitude or extent that it will be a hazard, and that the amount and distribution of any released radioactivity be carefully monitored. We are gratified at the competence with which this is being done in current phases of the "Plowshare" program. We are pleased with the potential application of techniques developed under "Plowshare" to uses under private enterprise in the gas, oil and mining industries and to increases in our economically useful national resources in these areas. We are hopeful that development of explosive and radioactivity containment techniques will reach the point that radiological safety can be assured at costs consistent with wide commercial application of "Plowshare" devices in these areas. The active participation of other governmental agencies and private firms in the development and field evaluation of such peaceful uses of atomic energy is both significant and appropriate and should continue to be encouraged.

Pollution Surveys. Area survey programs of radioactive contamination have received a powerful stimulus through the use of airplanes equipped with sensitive detecting methods. Similar techniques for the measurements of gaseous contaminants and aerosols are being developed through the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. These measurements allow the

OFFICE ▶					
SURNAME ▶					
DATE ▶					

1071106

construction of far superior patterns of pollution in only a fraction of the time and expense needed for ground based stations. Close cooperation among the various agencies working in this rapidly expanding field is strongly recommended.

Weapons Tests. One of the staff members from Lawrence Radiation Laboratory, Livermore, gave the ACBM an excellent briefing on the status and purposes of the weapons development program. The ACBM was especially impressed with the care and attention given to the safety features of the test program and with the explanation of why testing continues to be necessary. The ACBM believes that there is now insufficient public awareness of the need for continued testing and of the safety precautions taken. It recommends that further efforts be made by the AEC to acquaint the public with the continuing need for testing and with the safety measures employed. The ACBM is aware of the political sensitivity of this question, but believes that AEC could make a positive gain in its public image by a greater disclosure of the needs for weapons testing and of the precautions being taken.

Next Meeting. The ACBM plans to meet next in Washington, D. C., on January 10-11, 1969.

Sincerely yours,

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

OFFICE ▶	ACBM	BM DIRS OFC				
SURNAME ▶	GREEN:RME	DIR-TOTTER				
DATE ▶	11/21/68	11/21/68				