

MINUTES

133rd MEETING

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR BIOLOGY AND MEDICINE
U. S. ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION

March 13-14, 1970
1717 H Street, N. W.
Washington, D.C.

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Folder	<i>8</i>

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- 2 -

The 133rd meeting of the Advisory Committee for Biology and Medicine took place on March 13-14, 1970 at the AEC "H" Street Office in Washington, D. C. ACBM members in attendance were: Drs. Cohen (Chairman), Moseley, (Vice-Chairman), Bale, Haagen-Smit, and Stout; Dr. Harvey M. Patt, (Scientific Secretary) and Rosemary Elmo (Executive Secretary). Also present were Dr. Totter, Director, Division of Biology and Medicine, and members of his staff; Dr. S. G. English, AGMRD; Dr. C. Beck, Regulation; Mr. R. Hauber, Division of Peaceful Nuclear Explosives; Col. J. Griffin, Spec. Asst. to Commissioner Larson; Mr. Julius Rubin, Spec. Asst. to the Chairman; Dr. G. M. Dunning and Mr. R. Catlin, Operational Safety; Dr. J. V. Nehemias, Radiation Protection Standards; and Mrs. Penny Brandenburg, Historian Branch of the Secretariat.

The meeting began with an executive session attended by Drs. Totter and English. Dr. Totter reviewed the Commission's request for advice on environmental matters with particular reference to the basis for radiation standards. Apropos of this, he called the ACBM's attention to recent attacks on FRC guides and NCRP standards and to a recent proposal for large scale, low dose experiments with mice. Megamouse studies have been proposed from time to time but have never been carried out because of extensive requirements for staff, facilities and funds. It has been estimated that the mere maintenance of 10^6 mice would require 10^7 dollars per year which represents over 10 percent of the present DBM budget.

Dr. Totter briefed the ACBM on the distribution of budget cuts within the DBM program. Drs. Totter and English noted that reductions in the

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biomedical program at Lawrence Radiation Laboratory, Livermore, could have political implications. This was discussed with the Commission and subsequently with Dr. Roger Batzel, Associate Director at LRL, who proposed a \$60,000 reduction for the John Gofman program, the total reduction in the LRL biomedical activity amounting to \$280,000. Dr. English stated that there were no obvious problems in regard to the FY 1972 DBM program at the recent authorization hearings.

The executive session was followed by an open meeting at which Dr. Moseley discussed the evolution of permissible radiation levels. He called attention to errors in many retrospective studies of early radiation experience due to uncertainties in dose measurement. A recent analysis by Japanese investigators indicated that early radiation workers may have received as much as 900R per year. Dr. Moseley's presentation was followed by a discussion by Drs. Totter, Burr and Edington of recent criticisms of FRC guidelines. Dr. Burr referred to present FRC activities concerning a re-examination of standards. He also described recent hearings of a New York City Council Subcommittee which were concerned with a possible ban on reactors. Dr. Edington provided the ACBM with a critique of Dr. Arthur Tamplin's comments on genetic hazards at the 136th AAAS meeting in Boston and called attention to basic errors in Dr. Tamplin's interpretation of existing data.

The ACBM met with Commissioners Seaborg and Johnson in a closed session, which was also attended by Mr. Hollingsworth (General Manager) and Drs. English and Totter. Dr. Cohen noted that the ACBM was intellectually oriented against what appeared to be an emotional attack on radiation standards. The question was raised as to whether a continued response was desirable. Chairman Seaborg indicated that while he agreed philosophically with Dr. Cohen, it was necessary for the AEC to respond to any criticisms which reflected on its operations. In subsequent discussion, the ACBM noted that standards were always under surveillance and, moreover, that the standards were predicated on an assumption of linearity of the dose-response relationship. Hence, it is not necessary to invoke the question of a threshold in any justification of present standards.

After the conference with Dr. Seaborg and Mr. Johnson, the ACBM heard reports on:

- 1) Rocky Flats by C. R. Richmond, D. H. Slade (DBM): J. H. Harley, (HASL-NYO) and F. R. Tesche (DMA).
- 2) Legislation relating to nuclear power - B. H. Schur (OGC)
- 3) Thermal problems by R. Holton (DBM)
- 4) Over-all environmental problems by H. C. Brown, Jr., and J. J. DiNunno (General Manager's office)

5. Follow-up on the Rulison Trial, W. R. Bibb, (DBM)
6. Radon contamination of houses in Uravan and Grand Junction, H. D. Bruner (DBM) and R. J. Catlin (Operational Safety)

In its meeting on March 14, the Committee was briefed by Dr. Totter on the recent JCAE hearings. These covered only two subjects which are within the purview of DBM: food irradiation and centralization of the radium dial painter study.

Dr. Goldstein summarized the Medical Branch review of the UCLA program and this was followed by an interim report of the ACBM ad hoc review committee. A formal report will be sent to Dr. Totter within a few weeks.

Commissioner Larson was present during a portion of the meeting on this date. He told the ACBM of his projected visit to the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission. In response to a question by Dr. Larson, the Committee expressed the view that the ABCC was continuing to provide useful information.

The meeting was concluded in executive session at which time the ACBM noted that there was pressing need for increased support of the DBM, since many of its activities were at the core of the current emphasis on environmental problems. It was noted further that present heavy demands on the staff could compromise the future development of the DBM program.

Possible additions to ACBM membership were discussed. Dr. Totter's office will prepare a listing for consideration by the Committee at its next meeting.

The Minutes of the 132nd meeting were approved as circulated. The 134th meeting will be held on May 7-8, 1970 at the Battelle Northwest Laboratory, Richland, Washington. The 135th meeting has been scheduled tentatively for September 11-12, 1970 in Washington, D. C.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Harvey M. Patt

Harvey M. Patt, Scientific Secretary
Advisory Committee for Biology and
Medicine, USAEC