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January 22, 1973

Dr. James R. Schlesinger  
 Chairman  
 U. S. Atomic Energy Commission  
 Washington, D. C. 20545

Dear Dr. Schlesinger:

I am writing to report on the 145th meeting of the Advisory Committee for Biology and Medicine held in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory on January 3 and 4, 1973. All members of the ACBM were present with the exception of Dr. Finch, who was in the Far East at the time of the meeting.

Dr. Liverman arranged an extremely interesting, important, and I believe most productive program involving work in AEC national laboratories for other agencies. He had arranged this meeting at ORNL not to review in depth any of the ORNL programs, but rather because ORNL is a site, as explained by Dr. Weinberg in his welcome, where work for non-AEC agencies is perhaps as well developed as it is at any of the national laboratories with approximately 25% of the funding coming from these other agencies.

Dr. Liverman asked for the advice and opinion of the ACBM in relation to the assessment of the impact of work for non-AEC agencies on programs of the Division of Biomedical and Environmental Research for possible identification of particularly qualified areas in AEC laboratories and for the identification of programs to be encouraged or discouraged. In connection with this general area the ACBM has been on record for a number of years as being in favor of encouraging individual scientists as well as programmatic laboratory areas to seek funding from non-AEC agencies in view of constricting budgets. The ACBM would also, at this time, like to reiterate its recommendation, made after the May 1972 meeting at Brookhaven, to the effect that legislation or regulations be modified so that the AEC laboratories do not have to demonstrate non-governmental participatory financial involvement in order to qualify for funding from non-AEC agencies. The ACBM understands that some overtures in this regard have been made but urges that this be pursued vigorously so as not to leave the scientists at the AEC laboratories in a disadvantageous position in relation to their peer groups outside national laboratories.

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The questions raised by Dr. Liverman are not capable of simple solution but it is conceivable that some of the DBER's specific and generic problems can be improved, if not entirely resolved. Some of the difficulty seems to have arisen by virtue of a primary emphasis upon the mechanism of funding rather than the nature of the problem being attacked. The real problem seems to be: "Is the problem significant and a national need?" If this question is answered affirmatively, then competence should be sought to pursue them within the guidelines of the AEC's concerns if equipment and facilities exist in the national laboratories.

There seems to be little question on the basis of the numerous presentations made to the ACBM at this meeting that the over all effect of the addition of support from non-AEC agencies has certainly been positive. The ACBM strongly supports increasing DBER flexibility by permitting competition for federal grants from non-AEC agencies on an equal footing with applicants from academia. Scientists in the national laboratories, thus, would be subjected to national priorities and evaluated in relation to the current health needs of the nation.

There was some discussion concerning investigators who have developed substantial technical competence but have lost some of their investigative spark. The ACBM suggested that such individuals might be very helpful in the interface between research and regulations. For instance, in the preparation of environmental impact statements.

In an earlier meeting with the Commission you indicated that the ACBM should undertake to define its own role. In the Executive Session at this meeting the following points were discussed by the Committee with respect to its role:

1) It was considered that the ACBM was most effective as a policy advisory committee and can be very useful in this manner rather than as an in-depth review committee. Although the ACBM has the expertise to undertake in-depth review, this has been the responsibility of the AEC staff, and time considerations alone would probably contraindicate a part-time Advisory Committee attempting in-depth review on a regular basis.

2) The consensus was that the Committee should be advisory to the Commissioners and should report directly to the Chairman of the AEC. It was felt that this arrangement would make the ACBM of greatest utility to the scientific fields which it advised and of the greatest assistance to the Director of the Division with which it is primarily concerned.

3) In amplification of its belief that it should continue to be an advisory on policy, the Committee believes it has been particularly useful in this role in the past. Indeed, if the ACBM did not exist, as

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Dr. Liverman indicated might be the situation with re-evaluation of the roles of Advisory Committees, some similar committee would probably have to be invented. Some of the instances on which it has rendered advice in the very recent past includes: a) Resolution of major intramural problems with respect to the UCLA Laboratory operation (at the direct request of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy); b) Advice on the potential of the stable-isotope program at Los Alamos; c) Advice on the significance of utilizing the negative pi-meson at Los Alamos for medical research and clinical application; and, d) Advice on the proper role and significance of personnel monitoring procedures and the limitation in the interpretation of such measurements.

Complete minutes in relation to this meeting will be available at a later date.

Sincerely yours.

Robert D. Moseley, Jr., M.D.  
Chairman, Advisory Committee for  
Biology and Medicine

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