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May 10, 1972

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

Dear Dr. Schlesinger:

The 142nd meeting of the Advisory Committee for Biology and Medicine was held May 5-6, 1972, at Brookhaven National Laboratory. Members present were Drs. C. A. Finch, A. J. Haagen-Smit, T. A. Lincoln, P. R. Stout (Vice-Chairman), J. B. Storer (Scientific Secretary), Miss Rosemary Elmo (Executive Secretary) and Dr. R. D. Moseley, Jr. (Chairman). Dr. John R. Totter, Director of the Division of Biology and Medicine, and other staff members of DBM were also in attendance.

The ACBM considered in detail the proposal for the reorganization of the Division of Biology and Medicine and offers its assistance in any way in relation to this reorganization. In particular, the Committee recognizes the importance of identifying under a separate Assistant Director the significant environmental aspects of Ecological Sciences and Geosciences. The maintenance of this group in a biomedical sciences division points up the important interrelationships between the biomedical and environmental sciences. The ACBM also views with approbation the increased emphasis on analysis evident in the stature of an assistant director for this and related areas. It is of the utmost importance that the Commission maintain an inhouse capability in biomedical and environmental sciences in order to properly carry out its present mission and even more important in view of potential larger responsibilities. Hopefully, reorganization along the lines proposed will facilitate internal communications within DBM and especially among other AEC divisions, including the Regulatory Divisions.

The ACBM is enthusiastic about the new look and wide scope of the energy program and about the role that the Division can assume in supporting this effort. This seems a logical step in the historical development of our present energy responsibilities. For some time the ACBM has discussed in its own meetings and during meetings with several of the Commissioners the possibilities of such a wider scope but in view of budgetary restrictions and the necessary devotion to the problems of radiation and nuclear energy it did not seem possible to encompass this broader program. With budgetary support, the challenges and excitement of this larger responsibility can be welcomed with enthusiasm.

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In its discussions at Brookhaven the ACBM sharpened its focus on the problems of research support -- problems that are by no means unique to BNL but are noted on every ACBM visit to a national laboratory. The present situation in most of the national laboratories presents difficulties in keeping healthy programs alive. The necessary decreases in personnel due to budgetary restrictions are coming dangerously close to a loss in critical mass for productive interdisciplinary research for which our national laboratories represent such a vital resource. Possible research directions, in the present climate and because of programmatic necessities, are much more restrictive. One possible relief in relation to support of research at national laboratories by other agencies became apparent during our discussions: outside support is now restricted because of requirements of the National Institutes of Health for institutional participation with non-federal funds. Applied to universities this is a reasonable and justifiable restriction, but applied to national laboratories this is not equally reasonable and results in potential under-support and under-utilization of these important national resources. If the Commission could seek legislation exempting the national laboratories from these participatory requirements sources of support for the maintenance of a high level of research productivity could be opened.

The next meeting of the ACBM is scheduled for September 8-9, 1972, at AEC Headquarters, but the members of the Committee stand ready to respond to any intervening request for service.

Sincerely yours,

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

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