

UNITED STATES
ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

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IN REPLY REFER TO:

October 12, 1949

Mr. David E. Lilienthal, Chairman
U. S. Atomic Energy Commission
1901 Constitution Avenue N. W.
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. Lilienthal:

The seventeenth meeting of the Advisory Committee for Biology and Medicine was held on Friday and Saturday, September 9 and 10, 1949, in Washington, D. C. All of the members of the Committee were present with the exception of Dr. Alan Gregg, who is in Europe.

Since our last meeting we have read with considerable interest the Sixth Semiannual Report to the Congress. We feel that the high quality of this report is a real tribute to the individuals who contributed to it.

A review of the research projects which have been approved by the Division of Biology and Medicine since our last meeting stimulated discussion of several aspects of such a program. The Committee is pleased to learn of the progress that is being made in establishing uniform procedures for research contracts. In regard to overhead on projects, we felt that consideration should be given to the increased administrative burden which such projects place on institutions and allowances made for it.

In furtherance of our discussion at the June meeting the scope of the basic research program was again presented. The Committee studied a chart which showed the relative emphasis that is being placed on various phases of research including the work carried on at the national laboratories.

It was the opinion of the Committee that the biophysics program should be broadened. Several important problems were suggested for study,

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i.e., the time intensity factor; the exchange of energy between the environment and the cell; the study of the energetics of the metabolic process involved in the exchange of ions in the environment and the interior of the cells; enzyme chemistry; the utilization of our modern knowledge of microwave techniques to develop better our information on the kinetics of very rapid reactions; enzyme reactions to radiation damage; quantitative histochemistry; study on the exact composition of intracellular fluids and the colloids. These subjects and many others in the broad field of biophysics were suggested for strengthening of the program. It was our feeling that research in basic sciences is as important and as much a responsibility of the Commission and of the Division of Biology and Medicine as any of the present or planned programs.

The Deputy Director gave a helpful review of his recent visit to Japan wherein he surveyed the activities of the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission at Hiroshima, Kure and Nagasaki. Dr. Bowers' survey covered all phases of the program including organization studies in hematology, genetics, serology, parasitology, laboratory facilities, construction, housing facilities, etc. Inasmuch as large sums of money are being expended from Federal funds for this program, we feel that periodic reappraisals are essential. It is our purpose to study Dr. Bowers' full report to the Commission before giving our acquiescence to the current program.

In connection with Dr. Bowers' oral report, a letter from Dr. Lewis Weed requesting the approval of the Atomic Energy Commission of a plan to establish a Board of Commissioners within the Japanese National Institute of Health that would have a voice in the affairs of the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission was carefully reviewed. The Commission agreed in principle that the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission should collaborate with the Japanese National Institute, but that it is premature to implement definite plans. In no case was the proposed plan considered to be acceptable. However, they propose to discuss this question at a further meeting before a final recommendation is made.

We were pleased to learn that the Civil Defense program is under the able guidance of Mr. Harry L. Bowman, Professor of Civil Engineering at Drexel Institute of Technology, and that he is working on the material that will be serviceable to the National Security Resources Board in planning their program. Mr. Bowman summarized his recent report on disaster plans of the Oak Ridge Operations Office, which we understand is being studied by the Production Division before submission to the Commission for their consideration.

Inasmuch as several of the members of the Committee feel that in the near future they will have to retire from the Committee, we discussed a rotating change of the membership.

Both Dr. Hastings and Dr. Beadle have expressed a desire to resign from the Committee on June 30, 1950. Lots were then drawn for the remaining members and they will retire as follows: Dr. Bronk, 1951; Dr. Goodpasture, 1952; Dr. Wearn, 1953, Dr. Stakman, 1954. Dr. Gregg's name was not placed among the group, as we feel it is highly desirable for him to continue as Chairman.

It was unanimously agreed that hereafter the policy would be for members to rotate at the rate of one member per year. It was suggested that new members be appointed in time to permit their being invited to attend several meetings before the retirement of any member. Dr. Warren is planning to take this change in the Committee up with the Commission at an early date.

We considered the Fellowship Program in light of the recent Congressional hearings and the rider that has been placed in the Atomic Energy Commission Appropriation Act which makes obligatory a full background F.B.I. clearance for each candidate for an Atomic Energy Commission Fellowship before acceptance. As a result of the discussions the Committee was unanimous in voicing its opinion that the Fellowship Program should be continued despite the conditions imposed by the present statute. They further felt an effort should be made to educate the public in the peacetime applications and the humanitarian aspects of atomic energy as contrasted with the necessary restrictions that must be placed on classified work.

Mention might be made of the report of the Medical Board of Review in relation to the Fellowship Program of June 1947 in which it was strongly recommended " * * * that insofar as it is compatible with national security, secrecy in the field of biological and medical research be avoided". We believe that if this recommendation had been more widely followed it would have advanced science generally in the unrestricted aspects of atomic energy and attracted more young men into the field.

In connection with the fellowship program, it was the opinion of the Committee that if an applicant for a fellowship is denied clearance, the applicant then should be permitted to appear for a hearing in his own behalf. We are hopeful that some procedure will be worked out

(Mr. D. E. Lillenthal)

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satisfactorily in the not too distant future whereby this recommendation could be placed into effect.

The members of the Committee have sent their specific recommendations to the Director of the Division setting forth their views on how best to carry forward the Fellowship Program. It is our understanding that Dr. Warren will correlate these letters and forward a statement with his recommendations to the General Manager.

It was the view of the Committee that it would be well to emphasize the peacetime functions of the Commission by giving the open aspects of the meetings of the Advisory Committee for Biology and Medicine to the press.

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled to be held at Oak Ridge National Laboratory on November 11 and 12, 1949.

Sincerely yours,



Ernest W. Goodpasture
Vice-Chairman,
Advisory Committee
for
Biology and Medicine

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