

REPOSITORY US DOE ARCHIVES
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COLLECTION OBM

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STAFF COMMENT ON JOINT COMMITTEE CRITICISM ON ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION

Fellowships:

Congress in enacting the FBI rider rejected the viewpoints presented by the Commission during the hearings. It was made clear by scientists inside and outside of the Commission, as well as by other spokesmen for scientific groups that any attempt to impose security requirements in fields of fundamental research where security was not clearly an issue would operate to the detriment of scientific research as a whole, and would result in a lessened interest and confidence on the part of universities and scientists in the program and problems of the AEC

Upon the enactment of the rider, the membership of the National Academy of Sciences expressed its doubts that the continuation of the fellowship program with the rider, was in the national interest, and indicated that the Academy did not care to be connected in any way with the program. Despite this stand on the part of this outstanding nongovernment body of scientists, the Atomic Energy Commission in its concern for the critical need for an increasing number of younger scientists trained in the disciplines of atomic energy, asked the Academy to continue a limited program restricted to work in secret fields, where security measures were a valid issue, and where there would be less reluctance on the part of scientists to enter the field. Recent returns indicate that in the medical sciences a total of 6 applicants for fellowships were received and a total of 12 applications in the biological sciences. In the field of physical sciences, applicants number 15. This contrasts with experience in previous years when applications numbered in the hundreds.

Left unresolved at this time is the problem of filling the very obvious need for the training of young scientists in these fields. Future progress in atomic energy from the medical and biological side related to the protection of human beings against the harmful products of atomic energy and atomic weapons, as well as the exploration of the beneficial aspects of atomic energy, depends upon a continuing supply of capable young scientists trained in the fundamental disciplines. Similarly, progress in the physical sciences, in the development of weapons, and in the development of reactors, depends upon a continuing supply of trained scientists.

It should be reemphasized that the issue at no time concerned the desirability or the undesirability of giving government aid to an occasional communist who might work his way in the atomic energy program in non-secret fields. The real question was whether the measures which must be

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Taken to guarantee absolutely that no communist ever received government aid, would not in the long run bring about a much greater injury to the scientific potential of the country. Recent events have indicated that the expressed views of the Commission and of its scientific advisors correctly interpreted the reaction of the academic and scientific community to an attempt to impose security measures in a field where security was not a legitimate issue.

ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The Danger of Excessive Use of Advisory Committees

The Committee in commenting upon the Commission's use of advisory committees stated that "This advisory committee device may lead to diffusion of responsibility, procrastination, or exploitation of well known names as a shield against criticism." It should be pointed out that the advisory committee for Biology and Medicine is an advisory committee only.

In the field which deals with the medical and biological problems created by the existence of atomic weapons and of the atomic energy industry itself, the state of man's knowledge is so fragmentary, and in many cases so confused, that frequent consultation with eminent scientists who have a broad view of the problem is essential. Progress toward the solution of these problems, in large part, depends upon the degree of interest which scientists and educators in universities, medical schools and hospitals throughout the country take in the problems of atomic energy. The responsibility for the implementation for a vigorous program directed towards the solution of these problems rests with the Commission. No groups of government scientists and administrators are in a position to consider themselves omniscient in fields as complex as those with which we deal. The frequent consultation with scientific leaders to obtain the whole hearted cooperation of the scientific and academic community is essential to the scientific progress of the nation and to the national security.

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