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Letter to NRC re Security

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Dear Sir:

It appears that from time to time the problem relating to security as defined in the Atomic Energy Act may be raised in regard to the Fellowship Program of the Atomic Energy Commission. This letter is to state the considered policy of the Commission regarding the several problems that might arise under this heading.

You will recall that in previous conversations between representatives of our agencies, we have stated that we do not feel that a man holding a fellowship should be subjected to a security clearance unless he is to have access to restricted data. By Public Law 585, entitled, "Atomic Energy Act of 1946" restricted data means all data concerning the manufacture or utilization of atomic weapons, the production of fissionable material or the use of fissionable material in the production of power. This statement is a doubly logical translation of the spirit of the program in which it is planned that a considerable number of

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through the period of
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universities, colleges
and clinics

the fellows will carry out the terms of their fellowship in facilities which are not ~~carrying out~~ ^{engaged} research and development ^{which would fall} under the Atomic Energy Act.

In addition, a number of the fellows will at the completion of their fellowship assume positions in research, development and training programs in civilian universities or industries which are utilizing atomic energy in the scientific fields but which are not engaged in research which is programmatic to the Commission. This policy should reap a bountiful harvest in that it will germinate wider propagation of applied research in this expanding field. Indeed a number of the important advances in the application of atomic energy to the welfare of mankind have been made in such facilities. The use of radioactive materials in treating human diseases, studying the movement of fertilizers through the soils and into plants, ~~in developing the refrigerated blood transfusion program of the Armed Forces,~~ are only a few examples of the contributions from these sources.

A natural corollary to this problem arises regarding the policy of the Atomic Energy Commission on a fellow or proposed fellow who because of previous or present beliefs, affiliations, or activity cannot obtain security clearance. The question is, "Should the Atomic Energy Commission recommend to the National Research Council that such a man be barred from an AEC fellowship?" It appears that this question penetrates into the broad philosophy of scientific endeavor and particularly to those conditions which are most likely to encourage maximum contribution from scientists to the Atomic Energy program.

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We feel that such an individual should be granted a fellowship and, accordingly, that his work should be carried out in facilities where he will not have access to restricted data as defined above.

The question penetrated deeply into the philosophy of scientific endeavor insofar as it concerns those conditions which are most likely to encourage maximum contribution from scientists to the program of the Commission. It also touches the problem as to whether a man's scientific output is affected by his personal beliefs.

In considering this general problem several questions arise. The Atomic Energy Project was developed through the keen and active participation of scientists who were conscious of their responsibility in the winning of a war. At termination of these hostilities, scientists were outspoken in their criticism of any proposal which would have this project continue as a military secret. With the appointment of a civilian Atomic Energy Commission, the active participation of scientists in the program has continued. If we should now introduce the proviso that a young scientist who desires to work in this field must have full security clearance, we would not only repel many men who are capable of making valuable contributions but we would also weaken measurably the present level of cooperation

by the general scientific community.

~~The next question to arise is in regard to the policy of the Commission to~~
an individual who because of past or present beliefs, affiliations or activities
cannot obtain security clearance. Should such an individual be denied a fellowship,
or should he be supported in work at an institution where there is no access to
restricted data, such as discussed above. It is our feeling that the latter
~~course is preferable and there are a number of reasons for such a policy.~~

~~(The scientific community in this world is, in essence, a unitarian ground~~
in which scientists convene for the interchange of information and ideas.] ~~The~~ ^A
primary concern is the value of the information at hand and not the political
beliefs and aspirations of the scientist who supplies it. There are in the annals
of science a number of instances where men whose beliefs were alien to those
presently acceptable have made matchless contribution, to the progress of science.

To this ground come men of diverse creeds and beliefs, many of which may be
alien to the prevailing tenets of the day. Scientist primarily strive for informa-
tion and in obtaining such information their paths might naturally cross those
of scientists whose creeds or beliefs are at question. There is a unique opportunity
r associations which for the sake of science are highly desirable, but which

for the sake of security restrictions are undesirable. In such instances, the question turns upon the value of the scientific advance available and not on the tenets of the individual.

Consider the scientist, an intelligent inquisitive individual whose first impulse is to investigate and critically evaluate any new idea which implicates the lives of mankind. We should never desire to stifle that inquisitiveness, but we must realize that such inquisitiveness may lead to associations and memberships which are presently alien. If one year a scientist makes an intensive study and becomes interested in the doctrines of Karl Marx and at the same time discovers a radioactive isotope that is useful in treating cancer, the use of the isotope would not be devaluated by his Marxist leanings

Scientists, then, seek and accept scientific contribution of merit from a number of sources in which the value of the scientific accomplishment is the primary concern. If the Atomic Energy Commission should, in contrast, shun certain contributions, the impact on the present cooperative relationship between scientists and the Commission might compromise the successful progress of our program. It is often difficult in a unit of time to assess the relative value of a report on scientific progress. Surely there were many scientists who did not realize when

Hahn and Strassman, while unknown in a Nazi state, split uranium, that their work would stimulate the development of this Atomic Energy Program. To maintain and expand this program, we must welcome all scientific accomplishment and do our utmost to stimulate it.

It is my understanding that in informal discussions, your authoritative representatives have strongly endorsed these policies.

The Atomic Energy Commission is deeply appreciative of the advice and assistance of the National Research Council in the development of this Fellowship Program. It is our sincere hope that through it we will expand the scientific horizons of this nation.

Yours sincerely,

UNITED STATES ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION

David E. Lilienthal
Chairman