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L. H. ...

*Morris*  
Dear Dr. Bradbury:

Your letter of 27 October 1955, relative to the future of the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory presents certain questions which we recognize to be of the utmost importance to the Commission. Your letter of 7 February is most helpful in providing us with further thoughts on these questions. Although we realize that we cannot forecast now all developments that will affect the future of Los Alamos, we believe we can provide you with some information which will be of assistance.

The first question in your 27 October letter asks in part, "What is the long-range future role, 10 to 20 years ahead, of a laboratory like Los Alamos?" LASL's primary mission, for as long as national security requires must continue to be that of furthering atomic weapons research and development. No other laboratory could or should take over the vital defense load LASL carries. Although the nation can hope for, and must continually strive for, international arrangements which will be insurance against the use of atomic weapons, there is no present evidence that effective arrangements will come into being overnight. Even when international agreements are reached, an extended period of trial is to be expected during which we prove their reliability. During such time our weapons research must be continued, intensified if possible. How long then LASL's primary role must remain in the weapons field we cannot foretell. We are convinced, however, that the period will not be short nor will the worth of that weapons effort to our national security diminish.

We appreciate that the problem of retaining talent in the face of offers from agencies engaged in other programs is a real one. This appreciation has prompted our authorizing your establishment of a number of non-weapons research programs. These include, of course, Sherwood; work in the challenging area of homogeneous and plutonium

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Dr. Norris E. Bradbury

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reactor technology; nuclear propulsion of missiles; and the basic research programs which are being conducted in the fields of physics, mathematics, chemistry, and radiological physics and radiation biology. The Commission intends to continue such non-weapons programs at Los Alamos and to explore with you periodically the authorization of additional ones. Such non-weapons programs naturally can be undertaken now only insofar as is possible without interfering with weapons work. However, should the need for weapons research diminish in the future, these non-weapons interests would be expected rapidly to expand and others to be assigned.

Your first question in the second part asks whether weapons laboratories should look forward to being closed down and, if not, what sort of laboratories should they be and what their responsibilities. With respect to long range responsibilities, I believe my earlier statements provide the best answer which can be given at the present moment. As to closing down, it is unthinkable to us that the fine laboratory facilities could be allowed to wither or its talented staff to disperse. It is our opinion that, for many years to come, there will remain basic research and applied research on advanced concepts which must be explored by National Laboratories. The passage of time should increase rather than decrease the avenues needing exploration.

The second question of your 27 October letter asks which areas in the reactor program should industry be expected to enter and which should be carried by AEC. We believe that, if there is to be most rapid advancement in the atomic power field, basic concepts which are proven should be developed and improved by industry along with the AEC. It is for this reason that we have sponsored so actively the power demonstration program and are making available to industry information it requires. We believe, however, that there will continue to be new and different approaches which, though showing possibility, would not be explored by industry at a satisfactory rate. Sherwood and your reactor development are perhaps the best examples presently available but others are known or will appear. No clear cut and lasting line can be drawn between those matters to be studied by the Government and those by industry. Industry must be encouraged to carry on such research as it is able and willing to accept. Yet if there is to be maximum advancement of our national atomic energy program, and such advancement is a necessity to the nation, Government laboratories must continue the more advanced study which industry cannot afford or lacks the resources to handle.

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Your last question asks how the laboratories can retain their vigor. This, too, is a difficult question to answer. The fact that the weapons laboratories have maintained and increased their morale and vitality in the ten years since World War II is a splendid tribute to the leaders of the laboratories and to the patriotism of their staffs. We must expect that civilian industry will continue to look to the National Laboratories as a source for the best talent in the atomic field. Some staff members will leave to take positions in industry leaving vacancies to be filled by the younger individuals. Loss of staff members is detrimental in many ways. Yet the fact that industry looks toward our laboratories is a recognition of the opportunity those laboratories offer. It is our intention to continue to provide our weapons laboratories with the most advanced facilities so that staff members and prospects will know of the benefit they individually can receive by service there.

As you can appreciate, planning for the longer range future of the weapons laboratories must involve broad policy questions, - ones that involve all of the National Laboratories. These questions are now insistently before us in large measure due to the industrial participation program called for by the Atomic Energy Act of 1954. The General Manager has under review ways and means to determine laboratory missions with a view toward recommending the longer range course of action which the Commission should follow. He intends to seek your advice and counsel in due course in this regard.

You can be assured of our continuing interest in the questions you have raised. We shall keep you informed of developments which may affect LANL. In the meantime, please feel free to call on or consult with us if you believe we can be of assistance.

Sincerely yours,

*Lucretia*

Chairman

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