

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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4 FEBRUARY 1946.

STATEMENT OF RECOMMENDATIONS ON RELEASE OF ATOM BOMB PROJECT
INFORMATION

NO SINGLE "SECRET"

A great deal has been said during the past six months about the "secret" of the atomic bomb and what should be done with it. It has, during this time, gradually become apparent that there really is no single "secret" of the atomic bomb but rather that innumerable pieces of scientific and technical information have been incorporated in its production.

NEW DISCOVERIES MADE

However, it has not been as fully appreciated perhaps that a great mass of scientific and technical information has been accumulated during the course of the research and developmental work on the bomb and that this is of enormous potential value to the peacetime science and industry of the country--not only in the field of nuclear science but in many other fields--if it can be made available. At the present time it is locked up in the files of the various academic and industrial organizations that did the actual work, and nobody is permitted to make any use of it except for the manufacture of atomic bombs. The Army wishes to modify the existing secrecy restrictions which were necessitated by the War, and desires to make useful scientific and technical information generally available, where this can be done without endangering our national security.

COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY GROVES

About three months ago, Major General L. R. Groves asked the scientists whose names appear below to act as a committee to formulate recommendations for a program on the release of scientific and technical information obtained as a result of the development of the atomic bomb. We have given careful consideration to this important and complex problem and have arrived at certain conclusions; these may be of public interest since many widely divergent views have previously been expressed on this matter.

GENERAL VIEWS OF COMMITTEE

The directive which this committee was requested to fulfill is to make recommendations as to the release of information in the interest of national welfare and of national security. In considering the problem we have not intended to minimize the supreme

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importance of the establishment of international controls, nor are we unaware of the fact that such controls, once established, would profoundly alter the requirements of national security. We have, however, thought that it would be useful to make all possible progress in releasing valuable scientific and technical information even at the present time when the elaboration of international controls is in its earliest stages. Our fundamental belief is that the release of basic scientific and technical information obtained during the development of the bomb would, over a sufficiently long term, not only enhance our national welfare but actually conduce to our national safety; however, we recognize that those charged with the security of the country may be led to the conclusion that the time is inopportune for the release of certain information of a special nature. Even so we believe that nearly everyone will agree that there is much that can be disclosed at the present time without danger to our military security. We are convinced that practicable and sound principles can be formulated which will make it appropriate to release such information at once provided the release is carried out with circumspection and discernment under competent and informed guidance. The needless withholding of new developments is bound to delay progress in technical fields, and hence to have serious consequences for our national welfare and security, while the disclosure of a great store of new and useful information will stimulate the growth and development of science and industry. It is to this end that we have primarily directed our recommendations.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEE

We have made recommendations to General Groves as to specific topics on which information should be released at once; most of these are of a broad scientific or general technical nature. We believe that there would be agreement that information on these subjects could be released promptly without danger to our military security. The release of such information should proceed as rapidly as feasible in order to promote a return to those conditions of free intellectual interchange under which scientific education can be carried on with dignity and success. Only under these conditions of unimpeded growth can science have its most healthy and flourishing development. There are other important topics mostly of a critical scientific nature on which we are convinced that an early release of information would be desirable, but release of which at this time is likely to be controversial. Hence we have not recommended that action on information of this type should be taken now. Finally there are topics which are for the most part of a military nature in the broadest sense--for example the design and availability of atomic weapons. On these we believe that release of information must be made a matter of general national policy to be determined by the Congress and the President.

SMYTH REPORT FIRST STEP

We regard the release of the Smyth Report by the Manhattan District last August as the first step in the establishment of a desirable and rational policy for the release of information and we wish to express our approval of its publication. Although the report was written before the principles outlined above had been formulated by this Committee it was nevertheless prepared in accordance with a carefully thought-out and conservative set of rules, devised for the purpose of presenting a general picture of the development of the atomic bomb rather than for the purpose of releasing useful scientific and technical information. Indeed there was very little scientific information given in the Smyth Report beyond that which had already been reported in the scientific literature. We believe that the time has now come for the War Department to take the next step and release additional information in order to foster the development of a strong and healthy science and of a vigorous and inventive industry.

ADDITIONAL ACTION

We have made recommendations to General Groves not only as to topics on which information should be released, but also as to administrative machinery which will assure a close control of the release in such a way as to prevent inappropriate disclosures. It is our clear conviction that the release of information in accordance with the policies outlined would be for the best interests of the country. We have been informed that the Manhattan District has recently taken steps toward implementing the recommendations we have made to General Groves. We wish to express our approval of this action and to urge that future action should be such as to permit and encourage the continuation of a policy for the control of information in the field of atomic energy which would be not only prudent, but also enlightened and forward looking.

R. F. BACHER

E. O. LAWRENCE

F. H. SPEDDING

A. H. COMPTON

J. R. OPPENHEIMER

H. C. UREY

RICHARD C. TOLMAN
Chairman, Committee on
Declassification

ROLES OF INDIVIDUAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN ATOM BOMB PROJECT

Dr. R. F. Bacher was chief of one of the most important and secret divisions of the work at Los Alamos where the bomb was developed. He has just rejoined the faculty of Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, where he is Professor of Physics.

Dr. A H. Compton was Director of the University of Chicago Metallurgical Project which developed the manufacture of plutonium. He is now Chancellor of Washington University in St. Louis.

Dr. E. O. Lawrence is Director of the University of California Radiation Laboratory which developed the electro-magnetic method of separating Uranium 235. He is also Professor of Physics at the University of California in Berkeley.

Dr. J. R. Oppenheimer was Director of the Los Alamos Laboratory where the atomic bomb was itself developed. At the present time he is Professor of Physics at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena.

Dr. F. H. Spedding is Director of the Iowa State College Laboratory which, among other things, developed the successful method for the production of uranium metal. Dr. Spedding is also Professor of Chemistry at the Iowa State College in Ames.

Dr. H. C. Urey was Director of the Columbia University Project which developed the diffusion method of separating Uranium 235. He is now a member of the Staff of the Institute of Nuclear Physics at the University of Chicago.

Dr. Richard C. Tolman was Vice-Chairman of the National Defense Research Committee and was also Scientific Advisor to General Groves. He has recently returned to the California Institute of Technology where he is Dean of the Graduate School.

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