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October 6, 1944

CLASSIFICATION CANCELLED

DATE 1-29-53
For The Atomic Energy Commission
H. J. Cantor
Chief, Declassification Branch

C112

Major General L. R. Groves
P. O. Box 2610
Washington, D. C.

Dear General Groves:

I am glad to transmit the enclosed report of Captain Parsons, with the general intent and spirit of which I am in full sympathy. There are a few points on which my evaluation differs somewhat from that expressed in the report and it seems appropriate to mention them at this time.

1. I believe that Captain Parsons somewhat misjudges the temper of the responsible members of the laboratory. It is true that there are a few people here whose interests are exclusively "scientific" in the sense that they will abandon any problem that appears to be soluble. I believe that these men are now in appropriate positions in the organization. For the most part the men actually responsible for the prosecution of the work have proven records of carrying developments through the scientific and into the engineering stage. For the most part these men regard their work here not as a scientific adventure, but as a responsible mission which will have failed if it is let drop at the laboratory phase. I therefore do not expect to have to take heroic measures to insure something which I know to be the common desire of the overwhelming majority of our personnel.

2. I agree completely with all the comments of Captain Parsons' memorandum on the fallacy of regarding a controlled test as the culmination of the work of this laboratory. The laboratory is operating under a directive to produce weapons; this directive has been and will be rigorously adhered to. The only reason why we contemplate making a test, and why I have in the past advocated this, is because with the present time scales and the present radical assembly design this appears to be a necessary step in the production of a weapon. I do not wish to prejudge the issue; it is possible that information available to us within the next months may make such a test unnecessary. I believe, however, that the probability of this is extremely small.

3. The developmental program of the laboratory, whether or not it has been prosecuted with intelligence and responsibility, is still far behind the minimal requirements set by our directive.

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This fact, which rests on no perfectionist ideals for long-range development, means that there must inevitably be some duplication of effort and personnel if the various phases of our program, - scientific, engineering and military, - are to be carried out without too great mutual interference. It is for this reason that I should like to stress Captain Parsons' remark that a very great strengthening in engineering is required. The organizational experience which the last year has given us is no substitute for competent engineers.

Sincerely yours,

J. R. Oppenheimer

cc: Captain Parsons