

NAVAL ORDNANCE LABORATORY  
Navy Yard, Washington, DC

12 September 1945

Dean H. V. Gaskill  
Iowa State College  
Ames, Iowa

Dear Dean Gaskill,

Since talking with you the other day I thought of several things I should have said. In the first place, I intended to tell you that the microphone parts that Ike made for us were very much the best we have had constructed. I know you will want to pass this on to Ike. In connection with the cheese, everything was O.K. except that these cheeses were unboxed, and one of them was a little damaged in transit. The way it worked out, Captain Schindler ate the damaged one before I had a chance to do anything about it. I gave away parts of mine to Dr. Shortley who has traveled extensively, and he said that these cheeses surpassed any Roquefort that he has ever eaten anywhere, including France.

I am inclosing a carbon copy of a letter I addressed to Woodrow.

I am continuing this letter with some further details of the situation as I see it. The whole situation is that the war has caused certain gross disparities and the post war adjustment is going to be difficult. This will be particularly the case in the physical sciences and in engineering, if one considers them separately. The demand for men of this type is going to be exceptionally heavy, and although I do not wish to discourage you in the slightest, I do not see how universities can fill their needs without markedly stepping up the salary scale. To be sure, I hear a great deal of talk of returning to universities to complete degrees; the real trouble is how the typical institution can be staffed to direct such work on the proper plane. If that were done, of course the presence of these men would offer a certain amount of help at the instructor level.

No serious person wants the universities stripped, as it were, of vital personnel, but I cannot see how any institution except those in special circumstances such as M.I.T., Harvard, and the University of Chicago, can be adequately staffed except by a rather sharp break with past attitudes. Perhaps I should be more specific:

(1) All of the larger government activities expect to increase their staff. In the NOL (perhaps the most modest of them all) a 50% increase is expected. A prominent member of the staff of NEL told me they expected a five-fold increase. This may seem absurd, it does leave me a little groggy.

but it should be remembered that this will constitute a reduction of perhaps to one-fourth in the overall military connected scientific work. I expect that this reduction is as much as will be permitted in view of the recent experiences the world has had.

(2) Many academically inclined men who are very able will return to institutions of higher learning. For instance, Mr. Hart is going back to Utah State at a reduction in salary which must be nearly one-half. This reminds me that Christensen (address: N.L.O., Radiation Laboratory, M.I.T., Cambridge, Mass.) will be available for employment upon his discharge from the Navy which should be soon. You might be interested in him for a soils position. I consider him rather able although his personality does not fully meet academic needs.

(3) I have made inquiries in connection with the national fellowships in physics. The evidence I have is that they will be established at a level considerably higher than most institutions formerly considered adequate (about \$1500 without duties).

(4) In view of the fact that colleges and universities have not yet adjusted to meet the situation, many graduate students are thinking of completing their graduate work while they are employed. The institutions in the neighborhood of Washington are going to be exceedingly popular, but I hear that the same trend is being followed elsewhere. None of us would, of course, accept this as a satisfactory solution, but many of these people have been married or have otherwise accumulated obligations which prevent them from willingly accepting a great reduction in income.

(5) My information on the attitude of industry is that while they will pay excellent salaries in individual instances, they are making a firm effort to return their salary scale to something within reason. Nevertheless, in every case that I know of in which a man has definitely decided to return to industry, the salary consideration has been rather high. (Vaile (\$7500) Armour Research Foundation, a P-3 in NOL, present salary \$3640, has been offered an increase of \$2000 in an industrial job that he will probably take.)

(6) In the long run, a great deal depends upon the level at which our national economy adjusts itself and upon such political factors as Congress and the people. I have stated above that I do not believe that the attitude of these two political entities will be such as to permit a reduction in our research for war by a factor greater than three or four. Further I believe, irrespective of political dogma, that there will be common agreement that the level of production and wages should not be allowed to fall to pre-war levels. Whether this can be accomplished or not is another question, but I am certain that the proper adjustment for universities is to work in the direction of an expanding budget. I realize how much pains and how much difficulty this will cause in state

institutions and others of limited endowment as far as that goes, but I am simply afraid that there is no alternative to this procedure.

I did intend to include some of this material in my letter to Dr. Woodrow, but on second thought I have written it to you alone. Please feel free to call on me at any time that I can help you.

Very sincerely yours,

J. V. Atanasoff

JVA/vpc