

ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION

MEETING NO. 866

11:00 a.m., Friday, May 22, 1953

Present

Henry D. Smyth
Eugene M. Zuckert

M. W. Boyer
Walter J. Williams

William Mitchell
Harold D. Anamosa
Brig. Gen. K. E. Fields
Gerard Smith

DELETED

CLASSIFICATION CANCELLED

~~OR CHANGED TO~~

BY AUTHORITY OF M. J. G. [signature]

BY R. Anderson DATE 4/14/79

1. Radioactive Fallout at Nevada Test Site

Mr. Smyth read excerpts of a letter from Mr. Lyle Borst, formerly employed on the reactor project at Brookhaven Laboratory and now at the University of Utah, in which Mr. Borst expressed concern about radioactive fallout resulting from the UPSHOT-KNOTHOLE series of tests. Mr. Smyth said that Mr. Borst's letter asked several technical questions concerning the basis for AEC radiation tolerance levels and safety assurances, and was further evidence of the concern in the minds of the population in the vicinity of the test site. The technical points

raised in Mr. Borst's letter would require preparation of a detailed reply by the Division of Biology and Medicine. (See AEC 652/2, subsequently circulated.)

3. Proposed Eleventh Shot

General Fields said that with the completion of the UPSHOT-KNOTHOLE series as originally scheduled, an early announcement would have to be made concerning the proposed additional shot if it were in fact going to be fired.

Mr. Zuckert said that the recent fallout incident at St. George, Utah, coupled with claims of livestock deaths and concern about the effects of atomic tests on weather made him fear the effect of testing a device at Nevada considerably larger than any previously fired there. A serious psychological problem has arisen, and the AEC must be prepared to study an alternate to holding future tests at the Nevada Test Site. In the present frame of mind of the public, it would take only a single illogical and unforeseeable incident to preclude holding any future tests in the United States.

Commissioners Smyth and Zuckert discussed with General Fields the probable danger involved in the high yield, the essentiality of holding the test immediately, and the estimated additional cost in money and time if the COBRA were tested at Eniwetok rather than Nevada. Mr. Smyth said he was convinced that there would be no great danger from the high yield of the proposed shot since the burst would be considerably higher than some of the previous shots and the test could be delayed until weather conditions were exactly right. However, he was concerned about the public relations aspects of the tests, especially in view of the St. George, Utah, incident and the large number of shots already fired.

Mr. Zuckert said that the AEC was involving the President in this matter by the request for Presidential approval of expenditure of the additional fissionable material, but pointed out that the letter of request did not inform him of the magnitude of the shot or the possible dangers involved. He felt, therefore, that Mr. Strauss should be promptly informed of the estimated yield of the proposed shot, the safety and public relations aspects involved, the need for an early test, and the alternatives to conducting the test at the Nevada site.

DELETED

Harold D. Anamosa
Acting Secretary

Approved by the Commission: July 10, 1953