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May 25, 1943

Dr. Enrico Fermi  
Metallurgical Laboratory  
University of Chicago  
Chicago, Illinois

(257)

Dear Fermi:

I wanted to report to you on the question of the radioactively poisoned foods, both because there are some steps that I have taken, and because Edward Teller has told me of the difficulties into which you have run.

When I was in Washington I learned that the Chief of Staff had requested from Conant a summary report on the military uses of radioactive materials and that Conant was in the process of collecting the material for that report. I therefore, with Groves' knowledge and approval, discussed with him the application which seemed to us so promising, gave him a few points of detail and some orders of magnitude. I raised the question of what steps, offensive and defensive, should be taken in this connection. It is my opinion, and it was also Conant's, that the defensive measures would probably preclude our carrying out the method ourselves effectively, and therefore I asked that in his report the question of policy be raised as to which of these lines we should primarily follow. This report, and you will undoubtedly have heard of it in other connections, is to go directly to General Marshall so that it will have authoritative if not expert consideration. I hope to discuss the question further when Conant visits here in ten days.

I also plan to go into the matter a little more deeply with Hamilton, although of course only on the physiological side. As you know, he has already made studies of the strontium which appears to offer the highest promise, and he expressed his willingness to look into these questions more fully. I think that I can do this without in any way indicating the nature of our interest, but it will be some time, perhaps three weeks, before I get to see him.

I understand the difficulties that you have had in getting this subject developed without telling anyone about it,

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DATE

1-29-53

For The Atomic Energy Commission