

BROOKHAVEN NATIONAL LABORATORY

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RECORD OF SUPPLEMENTARY PRESS CONFERENCE

FOR LONG ISLAND EDITORS

February 28, 1947

Participants: Dr. Lincoln R. Thiesmeyer, Executive Assistant to the Director, Brookhaven National Laboratory, Chairman; Dr. Lyle B. Borst, Leader of the Pile Project, Brookhaven National Laboratory; Dr. M. Stanley Livingston, Leader of the Cyclotron Project, Brookhaven National Laboratory; Mr. Lawrence R. Swart, Chief of the Personnel Division, Brookhaven National Laboratory; Mr. W. E. Kelley, Acting Manager, Atomic Energy Commission, Madison Square Area; and G. Edward Pendray, Public Relations Consultant for Brookhaven National Laboratory.

PENDRAY: Since Dr. Morse and the Trustees have had to leave for their meeting, Dr. Lincoln R. Thiesmeyer, Executive Assistant to the Director, will serve as Chairman of this portion of the press conference. Dr. Thiesmeyer.

THIESMEYER: Inasmuch as the overall purposes and general plans of the Brookhaven Laboratory have been covered at some length in the session that preceded this, I believe it is unnecessary for me to add any introductory comments. I, therefore, welcome your questions and will refer them to members of our staff who have remained as a panel to assist me in answering them.

QUESTION: Why doesn't the Laboratory modify some of the barracks here at the camp to provide housing for its staff?

THIESMEYER: A plan for doing so is under consideration at present. This is aimed, however, at providing only temporary housing to ease the situation until more permanent housing is available, perhaps through a construction program of some sort in the surrounding communities. The

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Laboratory is anxious, however, to avoid building a city here at the site. We want to convert this into a university type of atmosphere and to encourage our staff to find homes in the neighboring communities, just as they would around a large university.

QUESTION: Is there going to be any danger from radioactivity in the neighborhood?

THIESMEYER: No.

QUESTION: Hasn't too much been said on this already?

THIESMEYER: Overemphasis is worse than nothing at all. But it certainly is not amiss to point out that in the operations of the Laboratory we expect to take all the necessary precautions, not only to protect our own staff, but all the people in the surrounding territory.

QUESTION: What are the possible dangers of radioactivity to people?

BORST: You have seen at Bikini what one might say is a possible danger. The underwater explosion at Bikini produced the maximum -- the most difficult problem. At this laboratory there will be no comparable situation. We will confine all active materials which are produced until we are able to dispose of them without possibly injuring the surrounding communities.

QUESTION: Will you store them?

BORST: For a considerable period.

QUESTION: There is no danger in that?

KELLEY: I would like to add a word there. Dr. Borst frightened me when he started talking about Bikini. We are not dealing here with explosive materials. We are experimenting with all types of materials, but there is ---

QUESTION: All the elements will not be here that were at Bikini?

KELLEY: Not in the forms needed in order to create an explosion.

QUESTION: Is the product you will make here of an explosive nature?

KELLEY: No, we are not playing with explosives. I wish the point hadn't come up. It is very remote from the work to be done here.

BORST: We are doing fundamental research. We are planning to use a nuclear reactor (or pile) that contains some of the materials which under special processes can be made into a bomb. We are not making bombs. We are not processing materials in the manner necessary. We never have any intention of doing so. At Oak Ridge, at Hanford, Washington and at Chicago normal insurance rates prevail. We expect the same to be true at Breckhaven. This is not a hazardous occupation.

QUESTION: The work was conducted with considerable secrecy at Oak Ridge. That would prevent the information from going to insurance companies.

BORST: That is incorrect. The insurance companies have not changed their policy since the end of the war. There is no hazardous occupation connected with this work.

QUESTION: Outside of any chemical laboratory?

BORST: Not even a chemical laboratory.

QUESTION: Will your work affect radio reception in this area?

BORST: It won't affect radio reception.

QUESTION: Will it affect the natural drinking water?

BORST: No sir.

QUESTION: Will it affect the fishing industry?

BORST: No.

QUESTION: Will it affect the agricultural industry?

BORST: No. We are investigating all of these things. We are going to spend a lot of money to find out safe methods for handling the materials. We assure you that we are ---

QUESTION: Will there be any censorship imposed here?

BORST: Only military.

PENDRAY: You mean only on matters of a military nature.

KELLEY: Since so much of the basic information was developed during the war on the Manhattan project, these people here will need a lot of that information. It is still secret information. We will make it available to them for their use. There will always be censorship on those things. But as to what we are doing here, I don't foresee any censorship.

QUESTION: In line with the conference before -- are there any medical research men on the staff?

THIESMEYER: Not as yet. There will be. We expect to activate a Department of Medical Research.

QUESTION: Is the Carnegie Institution, Cold Spring Harbor, one of the laboratories working with you on the biological angles?

BORST: We have already contacted some of the biological institutions in the vicinity. We will contact more of them. Cold Spring Harbor, Woods Hole, the Bureau of Fisheries at New London and various other institutions will be invited to participate. We only have a small staff at the present time. We have not yet assembled a group of biologists. We have to have time to do this.

THIESMEYER: Our fundamental purpose is to provide facilities for the use of the public in this whole region. Cooperation between this institution and all the research institutions in this area is natural and is contemplated.

QUESTION: The materials which you will need from time to time, will you be flying any of them in? Do you contemplate using MacArthur Field?

THIESMEYER: That is a little difficult to predict. I see no reason

why we should not do that.

QUESTION: Have any plans been made?

THIESMEYER: Not specifically. If we need materials in a hurry, we will ask for shipment by air freight just as any other organization might do.

QUESTION: What arrangements will be made here for foreign scientists to come and study?

THIESMEYER: That question involves the policy of the Atomic Energy Commission which will govern our operations. We will certainly welcome exchange of information and personnel, if this is possible.

QUESTION: What is the situation at the present time on employment? Are you short of personnel here?

THIESMEYER: Mr. Swart, Chief of our Personnel Division, is on my left and can tell you what the situation is in that regard.

SWART: We are not short on them, but we are not long on them either. Fundamentally our policy is going to be to hire everybody we can from the local area. We don't want to increase the housing problem. If we were to bring in everybody from outside, we would. We want to use local people so far as possible. Our scientific staff will undoubtedly come from outside. I have been encouraged by the types of people we have been able to get so far. There are not millions of jobs available; but as we grow we are going to need more people and I think we will be able to hire most of them locally, outside of the scientific staff.

QUESTION: In what capacity would most of them be hired locally?

SWART: Clerks, typists and stenographers, to a certain extent. We are going to fill in the administrative staff, and we will need machinists, technicians -- a good many of these people with some basic training can be trained further and we intend to have a training program to train them.

We will need maintenance personnel, some guards and firefighters. We already have a staff of firefighters and of guards and there is a possibility we may need more. These needs are going to develop as we grow. We are committed to a policy of using local people if we possibly can. I can see no reason why we can't get the majority of our non-scientific staff within a radius of 25 or 30 miles.

THIESMEYER: Looking forward into the future, since one of the fundamental purposes is to train young scientists, there may be careers right here at Brookhaven for young people from this area who take their degrees in science at participating universities or elsewhere.

QUESTION: Are there other research centers such as this anywhere in the country?

THIESMEYER: One in the Chicago area, Argonne Laboratory, one in Berkeley, and another established at Clinton at Oak Ridge.

QUESTION: Are they of this size and doing the same thing?

THIESMEYER: Mr. Kelley, do you wish to comment on this?

KELLEY: They might be comparable in size, but their objectives will be different.

QUESTION: How did you happen to choose this place, because it was remote?

KELLEY: Because it was available. A specific inspection was made on the availability of just what we needed. We might have selected any of several locations in this general territory.

QUESTION: On the program here, will information be available from time to time?

THIESMEYER: We hope that most of the work we do will be available to the general public and we hope to have meetings just like this to which representatives of the press are invited to come and discuss with us our

progress and our plans.

QUESTION: To what extent will the project be self-contained as to services?

SWART: There won't be any such thing as laundries; bakeries and butcher-shops. We are not going to have people living here. We don't want a laboratory town. We are not going to run facilities such as you would find on a naval or army installation. We may use the local laundries for, maybe, some overnight guest places. The cafeteria operators will use suppliers. They will get their meat and groceries from outside. They won't have everything right on the area.

QUESTION: To what extent will you give out subcontracts to local industries? Machine shops and the like, if any?

BORST: I have looked into that a little bit around here and I will say that any machine shop capable of doing the work is going to get the job. These are special jobs -- high-precision instrument-maker's jobs. We prefer doing a job near us rather than send it off to Illinois, for example.

QUESTION: There will probably be quite a few transient visitors -- are there any hotel provisions here?

THIESMEYER: There are facilities here at the site for overnight guests which will be activated. We expect to have a good many visitors during the summer, especially, visiting scientists with and without their families.

QUESTION: They will all be taken care of at the base?

THIESMEYER: Only a relatively small number can be. We will have to depend on hotels in the neighborhood to help out in accommodating our visitors.

QUESTION: Will the site be protected in any other way than by guards? Do you need a fence around it to keep out trespassers?

THIESMEYER: I don't know of any reason why additional protection should be

necessary. We will protect Government property in the same manner as it has been done during and since the war.

QUESTION: Is there any particular reason why the big cyclotron is going to be located on the side of a hill?

LIVINGSTON: Just for the proper handling of the shielding of personnel from radiation. Personnel who are going to handle the machine, the maintenance and operating personnel, must be protected adequately. They are the ones nearby. If they are protected properly, nobody at greater distance can be in danger. This is done by burying the machine in a hill.

QUESTION: How wide is the radius of radioactivity?

LIVINGSTON: In the cyclotron it would be relatively unimportant, not observable at any considerable distances. I think that Dr. Borst has already outlined the methods of controlling that in the pile.

QUESTION: For the present you will get your electric power from what utility?

LIVINGSTON: The Long Island Lighting Company.

QUESTION: Ultimately will you be generating your own power here?

BORST: Atomic power.

QUESTION: As I understand it, you want to make the least amount of hocus-pocus secrecy about your project here. This is to be just another research organization, built as any other university might be?

THIESMEYER: We hope there will be a minimum of security restrictions and certainly no hocus-pocus about it.

Although I know you have other questions, I believe we must consider this conference adjourned. The bus to take press representatives to Patchogue is scheduled to leave in just a few minutes. We are pleased that you came and have been so keenly interested in this project. We hope to have you all with us again soon and repeatedly as we grow. This is your

Laboratory and we want you to feel at home here. I am sorry that this session must be abbreviated, but I assure you that this is only the first in a series of opportunities for you to meet with us and ask questions about us.

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