

The University of Chicago

Metallurgical Laboratory

April 7, 1942

MIDWAY 0800
EXT. 1290

Professor Leo Szilard
Department of Physics
Columbia University
New York, New York

Dear Professor Szilard:

This is to confirm your appointment with the Metallurgical Laboratory of the University of Chicago. Your salary will be \$550 per month, plus five dollars per diem for the days you are in Chicago.

While your residence and work will be in New York City, it will be necessary for to come here for certain conferences.

Sincerely yours,

J. C. Stearns

J. C. Stearns
Associate Director

JCS:MT

Young

September 23, 1942

From: L. Szilard
To: J. C. Stearns
Re: Monday Conspiracy

LIMITED

Dear Stearns:

I have thought a little bit more about the question in what way we would get the Technical Committee to take a more active role in the direction of our work and I feel that I ought to report to you these considerations. You may then find out whether the general attitude represented by them corresponds to the temper of the "conspiracy" which was gathered under your chairmanship last Monday.

Let me start off by saying what I think we should avoid. I think we should avoid any formal reorganization. I believe that Fermi should remain chairman of the official Technical Committee. In the past, whenever Fermi felt that he wanted to call a meeting, he called a meeting. This did not happen very often. It usually happened only when Fermi felt that the situation was so desperate that it had to be met by a "desperate" measure. These meetings were rare but they were quite successful. The last meeting of this type we had when it turned out that Alexander's metal was impure. Fermi called a meeting and we decided to ask Ruhoff to go to Beverly and stay at Beverly. This was entirely a decision of the Technical Committee; at first, when it was presented after the meeting, Compton had some misgivings but the recommendation was finally accepted. I see no reason why this procedure should be changed.

It is true that in addition to those cases when Fermi felt that a meeting ought to be called, there are many cases where others feel that a number of decisions ought to be taken which are not taken. The question

is, how can we arrive at those decisions and see to it that the decisions are carried out? A necessary condition is that if a decision is reached, it should be formulated in writing, and the signatures of the members of that Technical Committee should be attached to it.

This purpose could be achieved in various ways. It could be achieved, for instance, by means of a large number of individual conversations and telephone calls. This is possible, but impracticable. I would much rather see it handled in the following way:

If anybody in our organization feels that he is frustrated in his work, or that trouble will arise in the future because an issue is not properly discussed and decided, he should persuade one of the members of the Technical Committee that the question should be taken up by the members of the Technical Committee. I intend to propose to the members of the Technical Committee that we should ask two persons who were so far not associated with the Technical Committee to serve as "aids" and assist the members of the Technical Committee in this work. Any of our research men who prefer to approach these "aids" rather than a member of the Technical Committee can do so and a recommendation made ^{by} either of these "aids" should have the same effect as a recommendation made by any individual member of the Technical Committee.

Either of these two "aids" or any other member of the Technical Committee can gather in an unofficial meeting as many of the members of the Technical Committee as he can persuade to come. Whoever is thus responsible for calling such an "unofficial" meeting of the Technical Committee can take the chair himself or ask anybody of his choice to take the chair. Only certain days of the week, for instance, on Friday, 2: P.M., should there be a longer meeting of this sort. If the meeting

is to be held on any other day it should be held at 2 o'clock, and should, as a rule, not exceed 15 minutes. Whoever is responsible for the meeting will have little chance to end up with a written recommendation which carries the signature of the members of the Technical Committee unless he has prepared the meeting by informing the prospective participants 24 hours ahead just what he intends to discuss. For important decisions it may be advisable to have a week's notice. I do not propose that these should be rules. I merely say that the chances for ending up with a useful recommendation would be greatly enhanced if such an advanced notice were given.

There may be a divergence of opinion just how much time each of us should spend in meetings and similar activities, in order to get the necessary decisions. I personally feel that even if I wasted one hour a day by sitting in at meetings, if this would result in a material improvement in the mechanism of reaching decisions, I would prefer to waste an hour a day to the situation which we have had in the past, when we wasted months for lack of direction and decisions. However, this is for every man himself to decide, and I believe that if some member of the Technical Committee does not wish to spend much time in meetings, it will still be possible to keep him informed of what is going on by means of those two "aids" of the Technical Committee, whom I think should be asked to help in this task. They could explain to the members who were absent just what the discussion was about, what point had been reached, and if, then, any of these members of the Technical Committee feels that he cannot add his signature to the recommendation which has been adopted, he is free to ask for an "official" meeting of the Technical Committee under the chairmanship of Fermi. Such an official meeting will then be attended by all members of the Technical Committee.

If any of us should turn out to be a busybody, who calls meetings unnecessarily and without proper preparation, he will soon find that most of the other members of the Technical Committee remain absent from the meetings which he calls, and he will soon realize that his meetings serve little purpose, since he will still have to see the members of the Technical Committee individually in order to get their signatures which are necessary for an official recommendation.

It is also in my mind that if in the course of time, after having seen various members of the Technical Committee and either of the two "aids" act in the chair at meetings, we might find that one or the other is suitable and willing to act more and more in this capacity, and finally, the Technical Committee might ask him to devote his full time to this activity. I do not think it would be wise to make such a request to anybody at the present time. Perhaps the one or the other "aids" of the Technical Committee might turn out to be the best candidates for this type of activity some time in the future.

I wish to use this occasion to make a plea to all those who were assembled last Monday. If there is anybody among us who does not believe the chances for putting our house in order are good enough to make it worthwhile to try it and try hard, will he then regard himself as an honorary member of those Monday gatherings? His presence is most welcome, and he can help to keep the "conspiracy" informed of what is going on in the Technical Committee and the Planning Board. Will he give a chance to the rest of us to try to see what we can do?

A question has been raised by Zinn last Monday which I now believe is capable of a satisfactory solution. But before putting

forward a specific suggestion it is perhaps useful to try and clarify a more general question. It seems to me that the men who assembled last Monday, under your chairmanship, should not think of themselves as an illegally constituted "Senate" or "House of Representatives" of the Project, but rather as a "party" or, if you wish, a "conspiracy". We are all agreed, I believe, that if it is a "conspiracy" it should be an "open conspiracy".

We have to gather those who are more or less agreed on the main aims to start with, and we cannot gather in one meeting too many if we want to have a really democratic discussion in which every man may make a full statement of his views. The most important point is that we should be able to reach decisions and act upon these decisions. The consideration not to hurt anybody has to be secondary to this aim. We can resolve, however, not to hurt anybody unnecessarily, and in this spirit I wish to make the following proposal:

Let us have two meetings each week. Those who met last Monday should meet every Monday, and the other group leaders about equal in number should meet every Tuesday. Mr. Stearns and members and "aids" of the Technical Committee should keep the Tuesday gathering informed just as well as they should keep the Monday gathering informed about what is going on. From any formal point of view at least then there will be perfect equality, and in a week or two difficulties in character and temper of the two gatherings may disappear. It means additional work for Mr. Stearns and some members of the Technical Committee, but if we are not willing to put in additional work there is no hope for us and we may as well give up.

LIMITED

LIMITED

September 28, 1942

J. C. Stearns

L. Szilard

In Re: Monday Conspiracy.

Dear Mr. Stearns:

About a week ago it was agreed that we should report today on the progress made towards getting a functioning Technical Committee. I am enclosing the first 4 pages of a memorandum which I wrote to you on this subject early last week.

As you remember, last Monday, a plea was made for adopting a democratic approach in place of the authoritarian approach of the past six months. Confidence was expressed that the Technical Committee may redeem itself, and I made a strong plea for patience, since time is required if changes are to be brought about in a democratic spirit, and are to have the blessings of most, if not all, of those who are concerned.

It is with regret that I have to state the following:

Tuesday morning, following last Monday's meeting, Fermi proposed to Compton that he resign as chairman of the Technical Committee and that Allison take his place and act as full-time chairman. As far as I know no previous consultation with any member of the Technical Committee preceded Fermi's recommendation to Compton. I myself came to the conclusion that it would be well for Allison to free himself gradually of his duties as head of the chemistry division and devote more and more time to the dealings of the Technical Committee. To see to it that recommendations adopted by the Technical Committee should take effect, is almost a full-time job, and I know of no one who could do this job as well as Allison could, if he is willing to take it on. I had a conversation with Allison on this subject Thursday morning, but I wanted to wait until Wigner returned before putting such a proposal to all other members of the Technical Committee. I learned Thursday at noon that Fermi has resigned as chairman and that Allison has been appointed in his place. It seems to me that the manner in which this change came about is contrary to the intentions of last Monday's gathering, and I lack the conviction that it will lead to an active participation of all members of the Technical Committee in preparing the ground for decisions to be taken by that committee.

L. Szilard

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

DATE September 29, 1942

To Leo Szilard

DEPARTMENT

FROM J. C. Stearns

DEPARTMENT

IN RE:

There is some doubt in my mind as to the function of the Steering Committee. If this committee would allow the same personnel as now composes the Technical Council to serve as a more vitally helpful committee in determining policies regarding types of power plants to be built, then I should be in favor of it. For instance, if changing the name from Technical Council to Steering Committee means that such a committee may make recommendations regarding fundamental policies or changes in policies or assignment of personnel, then I favor this motion.

However, I do not see why Mr. Fermi should be chairman of this Committee when he does not desire to do such work.

If it were possible to relieve Mr. Allison of his present duties and he could devote his time to the affairs of the Steering Committee, then it seems to me that he should be made Chairman. I know that Mr. Allison is willing to make the personal sacrifice necessary to try to make this Committee work, and I also know that Mr. Fermi would not enjoy the type of work necessary to make it function.

The matter of resignation of you and Mr. Wigner from the Technical Council is, in my opinion, a personal matter on which I feel we have no right to advise.

JCS:MT

The University of Chicago

Metallurgical Laboratory

DATE 9-16-44

MIDWAY 0800

EXT. 1290

TO L. Szilard

DEPARTMENT

FROM J. C. Stearns

DEPARTMENT

IN RE: Document to Montreal

On September 4, 1944, MUC-LS 28 was returned to me. Colonel Metcalfe was of the impression that the marked sentence of copy No. 1 was objectionable from the point of view of patent disclosures.

I am returning these to you so that you may delete the marked sentence, and return the document to W. W. Watson.

JCS:eee

J.C. Stearns

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

DATE March 17, 1945

TO Mr. J. C. Stearns

DEPARTMENT

FROM Mr. L. Szilard

DEPARTMENT

IN RE:

About ten days ago at a meeting held in your office it was agreed that I should consult my own patent attorney concerning my legal obligations arising out of a patent agreement which I have with the United States Government. Colonel Metcalf informs me that he had written a letter to this effect about ten days ago to the Area Engineers Office. The permission requested has so far not reached me. Since I will be out of town the better part of next week a delay appears to be unavoidable.



LS:s

cc: Captain Lavender

Metallurgical Laboratory

P.O. BOX 5207
CHICAGO 80, ILLINOIS

May 11, 1945

BUTTERFIELD 4300

TO: Mr. J. C. Stearns

FROM: Mr. L. Szilard

As you know, my present contract with the Metallurgical Laboratory ends on June 30th of this year. It is beginning to get rather late for me to make plans if I am to leave the Metallurgical Laboratory on that date. Conversely, if I were supposed to continue here it would be urgent to decide whether a satisfactory arrangement can be found and whether the manpower problem involved can be solved on the basis of the men who are becoming available through the present reorganization or otherwise.

In view of this I have talked to Dr. Compton this morning and suggested that we try to arrive at a conclusion as soon as convenient.

Leo Szilard

cc: Zinn
Daniels
Franck
Bartky
Hilberry
Compton

The University of Chicago

Metallurgical Laboratory

May 17, 1945

508 C
P. 30
Szilard

MIDWAY 0800
EXT. 1290

TO: Mr. J. C. Stearns

FROM: Mr. L. Szilard

MUC-LS-66
This document consists of 1
pages and 0 figures
No. 1 of 2 copies, Series A

I understand that you have in your office a patent application and of which I am supposed to be the joint inventor/which you intend to present to me for my signature. Will you please pass this application on to Mrs. Sullivan, my secretary, so that I may study this application and decide whether it contains any inventions and if so, whether I am the joint inventor thereof. I am sure you realize that without careful study and scrutiny of this application I am unable to state under oath that I am its joint inventor and I am unable to decide whether the application is properly drawn up. If you prefer to hand this application direct to me rather than to my secretary I should be pleased to receive it.

Leo Szilard

ls:ls

METALLURGICAL LABORATORY
P. O. Box 5207, Chicago 80, Ill.
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

MAY 17 1945

A.M. P.M.
7 8 9 10 11 12 1 2 3 4 5 6

Metallurgical
laboratory

Copied in quadrip. &
given to Dr. Szilard
5/29/45

May 19, 1945

To: L. Szilard

From: J. C. Stearns

I do have a patent application of which you are purported to be the joint inventor in my office. You have requested that I pass this application to Mrs. Sullivan, your secretary, or that I hand it directly to you, under which conditions you would be pleased to determine 1) if it contains any inventions, 2) whether you are joint inventor thereof, and 3) whether the application is properly prepared.

If you will come to my office and peruse the application there I should be glad to hand the application to you for such a purpose. I fully realize and appreciate how meticulous and painstaking you are in these matters and therefore wish to cooperate in the fullest in enabling you to make the study required subject to the limitations which are placed upon me.

J. C. Stearns
Laboratory Director

JCS:ccc

Blind cc:
AHCompton
HEMetcalf

*Copied in quadrap. &
given to Szilard
8/29/45*

C

RESTRICTED
Metallurgical Laboratory

P.O. BOX 5207
CHICAGO 80, ILLINOIS

BUTTERFIELD 4300

Agreement

May 28, 1945

To: L. Szilard

From: J. C. Stearns

I am extending to you an invitation to remain with the Metallurgical Laboratory of the University of Chicago at your present salary for the year beginning July 1, 1945.

I am keenly aware of how essential it is to have the services of scientists of imagination and ingenuity connected with this Laboratory. Your counsel and recommendations have been and will continue to be an inspiration to me and to many others at this Laboratory.

In a few days you will receive a supplement to your contract from the Director of Personnel. I should be glad to talk further with you regarding any questions you have regarding conditions of employment at a time which is convenient to you.

J. C. Stearns

J. C. Stearns
Laboratory Director

cc: Wayne Johnson

This document contains information affecting the national defense of the United States within the meaning of the Espionage Act, U. S. C. 50; 31 and 32. Its transmission or the revelation of its contents in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited by law.

eee

RESTRICTED

Metallurgical Laboratory

P.O. BOX 5207
CHICAGO 80, ILLINOIS

BUTTERFIELD 4300

June 5, 1945

MUC-*LS-67*
This document consists of 1
pages and 0 figures
No. 1 of 2 copies, Series 10

TO: Mr. J. C. Stearns

FROM: Mr. L. Szilard

Your note dated May 19th reached me just when I was about to go out of town. On my return I called at your office in order to peruse the patent application to which your note refers. Your secretary was, however, unable to show me a copy of this application, saying that your office did not have it any longer.

Sincerely,

Les Szilard

ls/ls

*Metallurgical
Laboratories*

METALLURGICAL LABORATORY
P. O. Box 5207, Chicago 80, Ill.
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
Szilard
JUN 6 1945

4327

(bk 21c)

A.M.
7/8/10/11/12

P.M.
1/2/3/4/5/6

*Copied in quadrep. +
given to Dr. Szilard 8/29/45*

June 8, 1945

To: L. Szilard

From: J. C. Stearns

It is true that my office no longer has the patent application. I am certain that your own personal regret in not being able to peruse this patent application cannot exceed my own. It is, however, very gratifying for me to know that the solution I had suggested to you seemed to be one in which you concurred--at least temporarily.

Would you care to assure me that if the application is again sent to me for securing your signature that you would come to my office, peruse the same with the intent of signing if the conditions you specified in your former memorandum are met?

Cordially yours,

J. C. Stearns
Laboratory Director

...

*Copied in quadruplicate
8/28/45 + given Dr. Szilard.*

L

June 5, 1945

MUC-LS-67
This document consists of 1
pages and 0 figures
No. 2 of 2 copies, Series A

TO: Mr. J. C. Stearns

FROM: Mr. L. Szilard

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Sincerely,

ls/ls

Metallurgical Laboratory

P.O. BOX 5207
CHICAGO 80, ILLINOIS

May 19, 1945

BUTTERFIELD 4300

To: L. Szilard

From: J. C. Stearns

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If you will come to my office and peruse the application there I should be glad to hand the application to you for such a purpose. I fully realize and appreciate how meticulous and painstaking you are in these matters and therefore wish to cooperate in the fullest in enabling you to make the study required, subject to the limitations which are placed upon me.

J. C. Stearns
J. C. Stearns
Laboratory Director

JCS:eee

Metallurgical LaboratoryP.O. BOX 5207
CHICAGO 80, ILLINOIS*Agreement*

BUTTERFIELD 4300

CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT

EXTENSION OF PERIOD OF EMPLOYMENTSUPPLEMENT No. 2June 6, 1945
(Effective Date)Mr. Leo SzilardMetallurgical LaboratoryDear Mr. Szilard:

This letter will evidence the fact that a certain Contract of Employment between the Metallurgical Laboratory of The University of Chicago and yourself, dated May 1, 1943, is hereby amended to provide for the extension of the term of employment therein provided for the additional period beginning July 1, 1945, and ending June 30, 1946.

The said contract as herein amended shall remain in full force and effect for the extended term thereof.

Very truly yours,

The University of Chicago
METALLURGICAL LABORATORY
J. C. StearnsDirector

ACCEPTED: with the proviso that I shall be free to terminate this contract at four (4) weeks notice.

June 14, 1945Leo Szilard

Employee

By Wayne W. Johnson
Wayne W. Johnson
Director of Personnel

Metallurgical Laboratory

P.O. BOX 5207
CHICAGO 80, ILLINOIS

BUTTERFIELD 4300

June 8, 1945

To: L. Szilard

From: J. C. Stearns

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Would you care to assure me that if the application is again sent to me for securing your signature that you would come to my office, peruse the same with the intent of signing if the conditions you specified in your former memorandum are met?

Cordially yours,

J. C. Stearns
J. C. Stearns
Laboratory Director

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