

Corrected Nov 12th - 45 L. Filard
L.H.

6653
History Box

I have to apologize for not having prepared a speech for this occasion, but only after my colleagues and I met today in Washington were we able to discuss what aspect of the subject each one of us might cover. We all are interested in the May-Johnson Bill, but it is not possible to discuss this Bill or any other Bill until it is made clear what the purpose is for which the proposed legislation is intended. Let me, therefore, say what I believe to be the real problem for which a solution must be found and you will see that that problem cannot be solved by an Act of Congress alone.

It seems to me that the existence of the atomic bomb will profoundly affect the military position of the United States and that it will affect her position not favorably but adversely. You can easily judge this for yourselves if you will consider the following. As long as the chief weapons of aggression ~~have been~~ ^{were} tanks, guns, and airplanes the United States could easily out-produce any other nation or combination of nations. If the United States produced ten times as many tanks, guns, and airplanes as another country, ~~its~~ ^{her} military position could be considered strong. When it comes to atomic bombs the United States has again an advantage at the outset. At first, if she has more atomic bombs this means that she could destroy more cities of another country. But if we get into an armament race, very soon we will have enough bombs to be able to destroy all the cities of a potential enemy. Additional bombs would then have very little value to us. There are no more worthy targets for them after we have enough bombs to cover all the cities of the "enemy". Therefore, if we have plenty of bombs and our "enemy" has plenty of bombs ~~it will not be of great advantage to us~~ ~~we will derive no great advantage of having ten times as many bombs as they have.~~ When this stage is reached, (and it can be reached very fast, in the course of an armament race,) when two countries have as many bombs as

Further meeting

they can use their relative strengths will no longer be determined by the number of bombs they have but rather by the number of cities which they have exposed to destruction. In the United States 30 million people live in cities of over 250,000. Altogether 70 million people live in metropolitan areas. When the armament race reaches the stage where ~~both~~ this country and other countries have plenty of bombs ours will be one of the more vulnerable nations. In the long run it is not possible for us to win an armament race. We can do something in order to avoid losing the armament race, *but* the main thing that we can do in this respect is to relocate 30 to 70 million people. If we should do this, *our position* ~~opposition~~ may not be weaker but it still will not be stronger than the position of other large countries which have plenty of bombs. I ~~do not~~ believe that it is ~~impossible~~ to relocate 30 to 70 million people. If we are willing to spend 15 billion dollars a year for ten years we might very considerably decrease our vulnerability by decentralizing our cities. If we do that we may avoid losing the armament race, but that does not mean that we can win such an armament race.

From this remark it would seem that the problem which faces us cannot be solved on the domestic scale; it has to be solved on an international or world scale. I am not saying that it can be solved on a world scale either, but we have to try it. If we have tried it and failed we may be faced with a new situation. Up to now we have not tried it.

Now if you are willing to adopt this point of view that we ~~really~~ have to make an attempt to solve this problem on an international scale then it is quite clear that sooner or later we will have to establish collaboration in this field of atomic energy with other nations. With this in view, I am *disturbed* ~~worried~~ about the independence *from the Government* of the Commission from the Government which the May-Johnson Bill proposes to set up than I am about any of the other provisions of the Bill.

The greatest danger that we as a nation face is a War which may arise more or less automatically from an armament race - a war which no nation really wants. Even if we feel that the ^{general} problem of war cannot be solved in the next two or three years at least we ^{will} want to avoid the additional danger of war which arises out of the existence of atomic bombs. It is not possible to discuss here the various ~~matters~~ ^{methods} by which this could be attempted, but most of these attempts would involve collaboration with other nations in the field of atomic energy as well as other fields. If the ^{government of the} United States should decide in favor of such a collaboration, under the May-Johnson Bill the President would presumably issue a Directive to this effect to the Commission, and it would be for the Commission to give effect to this directive by issuing appropriate rules and regulations. Now this Commission is practically independent from the Government. It has nine members who will meet at least four times a year and who are supposed to "run the show." The members of the Commission cannot be removed by the President except for cause. If the President wants a majority on the Commission he may have to serve two terms before by means of new appointments he can secure such a majority. ~~The/President/cannot/~~ ~~remove/a/member~~ Even if the President saw his way to remove some of the members in an emergency he ~~may~~ ^{might} not know which member to remove on account of the secrecy under which this Commission would operate. In the circumstances our relations with other nations might suffer because the members of the Commission have a different idea about what our foreign policy ought to be than the President. If this were the case, the danger would be great that the rules and regulations issued by the Commission would create the impression that we as a nation do not want to collaborate with other nations in the field of atomic energy. I am not inventing something that might ^{happen} ~~help me~~ in the future so much as I am thinking of similar events that have happened in the past.

During this war we have received directives which I believe originated with President Roosevelt instructing us to collaborate with ^a ~~the~~ joint British-Canadian project set up in Canada. Rules and regulations issued by the Manhattan District rendered this collaboration ineffective. I do not believe that we should create in the future a Commission which is so independent from the Administration that it can easily counteract, by means of rules and regulations, the directives of the Administration.

You may raise ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ the question, "What shall we do if in spite of sincere efforts or attempts to avoid an armament race should fail?" There will be those who will then begin to think about the possibility of waging a war within the next three or four years before other nations have bombs that will threaten our security. ~~While~~ ^{While} I personally find it difficult to get enthusiastic about this "solution", I recognize that from the purely logical point of view this possibility will have to be considered if all other methods fail. But however that may be right now this possibility can hardly ^{attention} take first place in our ~~attempt~~. The May-Johnson Bill attempts to solve the difficult problem of setting up machinery which can be used for both purposes, i.e., making preparations ^{for a preventive} ~~to prevent a~~ war and establishing cooperation with other nations in order to avoid an armament race. If you wish to have machinery which can serve both of ^{those} ~~the~~ purposes, you make it very difficult for anyone to provide you with a design for ~~such a~~ your machinery. I am not saying that it is impossible to design machinery which could serve well either of these two purposes but ~~it~~ in my opinion the May-Johnson Bill as it is before us cannot serve either purpose well.

In discussing the Bill further let me limit my remarks to one single point, i.e., the question of secrecy. The question is what kind of information do you want to have kept secret? No doubt we might have to keep secret, even thought we may not like to do so, technical information relating to ^{the} ~~the~~ process

of manufacture of fissionable materials and the construction of bombs. There is, however, another kind of information which you may or may not wish to keep secret and that is information which has neither scientific nor engineering character but has political implications. Let me give you an example. The greatest secret during the war was the fact that atomic bombs could be made. Under war conditions it was perhaps legitimate to keep this information secret. But I remember that at the approach of the San Francisco Conference, many of my friends became exceedingly uneasy because they felt that the people and the delegates of the United States to San Francisco could not live up to their obligations unless they knew that atomic bombs would exist. How could they take a stand on the question of the Charter if they did not know ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ^{with} ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ what the situation will be/which with the world will have to cope? As a result of representations made by a number of scientists which reached President Roosevelt, the President asked that ~~Stettinius~~ Stettinius be informed of the existence of the Bomb, and I wouldn't be astonished to hear that our delegation to San Francisco also knew of the bomb. If we go on after the war keeping information of such general type secret from the American people we prevent the American people from discussing intelligently questions of our foreign policy on the basis of facts. For instance if we succeeded in making bombs which could destroy 400 square miles in place of the 4 square miles, destroyed by the bomb//detonated over Hiroshima, would you wish to keep such a fact secret from the American people, or would you want them to know about it? ~~The fact that such a bomb exists is one kind of information which could be disclosed while the methods for making this bomb and its construction could be kept secret if the Administration desired to do so.~~ I think Congress will have to ^{in peace time} decide whether it wants to give the Administration the right to withhold information of a non-technical nature which ^{has} ~~is~~ far reaching from political implications. In my opinion, if bombs ^{could} ~~can~~ be made which can destroy hundreds of square miles this would be a fact which people would have to know in order to

know how to vote. *There would be no need for them to know how such counts are constructed.*

Perhaps there will be an opportunity later on during the discussion to mention other points connected with the Bill which will have to be discussed if we want to understand what this Bill means - what it means to scientists ~~but/upte/i/~~ and more important what it means to the country as a whole.

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