

IN CONFIDENCE

SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL

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Your reference

Our reference LCWH/vjd

24 June 1975

Dear *Sam*

## LASER FACILITY

This note is to confirm my telephoned report to Eric Sampson yesterday afternoon.

Paul Williams and I attended a discussion yesterday morning at AERE involving:

Dr J H McNally, Assistant Director for Laser and Isotope  
Separation Technology, Division of Military Application,  
US ERDA.

Dr A Narath, Sandia Laboratory, ERDA

Mr J Hulme, Scientific Attache, US Embassy

Dr W C Marshall (part-time)

Dr W M Lomer

Dr C Whitehead

Both McNally and Narath have some indirect responsibility for the application of the classification guide in the laser area. The purpose of the meeting was to inform them about our joint plans. This we did before Walter joined us, and he told them of the recent D En letter. He considered that the letter did not reflect the policy he had understood would be followed and that there must have been a breakdown in communication within D En. At the same time, he did not think much could be done now to recover the situation (but this view is not quite consistent with the position he adopted later and which is described below).

We discussed the Rochester programme. The ERDA people considered that Professor Lubin would be able to continue with his unclassified programme in laser fusion studies - in passing it was mentioned that his people had developed

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clever analytical solutions to compression system design problems and did not need access to the classified codes. (The ERDA codes are classified because they contain weapons data for normalisation, etc). ERDA are enthusiastic about the Rochester programme as a competitor to the national laboratories. However, we should note -

- a) Lubin has security clearance, and
- b) ERDA will monitor the programme and, if a proposal is made to do classified work, the proposer can be referred to one of the national laboratories.

It emerged that in interpreting the classification guide, ERDA will generally tend to be more restrictive than the text of the guide might suggest. Anything judged to be relevant to weapons will be classified and McNally and Narath agreed with Walter that this meant that anything involving targets which were not spherically symmetric would tend to be classified (asymmetry of illumination is not a sensitive issue). This conclusion was contrary to the one previously drawn by Walter on examining the new guide, and he believed it meant that the SRC could not operate a satisfactory stand-alone programme. I said that if the SRC proposed such a programme, it would be solely for unclassified work, but the concern felt by Walter (and supported by the two visitors) was that clever experimenters and theoreticians simply could not resist devising ways to improve the compression efficiency of their pellet systems and that this would immediately lead to studies relevant to weapons design, even (or especially) when they had only a modest laser facility.

Walter's final opinion was that MOD were unlikely to agree to an SRC only facility, even with a monitored scientific programme; that an SRC/MOD collaborative programme was unthinkable; and that the only satisfactory alternative was a joint programme with the AEA as already proposed but now rejected by D En. He thought that consideration of the joint proposal has been mishandled in Whitehall and proposed to write to someone (Press?) to draw attention to the impasse he felt now existed. I was non-committal in my comments and asked him to contact you as soon as possible.

McNally and Narath asked that the views they had expressed on security should not be attributed.

Yours sincerely

Leo

L C W Hobbis

P.S. I spoke to Walter again later in the afternoon. He agreed not to write to anyone before talking with you.

cc Dr G H Stafford