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UNITED STATES
ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

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August 14, 1956

Dear ~~Dr. Bradbury~~ Norris:

Your letter of 27 October 1955, relative to the future of the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory presents certain questions which we recognize to be of the utmost importance to the Commission. Your letter of 7 February is most helpful in providing us with further thoughts on these questions. Although we realize that we cannot forecast now all developments that will affect the future of Los Alamos, we believe we can provide you with some information which will be of assistance.

The first question in your 27 October letter asks in part, "What is the long-range future role, 10 to 20 years ahead, of a laboratory like Los Alamos?" LASL's primary mission, for as long as national security requires must continue to be that of furthering atomic weapons research and development. No other laboratory could or should take over the vital defense load LASL carries. Although the nation can hope for, and must continually strive for, international arrangements which will be insurance against the use of atomic weapons, there is no present evidence that effective arrangements will come into being overnight. Even when international agreements are reached, an extended period of trial is to be expected during which we prove their reliability. During such time our weapons research must be continued, intensified if possible. How long then LASL's primary role must remain in the weapons field we cannot foretell. We are convinced, however, that the period will not be short nor will the worth of that weapons effort to our national security diminish.

We appreciate that the problem of retaining talent in the face of offers from agencies engaged in other programs is a real one. This appreciation has prompted our authorizing your establishment of a number of non-weapons research programs. These include, of course, Sherwood; work in the challenging area of homogeneous and plutonium

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~~PER DOE REVIEW JAN. 1973~~

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AUTHORITY: DOE/OC
NAME: Dean Thomas
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