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An Open Letter to the President and the Congress
of the United States of America

We, the undersigned, address you in our capacity as private citizens concerned about the future of our country and of civilization itself if faced by another war. We have studied and discussed the atomic-energy legislation now before Congress and have formulated such conclusions as we are able to reach for whatever use you and the country at large may wish to make of them.

Almost any sacrifice to bring about international responsibility is justified.

We believe that World War II has demonstrated with fearful clarity the urgency of intelligent, informed, persistent and sacrificial effort by all nations to prevent the occurrence of a still greater catastrophe.

We believe with Niels Bohr that "only international control of every undertaking which might constitute a danger to world security will in the future permit any nation to strive for prosperity and cultural development without constant fear of disaster."

We believe that scientific facts cannot be kept secret for long, and that other nations will discover how to make atomic bombs within a few years. Unless that short time is used to establish international control, an armament race may ensue with results even more disastrous than they have been in the past.

We believe, therefore, that the United States should take the lead in negotiations seeking to establish this international control with its appropriate inspection procedures.

The first step is national control. Immediate action is necessary.

We believe that national control must precede international control. Therefore, a national Commission should be set up immediately to execute this control.

We believe that additional functions of this Commission should be (1) to advise in the formulation of policies and procedures for international control, and (2) to protect and foster scientific research on atomic energy and its utilization for non-military purposes in order that the achievement of nuclear fission may prove a boon to mankind instead of a menace to civilization.

We believe that this Commission must have broad powers. We say this in spite of the fact that the very idea of control and secrecy would be intolerable to all of us if such restrictions were not necessary. We accepted controls during the war as essential to victory; we believe that we must now accept controls as equally essential to peace.

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The composition of the Control Commission is of utmost importance.

We believe that the nature of the phenomena attending the release of atomic energy and its exploitation makes it mandatory that the Control Commission be chosen from Science as well as from Industry and Government. Moreover, only a Commission on which science is adequately represented can fairly judge the degree to which freedom of scientific research needs to be restricted in the national interest.

We believe, moreover, that the personnel of the Commission should represent in knowledge, integrity, and ability the best that is available without regard to political affiliation or official position, and that they should approve international control as an ultimate objective.

We believe that, while the Johnson-May Bill in its present form may require substantial modification, this should not be allowed to prevent prompt and decisive action.

We pledge support to an all-out effort in the cause of international cooperation.

We believe that you, truly representing the desire of the American people, are exerting yourselves to the utmost in the cause of a new world order of international cooperation in which the menace and fear of war will be eliminated. To this end we pledge our support.

We believe that you will not fail us. You will not fail a world which is looking to you for courageous leadership.

November 8, 1945

Walter S. Adams

Director, Mount Wilson Observatory

C. D. Anderson

Professor of Physics,
California Institute of Technology

Fern Aronow

Research Assistant,
California Institute of Technology

Carver

Graduate Student in Biology,
California Institute of Technology

Harold D. Babcock

Astronomer, Mt. Wilson Observatory

Hance W. Babcock

Research Staff Member,
California Institute of Technology

Richard H. Badger

Associate Professor of Chemistry,
California Institute of Technology

John E. Barber

Associate, California Institute of
Technology, Executive, Consolidated
Steel Corporation, Ltd.

Arthur L. Cohen

Research Fellow in Biology,
California Institute of Technology

Richard Cohen

Junior Physicist, Contract OEMsr-1131,
California Institute of Technology

David S. Collins

Research Staff Member,
California Institute of Technology

Marathy Coase

Research Assistant in Biology,
California Institute of Technology

Stanley Corrain

Research Assistant in Aeronautics,
California Institute of Technology

Charles Cow

Graduate Student in Physics,
California Institute of Technology

Hardin Craig, Jr.

Assistant Professor of History,
California Institute of Technology

Howard Hugh Crawford

Graduate Student in Physiology,
California Institute of Technology

Norma B. Cuthbert

Head Cataloguer, Department of Manuscripts,
Huntington Library

James W. Dally

Instructor in Mechanical Engineering,
California Institute of Technology

William H. Davenport

Lecturer in English, California
Institute of Technology. Associate
Professor of English, University of
Southern California.

Godfrey Davies

Member, Research Group,
Huntington Library

Leverett Davis, Jr.

Research Staff Member,
California Institute of Technology

A. D. Dekker

Research Assistant in Chemistry,
California Institute of Technology

J. H. Duff

Research Assistant in Biology,
California Institute of Technology

James W. M. Durham

Associate Professor of Physics,
California Institute of Technology

Hay E. Eason

Associate Professor of English,
California Institute of Technology

Stanford S. Gordon

Alumnus, California Institute of Technology. Physics Teacher, Los Angeles Schools

Hermione Grant

Research Assistant in Biology, California Institute of Technology

H.M. Greene Jr.

Graduate Student, California Institute of Technology

Althaag L.

Professor of Bio-organic Chemistry, California Institute of Technology

Arant Curricula

Associate Professor in Physiology, California Institute of Technology

Philip Hayward

Research Assistant in Chemistry, California Institute of Technology

A Hollander

Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering, California Institute of Technology

Mark Holzman

Radio Engineer, California Institute of Technology

Milton S. Humason

Astronomer, Mount Wilson Observatory

J Stanley Johnson

Alumnus, California Institute of Technology. General Manager, Holly Heating Co.

Louis W. Jones

Associate Professor of English and Registrar, California Institute of Technology

Alfred N. Joy

Astronomer, Mount Wilson Observatory

C.K. Judy

Professor of English Language and Literature, California Institute of Technology

Ernest H. Kaylor

Instructor in Physiology, California Institute of Technology

Edith Kent

Research Secretary, Huntington Library

Robert T. Knapp

Associate Professor of Hydraulic Engineering, California Institute of Technology

Walden H. Kunz

Research Assistant, California Institute of Technology

J. Malcolm Miller	Research Assistant in Chemistry, California Institute of Technology
Clayton S. Millikan	Professor of Aeronautics, California Institute of Technology
Robert A. Millikan	Emeritus Professor of Physics, California Institute of Technology
Lillian V. Morgan	Student of Biology, California Institute of Technology
Thomas H. Morgan	Emeritus Professor of Biology, California Institute of Technology
William B. Munn	Emeritus Professor of History and Government, California Institute of Technology
Kenneth R. Mussen	Radio Technician, California Institute of Technology
R. R. Martel	Professor of Structural Engineering, California Institute of Technology
H. Gusta Vetter	Professor of Physics, California Institute of Technology
Seth B. Nicholson	Astronomer, Mount Wilson Observatory
W. D. Nickerson	Property Accountant, California Institute of Technology
Carl Neumann	Professor of Organic Chemistry, California Institute of Technology
Esther Naitaki	Technical Assistant, California Institute of Technology
Haydee Noya	Cataloguer, Department of Manuscripts, Huntington Library
Richard M. Noyes	Research Fellow in Chemistry, California Institute of Technology
Ruth Oliver	Cataloger, Printed Books, Huntington Library
G. Oppenheimer	Research Assistant in Biology, California Institute of Technology
J. R. Oppenheimer	Professor of Theoretical Physics, California Institute of Technology



<i>Ernest E. Siller</i>	Associate Professor of Airplane Structures, California Institute of Technology
<i>Robert M. Sill</i>	Curator of Rare Books, Huntington Library
<i>Edward Philip Sheridan</i>	Instructor in English, California Institute of Technology
<i>David P. Shoemaker</i>	Research Assistant in Chemistry, California Institute of Technology
<i>Nathan R. Silk</i>	Research Assistant, California Institute of Technology
<i>Richard C. Sill</i>	Research Engineer, Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology
<i>Royal W. Sorenson</i>	Professor of Electrical Engineering, California Institute of Technology
<i>Conway W. Snyder</i>	Research Fellow in Physics, California Institute of Technology
<i>Roger Stanton</i>	Assistant Professor of English, California Institute of Technology
<i>James Allen Sterling</i>	Professor of History, California Institute of Technology
<i>H. J. Stewart</i>	Assistant Professor of Aeronautics, California Institute of Technology
<i>Robert J. Stinton</i>	Alumnus, California Institute of Technology. Assistant Manager of Research, Union Oil Co. of California
<i>Chester Stock</i>	Professor of Paleontology, California Institute of Technology
<i>M. S. Stone</i>	Assistant Comptroller, California Institute of Technology
<i>Samuel Stromberg</i>	Astronomer, Mount Wilson Observatory
<i>Foster Strong</i>	Assistant Professor of Physics, California Institute of Technology
<i>A. H. Stuart</i>	Professor of Genetics, California Institute of Technology

Patricia Lee Wilson

Ralph E. Wilson

R. Wimpers

Ralph E. Winger

O. O. Wintler

Doris Marion Wright

Emmett Wright

Louis B. Wright

Dor in Yost

H. Bateman

Wanda Mump

R. L. Daugherty

Robert P. DeLund

A. von Guene

Spiro Kyropoulos

John F. Lance

Frank J. Malina

J. Martner

Secretary and Research Worker,
California Institute of Technology

Astronomer, Mount Wilson Observatory

Research Associate in Chemical
Engineering, California Institute of
Technology

Research Staff Member,
California Institute of Technology

Research Fellow, Huntington Library

Cataloguer, Department of Manuscripts,
Huntington Library

Research Fellow in Physiology,
California Institute of Technology

Member, Research Group, Huntington
Library

Professor of Inorganic Chemistry,
California Institute of Technology

Professor of Mathematics, Theoretical
Physics and Aeronautics, California
Institute of Technology

Research Fellow,
California Institute of Technology

Professor of Mechanical Engineering,
California Institute of Technology

Assistant Professor of Mathematics,
California Institute of Technology

Technical Assistant in Geology,
California Institute of Technology

Research Fellow,
California Institute of Technology

Graduate Student in Geology,
California Institute of Technology

Assistant Professor of Aeronautics,
California Institute of Technology

Technical Assistant in Geophysics,
California Institute of Technology